**Homily to Diaconate Community**

October 26, 2019

Saturday of the 29th week in Ordinary Time

Remain rooted in Christ! Belong to the Father! Dwell in the Holy Spirit! Immerse yourselves in the People of God so that through your presence, in their midst, they might see Him for whom they long!

For the past 13 years, I have been reflecting on the diaconal vocation. What is its foundation? What is its heart? What are its fruits?

I have come to believe that the ***foundation******of the diaconate*** is gazing on the face of the Father, a Father who utters His Word, His Son Jesus, into our lives. It is an adhering to and loving that Word; it is being purified by that Word, so that our presence might purify others and, free them from all that enslaves them. The foundation of the diaconate is essentially contemplation, i.e., an undisturbed, purified, pre-occupation with the Word of God, who is Jesus, and the words of Jesus, which are the Gospel of which we are heralds.

I have come to believe that the ***heart of the diaconate*** is the Eucharist. It is our diakonia at the altar of sacrifice. Yes, the life of a deacon is a life of suffering: suffering the effect the Word has in our lives and the way it burns away all that is unholy, ***and*** suffering with the People of God who are in need. The heart of the diaconate is our witness to and service of what Jesus did that day on Golgotha. We are always to be present at the foot of the Cross, like Mary and John, and never absent ourselves from that position. Never run from it. Never avoid it. The heart of the diaconate, therefore, is the Cross, the Mass, the Eucharistic sacrifice. No, we are not the sacrificial victim, nor are we the ones who offer that sacrifice, but we are the ones who herald it, who bear witness to the Paschal Lamb sacrificed for the salvation of the world. We are heralds who say, “Look there! There is the Lamb of God.” We are the ones who are to tell others, “Look for Him at the Eucharist!” We must not avoid the Mass, the Eucharist. We must minister there and we must do so faithfully and with humility. It is our heart, hearts that are wounded beneath the Cross, the Altar of Sacrifice, just like Mary’s heart was pierced. Our hearts are at the Mass, the Eucharist. We are Simon of Cyrenes who bear the cross with Jesus to the place of the sacrifice; Cheek to cheek, step by step to the altar. We accompany the priest to the altar, and we remain there. We too are to accompany others in their cross bearing and bring them to the Eucharist from the peripheries to the center of all that we are about, the source and summit of our lives.

I have come to believe that the ***fruit of the diaconate*** is charity. It is unity with humanity in all its needs. The fruit of a well-founded diaconal heart is solidarity with the poor, with those who experience injustice and oppression. The fruit of the diaconate is a re-ordering of human relationships; it is essentially, a healing. Yes, we are to heal as Jesus healed. Deacons are ones who heal. This is why we deacons are so needed and necessary in our diocese for we are in need of healing. Think of Mary. She held the broken body of her Son. The Pieta’. She held the wounds of Jesus; she was that close and that united to her son. Are we that close to the wounds Jesus now bears in the lives of his people in our diocese? Mary could not have done what she did had she not first contemplated, accepted and nurtured the Word that had come to her, nor can we.

Remain rooted in Christ! Belong to the Father! Be not distracted from the Cross. Be present and be witnesses to the Paschal Lamb. Immerse yourselves in the lives of God’s people. Dwell in the Spirit.