

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Diaconal Ordination

Diaconal Ordination

Basilica of the Assumption

May 26, 2018

Dear friends: I hope you didn't misunderstand the first reading from the Book of Numbers! It opened with Moses' complaining to the Lord about the people he had been asked to lead. Moses pronounced them a heavy burden, so heavy in fact, that he felt he'd be better off dead than to continue leading them. I surely hope you don't think that's how I regard the Archdiocese of Baltimore! Quite the opposite, actually, because 'the Lord's yoke is easy and his burden is light.'

But I do have this common with Moses: like him, I need many good co-workers in this portion of the Lord's vineyard, good servants and friends of Jesus to minister to God's People in our parishes and schools, and in ministries that serve the poor and vulnerable. Today, the Lord in his goodness is providing such co-workers to me and to the whole Archdiocese of Baltimore - six men whose names have been called, six who have consented, six who have been found worthy to serve the Church as deacons. These men are your sons and in one case a husband and father; they are your brothers, relatives, classmates, and friends. Five will continue their formation for the Holy Priesthood and one will serve as a permanent deacon.

Like Moses, I will invoke the Spirit of the Lord upon them. By the prayer of the Church and the laying on of my hands, they will be ordained as deacons, living icons of Christ the Servant who laid down his life in humility and love for us and for our salvation. When I offer the Prayer of Ordination, listen carefully as I will beseech the Lord on their behalf, asking the Lord to look with favor upon them. Then, in the power of the Holy Spirit, I will *dedicate* them to the office of deacon in these words: "Send forth upon them, Lord we pray, the Holy Spirit, that they may be strengthened by the gift of your sevenfold grace for the faithful carrying out of the work of ministry." When you hear this invocation, may joy and thanksgiving fill your hearts, for the Spirit will be fashioning in them the living image of Christ, the

deacon. And so now, dear brothers and sons, let me address you in the Spirit of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ: The Order of the Diaconate goes back to the days of the Apostles. The reading from the Acts of the Apostles recounted for us how the Twelve, inspired by the Holy Spirit, selected and appointed the first deacons of the Church as ministers of charity. And while the diaconate took form through the ministry of the Apostles, its bedrock origins are in Christ and it is Christ Himself who is the measure of the ministry that you are about to enter upon, a ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Charity.

As Jesus walked the earth, he proclaimed the Word of God to one and all. Yet, that is not the whole story! Not only did Jesus proclaim the Word, he was and is the Word made flesh, who entered human history through the womb the Immaculate Virgin Mary. In his great love for us, the Incarnate Word revealed to us by word and deed the merciful face of the Heavenly Father and made us his adopted children.

So too, as deacons you are called to impart the living Word of God to others by preaching, instruction, writing, indeed, all available means of communication. Yet, preaching and teaching requires more of you than learning and good technique. As Blessed Pope Paul VI taught us so long ago, the Church's mission of evangelization demands that you be not only teachers but indeed witnesses to Christ and his saving love. As you preach and teach people will want to know if you are personally invested in what you say. They will want to know "if you believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach!" Your words, your deeds, your conduct, and your demeanor must brim with the luminous truth and love of Jesus who lives among us in the Church. Let the Spirit inscribe the Word on your hearts so that your lips may utter words of wisdom and love. Imitate St. Paul who said, "It is [Christ] whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone perfect in Christ" (Col. 1:28).

Let your words also show us Jesus whose humanity was the "original sacrament", the living and effective sign of his divinity at work in the world, in his life, teaching, and miracles, and above all in his death and resurrection. For, as Pope St. Leo the Great teaches, all that Jesus said and did for our salvation has passed over into the sacramental life of the Church.' Through signs perceptible to the senses, the sacraments draw us deeply into the mysteries of Christ's life, most especially the

triumph of his Cross. In the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church, the Body of Christ is united to Christ the Head in giving God thanks and praise. As we do so, we are drawn, even now, into the intimacy of God's own life and love.

As deacons, you are to aid and abet the Church's sacramental and liturgical life, assisting at the altar, distributing the Body and Blood of Christ, baptizing, witnessing marriages, and presiding at funerals. Do all of this with a fidelity, love, and humility that shows us the face of Christ, the splendor of the Father and our good and gentle shepherd.

As Jesus walked the earth, he had special love for the sick, the poor, the outcast, and the vulnerable, those who live, as the Pope says, 'on the peripheries.' Jesus, "poor in spirit," - "the Son of Man [with] nowhere to lay his head," was also the Good Samaritan to a suffering humanity, in all its poverty and need. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, raised the dead, and consoled the grieving, touching the wounds of human existence with the balm of divine love.

As deacons you are ministers of the charity of Christ. Like him, you are to have a special love for the poor, the sick, the grieving - but not a mere abstract love, rather a love expressed in deeds of mercy, a love concretized in a ministry of charity and service. So too you are called to draw others into ministries of charity, conscious of Christ's command, "Love one another as I have loved you."

How, then, will you live such a magnificent ministry worthily? Surely your formation will be crucial as will the grace of the Sacrament of Holy Orders which will accompany you throughout your lives. But for that grace to bear the good fruit of the Gospel, you must also follow what the Lord teaches in today's Gospel proclamation: 'Don't rely on the props - the walking stick, the money, the extra clothes - but instead, in your daily life of assiduous prayer, let his Spirit fill you with a true missionary spirit, such that you will walk with others in their joys and sorrows, imparting to them the peace the world cannot give. Then will the harvest of your ministry be abundant. Then you will be the good co-workers that I need and the Church needs. Through Mary's intercession, may God bless you and keep you always in his love!

*Read the Catholic Review's coverage of the ordination **here**.*