

**Today is a day of amazing celebration! We rejoice with our Blessed Mother on this Solemnity of her Assumption into Heaven, and we choose these men for the ministry of service by ordination as deacons for the Holy Church! I cannot think of a better way to honor our Mother Mary than by extending the mission of the Apostles, with whom our Blessed Mother received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, in the world today through ordaining these men, our brothers.**

**Today's gospel proclamation places us in the setting of Mary's visitation with her cousin, Elizabeth. This visit of Mary with Elizabeth is not as casual as it may seem on the surface. In the world of their time Palestine was a land occupied by Roman troops. The roads and pathways from city to city were fraught with danger from brigands, robbers, and revolutionaries, as well as the occupying soldiers. For young Mary to make this trip from the region of Nazareth to an area just outside of Jerusalem was no easy thing to accomplish. Yet, she does accomplish it and she does it filled with joy and a spirit of praise! She cries out, "my soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!" Mary is willing to brave the dangers of her time and place, and to do so with an open and rejoicing heart!**

**Brothers, we too are living in times of danger! This very ordination was changed to this day because of a Pandemic still raging out of control and threatening the health of our people. There is international tension. People have lost their jobs. Our social fabric is under tremendous strain from competing ideologies. Yet, in the midst of all this you have been called, as Mary was called, to bring**

**Christ into the world and to bring him into the world with the same joy, praise, and gratitude that filled the heart of the Blessed Virgin!**

**Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has recently referred to deacons as “the Servants of Charity.” From the days of the original seven deacons, chosen in Jerusalem, and accounted to us by the Acts of the Apostles, to our own day here in San Antonio, deacons have been the custodians of the Church’s ministry of love and care for the most needy and vulnerable in our midst. Chosen to aid the widows, orphans, and those of Gentile descent, the Jerusalem deacons were the ministers of practical love and care in the community of the Church. Although the People of God may see deacons most often in their liturgical and sacramental roles, the truest work of the deacon is in the unseen ministry of presence to the poor and needy.**

**Please, my brothers, never forget this! Just as our Blessed Mother’s heart was filled with joy at the prospect of visiting her cousin Elizabeth, so let your heart be filled with joy and praise at the opportunity to be with poor, the sick, the elderly, the hungry, the widow and orphan, the “people at the edges, the margins,” as the Pope likes to say! Because it is precisely in this encounter where you are meeting Christ and making his presence known, especially in dangerous times!**

**Just as we celebrate our Blessed Mother’s Assumption, body and soul, into the presence of the Father at the moment of her death, so give of yourselves, body and soul, to this great ministry of love for God’s People. Celebrate the sacraments with the dignity and honor the sacraments are due. Assist the bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the sacrifice of the mass. However, do not be satisfied with wearing the stole and dalmatic. The stole you will wear across your shoulder is a symbol of your office, like the cross of Christ upon His shoulder. The dalmatic you will wear is a symbol of the steward of the household, whose job it is to be the chief servant. These vestments only have dignity if the person wearing them is, truly, a “Servant of Charity,” as our Holy Father has asked you to be. Your dignity, brothers, is in the service of Christ in faces of the poor and needy, and not in the clothes you wear!**

**In just a moment I will share with you the Church’s instruction as you are about to be ordained. Listen well, and avail yourself to practice what you proclaim in the gospel.**