

Homily – Ordination to Permanent Diaconate

May 25, 2019

A candidate for the permanent diaconate, no matter his age, can easily identify with Jeremiah's words: "Ah Lord God, I do not know how to speak. I am too young." I am not worthy. I am not ready yet. Give me more time. God's response is very reassuring: I know you well! "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. . . I will be with you." This is a day of great joy for the candidates and their spouses, their families and friends, and for the entire Church of San Antonio! Through a process of discernment with your families, formators, and spiritual directors, you have heard and responded to God's call to serve the community of faith as permanent deacons.

Yes, "we hold this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us." You are being charged with proclaiming the risen Lord and his gospel boldly and faithfully. The ambo or pulpit is not a place for speaking about our pet peeves or pet ideas, our political ideologies! It is a sacred place where we exercise a sacred duty to proclaim the truth of the gospel. Not watering it down. Not distorting it into "fake news." It is the good news of God's unconditional and enduring love for all of us.

Yes, this is a day of great joy – but it comes with a serious cost. Listen attentively to Jesus’ words to his disciples at the Last Supper on the night before his death: “Love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” You have become close friends with one another during the diaconate program. Now your embrace must reach out to include everyone you encounter.

This means serving others, especially the most vulnerable among us, even when we may prefer, instead, to serve ourselves or only our friends and loved ones. It means being willing to let go of an image of self-importance in order to enter into the full paschal mystery. It means loving others as Jesus does – fully, faithfully, holding nothing back – not performing in order to be seen and esteemed by others.

My brothers, you are undergoing a transformation in the celebration of this Sacrament of Holy Orders. Strive to live in such a way that you will produce much good fruit. We will call down upon you the Holy Spirit to empower you to do this and give you his sevenfold gifts. May Our Lady, the Mother of the Church, be at your side and help you in this vital ministry of the Church!