



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEWLY-ORDAINED DEACONS
OF THE NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE***

Saturday, 24 April 1982

My brothers and sisters,

I welcome you in the joy of this Easter Season! I am especially happy for this opportunity to meet with the newly-ordained deacons of the North American College and to offer a special word of greeting to their parents and friends as well as to the members of the College faculty - to Monsignor Charles Murphy and all those who are assisting the formation program of the College.

I am pleased to learn that two days ago all of you gathered in Saint Peter's Basilica for the ordination of the young men to the diaconate. What a treasured gift the Lord entrusted to them in that moment! True enough they worked hard to prepare themselves theologically, spiritually and pastorally in order to be ready for this moment. But they realize that this call of the Lord is a gift. It is not something one merits; it is a grace freely bestowed by our Risen Lord.

There is no claim that any person can make in his own name to serve as a deacon in the Church. The diaconate is a call from God mediated through the Church, and it should be humbly accepted as a privileged opportunity of participating in Christ's Paschal Mystery. The ordination rite itself teaches us an important lesson when it instructs the candidate to receive this gift in a state of prayer - lying prostrate before the Lord, invoking his help and that of our Blessed Mother and all the saints.

Yes, my brothers, deacons of the Church, what a wonderful grace the Lord has given you in this sacramental encounter. Be thankful for the invitation that is now your daily challenge to grow more and more in the image of Jesus through your service to others and your prayer for the Church.

The diaconate gives you a unique share in the Church's ministry, in which you will participate even more completely with priestly ordination. Naturally you look forward to this with enthusiasm and expectation.

But find in this present call to service the invitation to mature in faith, in hope and in love. Be ready to give of yourselves in service and in prayer for you brothers and sisters, for the whole Church.

May the Risen Lord sustain all your efforts and may he be for you always a source of strength and happiness.

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