



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW DEACONS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE**

Friday 15 April, 1988

Dear Friends in Christ,

*“This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad”^[1].*

Throughout the Easter season, the Church invites us to proclaim this message. And it seems especially fitting to do so today as I have joy of welcoming the *new Deacons of the North American College*, together with their families and friends.

Ordination to the Diaconate is first of all the work of God and not a human achievement. It is because of what God has done that we rejoice and are glad. As Jesus said: “It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit”^[2]. We rejoice, then precisely because of what God is doing in the Church and in the lives of these young men.

Dear brothers: God has called each of you to be a deacon, a *diakonos*, a servant. Through the sacramental prayer and the laying on of hands, each of you has been made a servant of the Gospel, a servant of the Sacred Liturgy, a servant of the whole People of God, and in particular a servant of the sick and the poor. At the Lord’s invitation, you have taken a decisive step towards becoming even more like our Saviour, the one who came “not to be served but to serve”^[3].

The happiness of a servant, indeed the very identity of a servant, depends upon his relationship with his Master. And thus told his disciples: “Where I am, there will my servant be”^[4]. Where Jesus is, there will his *diakonos* be. He will be with Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the other sacramental celebrations. He will be with Christ who makes himself one with “the least ones” of our world. He will be with Christ in the Christian community and in the successor of the Apostles. He will be with Christ in the Church’s Liturgy of the Hours and in her mission of bearing

public witness to the rights and dignity of every human person. He will be with Christ because he is a faithful servant.

A servant, yes, but even more: for he also calls you friends, friends with whom he share a special relationship with the Father, friends whom he loves even to the point of dying on the Cross.

As friends of Christ you also shares his own knowledge of with his Mother. During this Marian Year, I encourage you, together with your families and friends, to nourish in your own lives devotion to the Mother of God. You can find no better example of readiness to do God's will. Just as Mary said "I am the servant of the Lord"^[5], may all of you be examples of generous service and faithful love.

To all of you I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing.

[1] *Ps. 118 (117), 24.*

[2] *Io. 15, 16.*

[3] *Marc. 10, 45.*

[4] *Io. 12, 26.*

[5] *Luc. 1, 38.*

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