

Transitional Diaconate Ordination  
November 16, 2019

“How can I, unless someone instructs me?” These words tell us why we are here today. The people of God are out there, hungering for the word and for the sacraments, and they have called out to be served. You, my brothers, are here because you have heard that calling and responded with joy and courage.

What kind of service will it be? We hear the answer clearly ringing through the scriptures today. In the Book of Numbers, we see Moses being very pragmatic. He’s telling God, I cannot do all this work by myself! We feel that way in ministry sometimes. The weight of the needs of God’s people can be very heavy. You will experience this in your service as deacons. So, what to do? You rely on what Moses did. He asked God to send fellow ministers. God sent him the 70. He gave them a share of the same Spirit that Moses had received from on high. Today, the Church has called 6 more to serve, and you also will receive a share of the living Lord, the Holy Spirit. Never forget that you are not alone in service. Live as faithful sons of the Church, *with* the faithful of the Church, and *for* the faithful of the Church. No burden is too heavy for the Body of Christ.

It is after all Christ’s own mission you are participating in. He is the one sending you, just as he sent the Apostles. He breathed his Spirit into them and said, “Peace be with you.” He sent them to be missionaries of peace and reconciliation. He gave them a share of his mission – to reconcile all people to himself. When you receive the Holy Spirit remember that there are no boundaries or borders on the merciful love of God. Peace can always be found in a servant of the Lord, alive in the Spirit of God. Do not hold back the gift you are receiving. We are sent to everyone, without exception, to share peace and mercy in the love of Christ Jesus.

Lastly, we are called to do this through true accompaniment. We do not just come in, teach, and leave. The people are crying out to be instructed, to be served, to be loved. But we do this as fellow children of God, giving of ourselves in order to walk with others. We offer witness and draw people to the Gospel by the attraction of that witness. Look at the story of Philip and the eunuch from Ethiopia. Philip listened to the Holy Spirit who directed him to the man. He recognized the desire in his heart to love God. Philip did not talk down to the man or simply lecture him. Philip first asked questions, listened to him, and got to know who the man was. Then he invited him to go deeper. All the while, Philip showed he was there to walk with him as a brother in service. The man responded with passion. He recognized genuine care and love in the apostle, and he walked with Philip with an open heart. So effective was Philip's service that the man demanded baptism. He could not wait to receive the Holy Spirit, then go out and share his own encounter with the Lord to anyone who would listen. This is the mission you are being given in a new way. As Pope Francis has said: "We need a Church capable of walking at people's sides... a Church which accompanies them on their journey." We are not sending you to "give" the faith to anyone. You are being sent to share your witness, inviting others to walk with you in the faith. You are being sent to bring others along in our journey together with God, who guides us and gives us life.

My brothers, this is what you are being called to today. The Holy Spirit will fill you, and you will be consecrated to the service of God's Word and his Sacraments. You will go to share mercy and peace, through genuine care and love for God's people. Remember to keep your eyes and hearts open to others. You do not go alone. We are here to celebrate the beauty God has bestowed upon his people. May we sing together, forever, the goodness of the Lord.