

# **Bishop John O. Barres Permanent Diaconate Ordination Remarks (after the Closing Prayer)**

**St. Agnes Cathedral**

**September 23, 2020**

To our newly ordained permanent deacons and their wives: Deacon Terrence and Eileen Culhane, Deacon Michael and Tina Durso, Deacon Matthew and Eileen Faughnan, Deacon Gregory and Carolyn Fewer, Deacon John and Ann Heverin, Deacon Ronald and Rachel Lasca, Deacon Gerard and Deborah Magaldi, Deacon George Sprance (and his wife Josi whose soul we have remembered at this Mass), Deacon Vincent and Sharon Sweeney – we give thanks to Father, Son and Holy Spirit for the way they have led you and your families to this historic day, an historic day in the life of your families, and an historic day for the Catholic Church on Long Island.

We give thanks to Mary, Mother of the Church, for interceding for you, and on his feast day, we are grateful to St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina for teaching us all to live Christ Crucified and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and to embrace the graces of the Divine Mercy that flow from the Sacrament of Penance.

Recently the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization issued a new *Directory for Catechesis*. Two sections (117-118) highlight the role of the deacon in the catechizing and evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church. They are brief and eloquent, and especially worthy of reflection on this ordination day.

In the first section, we read: “The diaconia of the word of God, alongside that of the liturgy and of charity, is a service that deacons exercise in order

to make Christ, who out of love became a servant (cf. Lk 22:27; Phil 2:5-11), present in the community.” (117) The text is clear: Deacons are called to be instruments of outstanding sacramental catechesis and practice, both of which – the teaching and the doing – must be completely faithful to Church teaching, Church ritual and canon law.

Brothers, your radical fidelity to the sacramental rituals is absolutely critical, and I know it will be prayerful, natural and precise. You have been well-formed. You are men of the Church. Therefore, you understand that ministry is only enhanced, enriched and deepened when offered with the spirit of humility and bold ecclesial obedience expected by the Lord.

The *Directory for Catechesis* goes on – still in that same section - to emphasize the call of deacons “to (a) catechesis of the faithful of all stages of Christian living.” (117) Deacons, it says, are to be active leaders “involved in diocesan and parochial catechetical programs” and are “called to proclaim the word in their professional lives, either explicitly or merely by their active presence in places where public opinion is formed and ethical norms are applied – such as the social services or organizations promoting the rights of the family or life.” (117)

Brothers, never forget the obligation that is yours, beginning this day, to transmit the Faith. The task is weighty, but remember you are never alone. Your service to catechesis is done always in communion with the wider Church, and most especially with our dedicated catechists and catechetical leaders.

The *Directory* next spotlights the Deacon’s role in family catechesis: “The role of deacons in catechesis is particularly valuable in certain areas, specifically the life of charity and of the family. Their action can be carried out among prisoners, the sick, the elderly, at-risk youth, immigrants, etc. Deacons have the task of encouraging those who in these

ways experience poverty to avail themselves of the catechetical activity of the ecclesial community so as to encourage all believers toward a true education in charity. Moreover, permanent deacons who live in the married state are called in a particular way on account of their unique way of life to be credible witnesses to the beauty of this sacrament. They, with the help of their wives and of their children...can engage in the catechesis of families and in the accompaniment of all those situations that require particular attention and sensitivity.” (118)

As you know, we have a new Office of Evangelization and Catechesis headed by Fr. Lachlan Cameron, STL that will help us to follow some new and creative directions with which you will be strongly involved in in your parishes.

Thank you for being permanent deacons who champion catechesis in our parishes, our parish religious education programs and our Catholic schools-*Morningstar* initiative.

One of the unique features of the Permanent Deacon Class of 2020 is that Deacon Gerard Magaldi is the father of Fr. Sean Magaldi, our diocesan director of Vocations. We congratulate Deacon Gerard’s wife and Fr. Sean’s mother, Deborah, and the entire family today who will enjoy seeing son and father together at the Altar of God.

With Fr. Magaldi and Deacon Magaldi, we expect all nine members of the Permanent Deacon Class of 2020 to cast nets constantly throughout Long Island for vocations to the priesthood.

Friends, today we have seen these nine new permanent deacons lay down in humble abandonment to divine providence and stand in our midst to promise their faithful service to God and the Church. This gift of witness moves us and enriches the Diocese of Rockville Centre with a clear

reminder of St. Paul's beautiful truth: "for to me, life is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

The Holy Spirit is deeply present in the Ordination of these nine permanent deacons and in their wives, their marriages, their families, their professional work and their future diaconal ministries in the evangelizing parishes of the Diocese of Rockville Centre.

These deacons and their families are instruments of the Divine Mercy and instruments of the evangelizing mission of our Church on Long Island and across our global, universal Church.

I want to thank our deacons, their wives and their families for the sacrifices they have made and will continue to make for the Mission of Mercy of our Catholic Church. Thank you, too, for staying the course through all the COVID-19 delays of your Ordination.

To the pastors, priests, deacons and lay people of our parishes who have been critical to the formation that has led these newly ordained deacons to this day, I express my gratitude.

I thank Deacon Art Candido, the Director of Diaconate Formation, and all of our dedicated Deacon Formators. I thank, as well, Deacon Larry Faulkenberry, Director of Deacon Personnel, for his dedication and leadership. I also thank Fr. Walter Kedjierski, Executive Director of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs in Washington D.C., for the crucial role he played in your formation. Thanks too to Msgr. Charles Fink, the rector of our seminary, for his constant and gracious support of Diaconate Formation.

Finally, on this historic day in the life of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, I thank all who have contributed to making our liturgy so beautiful and memorable.