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# **"For a deacon, serving is like breathing"**

Homily from the Mass of ordination for 29 faithful of Opus Dei as transitional deacons in Rome on November 9th. They will be ordained priests on May 23, 2020.

11/09/2019

"Serving, serving: this is the key, my dear brothers. For a priest or deacon, serving is like breathing. A priest

who doesn't like to serve is like a doctor who's scared of blood."

Bishop Philippe Jean-Charles Jourdan, Apostolic Administrator of Estonia, directed these words to the 29 men that he ordained deacons this past Saturday in Rome. Bishop Jourdan is the second bishop Estonia has had since the Protestant reformation in the 16th century. Full text of his homily below.

The new deacons come from 13 different countries:

- Santiago Altieri Massa Daus (Uruguay)
- Alejandro Armesto García-Jalón (Spain)
- José Luis Benito Roldán (Spain)
- Guillermo Jesús Bueno Delgado (Spain)
- Juan Luis Orestes Castilla Florián (Guatemala)
- José Luis Chinguel Beltrán (Peru)

- José de la Madrid Ochoa  
(Mexico)
- Andrew Rowns Ekemu  
(Uganda)
- Pablo Erdozáin Castiella (Spain)
- Felipe José Izquierdo Ibáñez  
(Chile)
- Kouamé Achille Koffi (Ivory  
Coast)
- Santiago Teodoro López López  
(Spain)
- Martín Ezequiel Luque  
Marengo (Argentina)
- Andrej Matis (Slovakia)
- Carlos Medarde Artime (Spain)
- José Javier Mérida Calderón  
(Guatemala)
- Claudio Josemaría Minakata  
Urzúa (Mexico)
- Andrés Fernando Montero  
Marín (Costa Rica)
- Ignacio Moyano Gómez (Spain)
- Miguel Agustín Mullen  
(Argentina)
- Miguel Ocaña González (Spain)

- Ricardo Regidor Sánchez (Spain)
- Antonio Rodríguez Tovar (Spain)
- Manel Serra Palos (Spain)
- Juan Esteban Ureta Cardoen (Chile)
- Giovanni Vassallo (Italy)
- Roberto Vera Aguilar (Mexico)
- Juan Ignacio Vergara (Holland)
- José Vidal Vázquez (Spain)

## **Homily of Bishop Philippe Jourdan in the Basilica of Saint Eugene (Rome), 9 November 2019**

First of all, my deepest gratitude to the Father, Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Prelate of Opus Dei, for his invitation to come and ordain 29 of his sons as deacons. Besides the family joy that they feel—that all of us who are members of the Work feel on a day like today—you can imagine what it means for me, as a bishop from northern Europe, to ordain

more people in a single day than we ordain over the course of several years in all the "cold villages of northern Europe" as Saint Josemaría used to say. May God allow an abundant harvest to be reaped there as well. At the same time, we give thanks for these new laborers in the Lord's vineyard.

"You are my friends, if you do what I command you." Today's Gospel shows our Lord urgently asking his disciples for help. I was fortunate this summer to spend some time at the Saxum center in the Holy Land, which Bishops Alvaro del Portillo and Javier Echevarría so longed to see a reality. I noticed how dry and arduous the road is from Jericho to Jerusalem, along which our Lord and his disciples so often traveled. It was not an easy path to walk along, which perhaps helps us to better understand those words of His: "You are my friends, if you do what I

command you." This is not a beautiful theoretical principle or a pious lesson, but a demanding call and a reality to be lived out: it is a difficult path.

Allow me to recall what Pope Francis said during Holy Mass at the Freedom Square in Tallinn (Estonia): "See how the eagle helps its chicks learn to fly: she flies with them and under them, to protect them from falling. This is how you have to live, accompanying everyone, especially non-believers who make up the majority of your country."

Serving, serving: this is the key, my dear brothers. For a priest or deacon, serving is like breathing. A priest who doesn't like to serve is like a doctor who's scared of blood. A doctor who is scared of blood might try to study the history of medicine, for example, but generally we can

say that being a doctor does not seem like the ideal path for him.

Dear brothers, serving is like the blood of our priesthood. You might be afraid of blood, but blood is the price to pay in order to be useful. Saint Josemaría gave us this joyful motto: "In order to be useful, serve." This can be understood in many different ways. For me, it simply means that you are never as useful as when you are serving in exactly what has been asked of you, without seeking personal programs or goals.

Throughout his life, Saint Josemaría instilled in his children—with his word and actions—that we have to serve the Church as the Church wants to be served. How important are those words! Today, it is not that people are lacking who are willing to serve the Church or to serve humanity. They want to serve, but in the way they want, not in the way the

Church wants. What has true value is to serve as the Church as she wants to be served and, within the Church, the priests of the Work serve as our Prelate wants us to serve.

Now allow me to share a personal memory. When I arrived in Estonia for the first time, I had prepared myself to answer all the questions that the people there were going to ask me, the deep ones and the not-so-deep ones. But I hadn't prepared for the only question they ended up asking me: "Do you want to play a game of soccer?" I really didn't want to. I was tired and I was never a very good soccer player, but I told myself that I couldn't say no to the first and only question they asked me. I thought, "Wow, these Estonians are really devoted to soccer!" So I said yes, I would play. Later on I learned that Estonians don't like soccer very much. I may have been the first French person they had met and they



didn't know how to connect with me. It was around the time of Zidane and Platini, and they thought: "Surely a Frenchman would like to play a game of soccer, even if it is dark, raining, and cold." So no one actually wanted to play, but we all went to play in order to serve the others as we thought they wanted to be served. And the match was wonderful, even though I accidentally broke the leg of a woman who was playing goalkeeper.

Finally, I will remind you of these words of Saint Josemaría, so appropriate for our time and particularly for the country where I come from, and that I have the honor of sharing as a motto with the Prelate of Opus Dei: "Offer your prayer, your atonement, and your action for this intention: *ut sint unum!*—that all of us Christians may share one will, one heart, one spirit: so that *omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam*—that we

may all go to Jesus, closely united to the Pope, through Mary."

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