**Homily to Diaconate Community**

October 26, 2019

Saturday of the 29th week in Ordinary Time

Remain rooted in Christ! Belong to Him! Dwell in the Spirit of God and immerse yourselves in the People of God who long to see His face so that through your presence, in their midst, they might see Him for whom they long!

Remain rooted in Christ; belong to Him; dwell in the Spirit always!

For the past 10 years, I have been reflecting on the diaconal vocation. What is it 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 in faith, a Father who utters His Word, His Son Jesus, into our lives. It is an adherence to and love for that Word; it is a willingness to be purified by that Word proclaimed into our lives and into the world, so that we might purify others by our presence among the people, free them from all that enslaves them. The foundation of the diaconate is essentially contemplation, i.e., an undisturbed 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 impact 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 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 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 it, to the Paschal Lamb sacrifice 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. It is our heart, and we must do so faithfully and with humility. Yes, our hearts are wounded as we stand 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 Cyrene who bear the cross with Jesus to the place of the sacrifice. Cheek to cheek, step by step to the altar. 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 society and human relationships; it is essentially, a healing. Yes, we are to heal as Jesus healed. Deacons are ones who heal. Have you ever thought of that before? Think again of Mary. She held the broken body of her Son. The Pieta’. She held the wounds of Jesus. She was that close, that united. Are we that close to the wounds Jesus now bears in the lives of his people? Mary could not have done what she did had she not first contemplated, accepted and nurtured the Word. Nor can we.

Remain rooted in Christ! Belong to Him! Be not distracted from the Cross. Be present and to witness to the Paschal Sacrifice at Mass. Immerse yourselves in the lives of God’s people. Dwell in the Spirit.