**Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time**

**February 7/8, 2015**

**Job 7: 1-4, 6-7; 1Cor. 9: 16-19, 22-23; Mt 1: 29-39**

A few weeks ago, I gave a vocation talk to our students over at the school. It was a great time to be with all those kids and to speak about my vocation as a married deacon. Their questions were spot on in many cases. One of those questions, the same one that often comes up in any conversation about the diaconate is, “What does a deacon do?”

My answer to the kids’ question was, “Deacons are to do what Jesus did for other people, like we read about in the Gospel.” Who is Jesus? He is the Word of God, as we hear in the Gospel of John. Deacons then preach the Word of God. And what did Jesus do in his life on earth? He fed the hungry, healed the sick, instructed the ignorant, preached the Gospel, told parables, gave homilies, and went out to the people where they lived and worked and touched their lives.

Our second reading and our Gospel today are good descriptions of what deacons are to do and what their ministry should look like. Read over these readings again later this week. Reflect on them. These are descriptions of the diaconate.

Many people ask Deacon Trocinski and me the same question the students asked so I will try to describe for you who we are and what we are to be doing.

Deacons are men who are ordained. They receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders, a permanent sacrament that marks them for eternity. Once a deacon, always a deacon. And when a man is ordained a deacon, the bishop sends him out to proclaim the Gospel, and to preach that Gospel here at this pulpit and out there in the world, as we heard in the second Reading today. He is given the Book of the Gospels at his ordination and is told by the bishop to preach the Gospel with a clear conscience. The bishop reminds him he has become a “Herald of the Gospel.” After ordination, the bishop gives him his faculties which say he is to baptize, to marry, to bury and to teach the faith.

Deacons, priests, and bishops are all ordained, but there is only one Sacrament of Holy Orders. A man may receive this sacrament three times, each time being ordained to another rank or responsibility in the Church. The bishop is ordained to shepherd a diocese. He is a successor of the Apostles. He is our **chief priest** and our **chief deacon**. He possesses the **fullness of the priesthood** of Jesus Christ and the **fullness** **of the diaconate** of Jesus Christ, but he cannot possibly be everywhere all the time. He cannot be with us every Sunday to celebrate Mass. He cannot sit in every confessional every Saturday to forgive our sins. He cannot anoint every person who is ill. So, the bishop ordains some men to celebrate Mass, hear confessions, anoint the sick, and shepherd parishes in his diocese. He shares his priestly ministry with these men we call priests.

Likewise, the bishop cannot proclaim the Gospel at every Mass, or preach every homily, baptize every person, marry every couple, bury every person who dies, feed every hungry person in the diocese, visit all the sick and imprisoned, or instruct everyone in the faith. So, he ordains men to baptize these people, to marry them, to bury them, to care for them when they are sick, to go out to their homes and business places, to the jails and prisons to minister to the people there. He ordains men to read and proclaim the Gospel in the parishes and to preach that Gospel. He ordains these men to serve in his name, serve in the name of the Church, and serve as Jesus served. He shares his diaconal ministry with these men whom we call deacons.

A bishop has two have two legs to stand on: His deacons and his priests. A bishop really cannot fulfill his ministry without his deacons or his priests.

You may say, “But priests do all the things deacons do.” Yes, they do, because when they do the things deacons do, they are living out their diaconate. Every priest is ordained a deacon before he is ordained a priest. For centuries, there were only a few deacons and so all men destined for the priesthood had to be ordained deacons first so they would be both deacon and a priest after their ordination to the priesthood, so they would take care of the diaconal aspects of the bishop’s ministry. As priests they offer the Sacrifice of the Mass and forgive sins in the name of Jesus Christ. As deacons they serve the bishop and the People of God in the ways deacons do.

Yes, as we hear in our readings today, deacons are a slave of all. They are weak with the weak. They are immersed in the human condition. Deacons are one with families for they are family men too. As St. Paul said in our second Reading, it is our ***obligation*** to preach and teach the Gospel, to baptize, marry and bury. As deacons, it is our ***obligation*** to heal the broken hearted, bind up the wounded, reach out to those on the fringes of society, and sustain the lonely and the depressed. Deacons are immersed in the world in a way priests and bishops are not, and yet we are attached to Jesus and the Church. Deacons must be men of prayer and men of the Church.

Deacons must do what Jesus did for the people. As St. Paul said, we must become all things for all people to save at least some. As our Gospel said today in the beginning, we are to leave the church buildings and enter into peoples’ lives. This is a tall order for any deacon. But with God’s grace, and the support of our wives, we live out our vocations.

Never be hesitant to approach us when you have a question about the Faith. Don’t hesitate to ask us to baptize your children, to marry you, or to bury your loved ones. Don’t hesitate to ask us to bless your rosaries, your homes, your cars, your pets, or bless you. If you need us, we will come.

My dear people, I conclude with the same words our Lord used at the end of today’s Gospel: “For this purpose have I come to you.”