

**Candidacy Mass for Permanent Diaconate
September 15, 2018**

My dear friends you have been waiting and preparing for this moment for some time. Your family has gathered to share this day with joy and excitement. So many blessings! And what memorial celebration do we get for this happy day? Our Lady of Sorrows! Oh my goodness. I think it is important to clarify that this feast day does not reflect the deacon class that is starting with their candidacy today! No, you are not the class of sorrows and woe! Brothers, we are so happy to have you with us here today, with your lovely wives and wonderful families. This is a day of joy, even as we celebrate Our Lady of Sorrows.

The memorial is helpful in an important way. We all know well of the sorrows that we have been experiencing in the Church these days. So much pain and confusion. Brothers, these are the conditions you are entering under. You are answering your call to be clergy of the Holy Catholic Church, right at this time when we are calling all clergy to renew their commitment to holiness and true discipleship. Please receive the lesson well. You are not called to serve yourselves, brothers. You are called to serve the Church, and to give yourselves to that service. Through formation, and God willing through ordination to the diaconate, service will be your very identity.

“We, though many, are one Body for we all partake of the one loaf.” Our wise and loving Lord gives us the true food and true drink of his Body and Blood. We cannot, brothers, rely on any other sacrifice or source of unity. None satisfy but the Lord. Just as St.

Paul warned the Corinthians in his time, I warn you as you begin your formation, do not fall into idolatry. There are so many voices out there shouting to take our attention. The voice that brings us the truth is the Lord. All our efforts, our ideas, our ideologies, will not matter if they set us against the Lord. Stay close to him, read his word, draw from his sacraments, and serve with your eyes fixed on him. He is stronger than we are. He will guide us in the storm.

But today, we also remember our Blessed Mother. She is la Dolorosa. She suffers with her children when they hurt. She cries with us, standing by the Cross and accompanying us through the pain. She is a mother who never, ever leaves us orphans. She always helps unite us to the source of our life, to Jesus our Lord. As Pope Francis has said: “Our Lady shared in the pain of the Son and accepted with him the will of the Father, in that obedience that bears fruit, that grants the true victory over evil and death. The reality Mary teaches us is very beautiful: to always be united with Jesus” (General Audience, 23 October 2013).

My brothers, with your families, draw closer every day to Our Lady. We find strength and consolation in her who was made our own Mother by the Lord as he hung on the Cross. He has given us to her, may we not stray from our family in heaven.

So, we remember Our Lady of Sorrows today, but we know that Our Lady of Sorrows is also Our Lady of Hope. Follow her example, brothers, as you dive into formation for service to the Church as holy deacons. Make Mary’s heart your heart. No matter the Cross, be people united to Christ, united *in* Christ. May Mary, our loving Mother, always keep you in her loving prayers.