

**Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estevez
for the Diaconate Ordination
St. Joseph Catholic Church, Jacksonville, Fla.
Saturday, June 11, 2022**

Icons of Christ – Servant of the Father

1 Peter 4:7-11, Matthew 20:25-28

St. John the Evangelist must be very pleased that the 2022 class of the diaconate in the Diocese of St. Augustine are seven candidates, a number and symbol of rich fulfillment in his Gospel.

Your preparation for this day, your witness, has impressed your formation team. They said, “These deacon candidates have a family life which is solid, they have a strong pastoral sense, deep faith, strong prayer life, as a couple they exemplify team ministry, they have a strong sense of loyalty to the church, they are compassionate and have deep faith, their pastors are so lucky to have them, all their wives provide lots of support to them, they are passionate for evangelizing, these couples are in love with God, they see their future roles as deacons to be very supportive to their pastors.”

As Father Denis O’Shaughnessy stated, “This entire group of seven candidates and their wives all radiate an enthusiastic, synergistic bond and commitment to the new ministry of the diaconate.”

Deacon class of 2022, this local church looks forward to your ministry as icons of Christ the servant. The Holy Spirit has been at work within you personally, as a couple, and as a family.

The Apostle Peter reminds us that we do not become ministers out of our doing but by God’s action, that is by his grace. Whatever gifts you have been given come from God – see all your talents due to God’s, see yourself as “stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” Humility really is truth. And all manifestation of respect and gratitude that you receive from the flock is due to the blessings of God’s giving to you for the care of others. Your fidelity, your endurance in facing contradictions and obstacles and challenges is due to “the strength God provides.”

In church ministry it is very important the purification of our motivations, of our intentionality, the energy to serve must come from the love of Christ acting in us. As Paul said so well, “He loved me and gave His life for me” and it is this charity of Christ that leads us to the ministry that is to love the Body of Christ, the people of God, especially those in the margins, the needy, the suffering ones. How well Pope Francis said it EG 268, “To be evangelizers, we need to develop a spiritual taste for being close to peoples’ lives and to discover that this is itself a source of greater joy. Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for the people.”

Looking at the Gospel today: It took a long process for the Apostles to understand Jesus – to know the Lord. John and James wanted to be first and great in Jesus’ kingdom. They did not fully acquire the mind of Christ. They were influenced by a secular view along “what is there for me?” Jesus confronted them with love “it shall not be so among you” with a teaching and diaconia way, the joy of service in humility is the Gospel teaching. Fifty years after Vatican II

that brought back to the 20th century the ancient Order of the Diaconate, I have met many deacons who exemplify Jesus' teaching. They have a joy, a passion in serving, of enabling others to serve, of being ready and available to the needs in the community; The church is in desperate need of this selfless love exemplified by the Order of Deacons in the church.

In his teaching on service, Jesus ended in revealing his vision and deepest identity, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

A true deacon will find in the Sacrifice of the Cross the deepest motivation of his life of service. The Mass, the Eucharist is thus the great source of this servant life motif. As the deacon holds the chalice at the supreme moment of the Doxology of the Mass, the words of Peter best reveal the deacon's heart holding the cup, "In all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."

Un gran Obispo, Mons. Eduardo Boza Mazvidal decía con frecuencia: "el que no vive para servir no sirve para vivir". Este juego de palabras tiene sabor evangélico. La restauración del Diaconado permanente en el siglo XX gracias al aggiornamento del Concilio Vaticano II es una de los grandes gracias del Espíritu Santo. Hoy vemos sus frutos. Invite a Mons. Erik Pohlmeier para predicar en esta Ordenación. El no pudo por coincidir este evento con la ordenación de su propio hermano de Diacono y de la clase en la que el ha sido el responsable. El que su padre sea Diacono al igual que su hermano es signo evidente de su estima y cercanía de esta bendita Orden que hace visible a Cristo Siervo del Padre.