

ABUNDANCE: 17 ORDAINED PERMANENT DEACONS

PENSACOLA – God blessed the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee abundantly with a bumper crop of new permanent deacons June 20 when Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ, ordained 17 men during Mass at St. Paul Parish.

Coming from parishes across the diocese and beyond, friends and family members filled the year-old church to capacity. The ordinands were seated with their families as the Mass began.

Priests of the diocese concelebrated the Mass, assisted by the deacons of the diocese.

Following the Gospel, Deacon Tom Kennell called the 17 forward, and Deacon Gerard Williamson, the retiring director of permanent deacons and deacon formation, presented them to the bishop and attested to their proper preparation. The bishop accepted them, saying, “Relying on the help of the Lord God and our Savior Jesus Christ, we choose these, our brothers, for the Order of the Diaconate.

The assembly concurred, responding, “Thanks be to God.”

In his homily, Bishop Ricard referred the Gospel chosen by the ordinands for the Mass. “In this Gospel, Jesus says, ‘Greater love than this no man has, than to lay down his life for his friends.’ We wonder if we could ever muster the courage to do that – to lay down our lives for our friends. Jesus described something very real that was about to happen in his life. And who were the friends of Jesus?”

The bishop listed a number of Jesus’ unlikely friends: the prodigal son, the woman caught in the act of adultery, the thief who was crucified alongside him, his first disciples who abandoned him, Peter who denied him. “Yet Jesus placed himself between each of them and condemnation. For all of them, and for all of us, Jesus allows himself to be led to the cross that we might achieve our full potential to share in the life of his Father.

“Jesus has taught us what true love really is. And he gives us this command: ‘Love one another as I have loved you.’ In this, my dear brothers, is the ministry you are about to receive: to love as Jesus loves. Such is the ministry of the diaconate, a ministry of service. You may not realize it now, but this ministry is one of extraordinary influence over the lives, hearts and minds of many people, but it is a servant leadership. The success of your ministry will depend on how you decide to love, who you decide to love,” the bishop said.

To begin the ordination rite, the deacon candidates stood before the altar and promised to discharge the office of deacon with humble charity,

assisting the priestly order, proclaiming the faith in word and deed according to the Gospel and the Church's tradition, celebrating faithfully the Liturgy of the Hours, and conforming their lives to the example of Christ.

Each man then approached the bishop and pledged his respect and obedience.

As the men lie prostrate on the floor of the sanctuary, the choir intoned the Litany of the Saints, seeking the intercession of those holy men and women on behalf of the ordinands.

One by one, the men then approached the bishop once more, and as he lay his hands upon each of their heads, the power of the sacrament of holy orders was transmitted to them in the ancient gesture.

The new deacons then knelt before the altar as the bishop prayed the Prayer of Ordination.

The deacons wives assisted each of them in vesting for the first time in a deacon's stole and dalmatic. These vestments of a deacon differ from those of a priest in that the dalmatic is closer fitting than a chasuble, and it has sleeves of a sort. The deacon's stole crosses from left shoulder to right hip, instead of being draped from behind the neck.

Once more, each of the men knelt before the bishop as he presented each of them with the Book of Gospels, instructing them to faithfully , proclaim the Word of God.

Then all the deacons passed by the line of their new brother deacons, congratulating them with handshakes and hugs, smiles, laughter and prayers.

As the assembly erupted into thunderous applause, the new deacons took their seats with their brother deacons.

The Mass continued with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. At the conclusion of Mass, Bishop Ricard recognized the service of six deacons who have long contributed their talents to the diocese. Deacons John Morgan, Walt Richardson, Bradley Seabrook, Bob Saxer, Charles Wolf and Jerry Williamson received the diocesan Medal of Honor.

The newly ordained deacons and their parishes are: Patrick Dallet, Blessed Sacrament; Roger Gallagher, St. Dominic; Thomas Gordon, St. Anne (Bellview); Dr. David Harris, St. Margaret of Scotland; Gerald Haynes, Good Shepherd; Donald Krehely, St. Anne (Bellview); Lloyd Krueger, Holy Spirit; Charles Lee, St. Paul; Jeffrey Massey, St. Rose of Lima; Thomas McBrearty, Good Shepherd; Kenneth McClure, St. Thomas More (Pensacola), Michael Nixon, Blessed Sacrament; Miguel Nolla, Christ Our Redeemer; Mark Schneider, Good Shepherd; John Scott, St. Ann, Ong-In (John) Shin, Holy Name of Jesus; Dr. George Walters, St. John the Evangelist (Panama City).

