



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE JUBILEE FOR PERMANENT DEACONS

Saturday, 19 February 2000

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,

*Dear Deacons and your relatives,*¹ It is a great joy for me to meet you at this significant Jubilee event. I greet Cardinal Darío Castrillón Hoyos, Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, and his assistants who have organized these intense days of prayer and brotherhood. I greet the Cardinals and prelates gathered here. I especially greet you, dear permanent deacons, your families and everyone who has accompanied you on this pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles. You have come to Rome to celebrate your Jubilee: I welcome you with affection! This is an excellent occasion to reflect on the meaning and value of your permanent and not transitory identity as those ordained not for the priesthood, but for the diaconate (cf. Second Vatican Council *Lumen gentium*, n. 29). As ministers of God's People, you are called to work in liturgical service, in teaching and catechesis, and in the service of charity in communion with the Bishop and the presbyterate. And this extraordinary year of grace, which is the Jubilee, aims at helping you grasp even more radically the beauty of life in Christ. Life in the One who is the Holy Door!

2. In fact, the Jubilee is an important time for self-examination and inner purification, but also for recovering that missionary awareness inherent in the mystery of Christ and the Church. Whoever believes that Christ the Lord is the way, the truth and the life, whoever knows that the Church is his continuation in history, whoever has a personal experience of all this cannot fail, for this very reason, to become fervently missionary. Dear deacons, be active apostles of the new evangelization. Lead everyone to Christ! Through your efforts, may his kingdom also spread in your family, in your workplace, in the parish, in the Diocese, in the whole world! This mission, at least in intention and zeal, must stir the hearts of sacred ministers and spur them to the total gift of themselves. Let nothing stop you, but persevere in fidelity to Christ, following the example of the deacon Laurence whose revered and celebrated relic you have wished to bring here for this occasion. In our times too there are people whom God calls to the martyrdom of blood; far more numerous, however, are those believers who must endure the "martyrdom" of misunderstanding. Do not be upset by problems and

conflicts but, on the contrary, have ever greater trust in Jesus who redeemed humanity through the martyrdom of the Cross.³ Dear deacons, let us enter the new millennium with the whole Church, who urges her children to purify themselves, through repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency and slowness to act (cf. Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 33). The first to set the example must be the ordained ministers: Bishops, priests, deacons. This purification and this repentance are to be understood as referring especially to each one of us personally. Our consciences as sacred ministers working in this era are the first to be challenged. Before the Holy Door we sense the need to "break away" from our selfish world, from our doubts, from our infidelities, and we hear the pressing invitation to "enter" the holy world of Jesus, which is the world of full fidelity to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The divine Teacher's words echo in our hearts: "Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (*Mt* 11: 28). Dear deacons, perhaps some of you are tired because of the burden of your duties, because of frustration due to unsuccessful apostolic projects, because many misunderstand you. Do not lose heart! Throw yourselves into Christ's arms: he will refresh you. May this be your Jubilee: a pilgrimage of conversion to Jesus.

4. Faithful to Christ in all things, dear deacons, you will also be faithful to the various ministries the Church entrusts to you. How valuable is your service to the Word and to catechesis! And what can we say of the *diakonia* of the Eucharist, which brings you into direct contact with the altar of sacrifice in your liturgical service? In addition, you rightly strive to live without separating your liturgical service from that of charity in its concrete forms. This shows that the sign of Gospel love cannot be reduced to categories of mere solidarity but follows as a logical consequence of the Eucharistic mystery. By virtue of the sacramental bond that unites you with the Bishops and priests, you live ecclesial *communio* to the full. Although the diaconal brotherhood in your Diocese does not constitute a structural reality analogous to that of the priests, it spurs you to share the Pastors' concern. All the features of your specific spirituality, which is essentially a spirituality of service, clearly flow from your identity as deacons.⁵ Dear friends, the Jubilee is an appropriate time to restore the original and authentic features of this identity and this spirituality, so that every apostolic energy can be interiorly renewed and mobilized. Christ's question: "When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (*Lk* 18: 8) resounds with particular eloquence on this Jubilee occasion. Faith must be passed on and communicated. It is also your task to share with the younger generation the one unchanging Gospel of salvation, so that the future will be filled with hope for everyone. May the Blessed Virgin sustain you in this mission. I accompany you with my prayer, strengthened by a special Apostolic Blessing, which I cordially impart to you, to your wives, to your children and to all the deacons who serve the Gospel in every part of the world.

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