



*Homily – Ordination of Permanent Deaconsⁱ
Santa Barbara Region*

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*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels
Los Angeles, California
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Indeed this is a day of great joy for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles as we ordain these men to serve in the permanent diaconate.

I know this is a day of grace and joy for you, my brothers, and for all of your families.

I want to say a few words to you personally in my homily, my brothers. But I also hope that what I have to say will help all of us to reflect on our Christian identity and vocation.

Every time we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Orders, each of us has a chance to renew our own calling to serve Jesus Christ.

We all know that the name “deacon” indicates one who serves.

But all of us in our Christian lives are entrusted with a mission to serve our brothers and sisters in the name of Jesus Christ. Each of us is called to take Jesus as our model and to imitate him by serving the Church and all mankind.

However, you who are to be ordained to the permanent diaconate are called by God and set apart to a divinely instituted ministry of service in his Church.

My brothers, as you know, I was in Rome recently to receive my pallium from our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI as the new metropolitan Archbishop of Los Angeles.

It was a beautiful ceremony and during his homily our Holy Father offered a beautiful reflection on the Gospel passage that we have just heard.

“I no longer call you servants, but friends.”

Our Holy Father, of course, was also celebrating the 60th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. And in his reflection, he talked of the special meaning those words have for priests.

But these words that our Lord addresses to his apostles are spoken to each of us who are called to Holy Orders, to the sacrament of apostolic ministry in the Church.ⁱⁱ They are addressed in a special way to bishops and to priests. But they are also spoken to you who will be ordained deacons.

“I no longer call you servants, but friends.”

Today, my brothers, Jesus welcomes you to sacramental ministry in his Church — not as servants, but as friends.

Today, Jesus Christ calls you his *friends*, my brothers. What a beautiful gift!

My brothers, my prayer for you is that you will enter deeply into this friendship with all your heart and all your soul. I pray that you will accept this beautiful gift of his friendship and let it shape your identity as deacons and let it set the program for your ministries.

What does it mean to be a friend of Jesus? Our Holy Father told us in Rome: “Friendship is a communion of thinking and willing.”

Your friendship with Jesus Christ means you must always be trying to know Jesus better and trying to conform yourselves more closely to his will.

We do that through our prayer and our daily striving for holiness. We do that through reading sacred Scripture and through our participation in the Sacraments, especially the holy Eucharist and Confession. We do that through seeking God’s will in everything that happens to us in the course of our daily lives.

My brothers, as friends of Jesus, you have a sacred dignity and responsibility for his Church. The first reading we heard this morning tells us about the origins of the diaconate in the early Church.

When you are consecrated today by the laying on of hands that comes to us from the apostles, your names will be written in that long line of deacons that begins with these first heroic men we hear about today — St. Stephen, St. Philip and the rest.

As deacons you will continue the mission of those first deacons — as co-workers, along with my brother bishops and priests, in my apostolic ministry in this great Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

You are being called to something so great, my brothers! God is calling you to participate in the mission of Jesus for the salvation of the world! For the salvation of souls!

But in order to carry out that mission you need to have a heart like the apostles and those first deacons.

In the second reading we heard today, St. Paul tells you of the personal qualities that should distinguish you in your ministries.

Never take these qualities for granted, my brothers! Meditate on these words of St. Paul and examine your conscience often in light of them. You are called to a life of simple holiness and an attitude of humble service.

And in everything my brothers, take Jesus as your only model and guide.

By your ordination, you are configured to the image of Jesus Christ, who emptied himself to come among us in the form of a servant. You are called to serve — *in persona Christi Servi*, “in the person of Christ the Servant.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Let Jesus Christ be the way for you. Learn from him. Try to become, really and truly, “another Christ” for the men and women you serve.

Through your service of love, you will show our brothers and sisters how much God loves them. You will show them how God longs to touch each one of us personally with his love. How he longs to wash away our sins. To heal our wounds. To sanctify us and to make us holy.

Christ became the servant of all.^{iv} That is what you are called to be! Servants of the family of God here in Los Angeles.

You must make your mission the mission of Jesus Christ. You are called to be missionaries of God’s love in the world.

Jesus Christ is ordaining you today to bear fruits of love: “This I command you: to love.”

As those early deacons did, I urge you: stay close to me as your Archbishop and to our Auxiliary Bishops. And we will stay close to you as our deacons. Let us stand firm together as servants of God in this great Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Let me leave you, my brothers, with a short prayer that Pope Benedict composed to teach us how to grow in our friendship with Jesus Christ.

It is beautiful and I hope that it will inspire you as you set out on this great mission of loving service:

*Lord, help me to come to know you more and more.
Help me to be ever more at one with your will.
Help me to live my life,
not for myself,
but in union with you,
to live it for others.
Help me to become ever more your friend.^v*

And let us ask for the prayers of Our Blessed Mother Mary, who gave us a perfect model of discipleship and service to God's will.

May she help all of us to gain the grace we need to always serve our Lord Jesus Christ and our brothers and sisters in love.

ⁱ Readings: Acts 6:1–7; 1 Tim. 3:8–10, 12–13; John 15:9–17

ⁱⁱ *Catechism*, 1536.

ⁱⁱⁱ Phil. 2:7; Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:18; *Catechism*, 1570.

^{iv} Mark 9:35.

^v Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (June 29, 2011)