

AMDG

JMJ

**Ordination of Deacons
Feast of St. Therese
October 1, 2015
Rome**

Sia Lodato Gesu Cristo!

It is indeed to *Jesus* we give honor and glory;

What we are about here is due to *Him*: His plan, His call, His designs for His Church.

Without Him we can do nothing; with Him nothing is impossible.

We praise Him for giving our deacons-to-be the gifts of life, salvation, and His call to serve Him and His bride, the Church, in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, as we congratulate our sons, brothers, and friends for replying "yes" to that apostolic call.

We also congratulate their parents and families for raising a man to realize that his highest call in life is "to know, love, and serve God in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in the next." You raised these men to sense that the most important question to answer in life is, "What does God want me to do!"

Moms and dads, grandparents, brothers and sisters: on Monday we bishops begin the *Synod on the Family*. I only wish you could be participants in these sessions! You've done something right, very right, in raising these men. You may doubt that, they don't! Thanks!

And we congratulate the college, our rector and faculty community who took the “dough” given by God, parishes, priests, and supportive families, and formed it into good “gnocchi” for the family table of the Church.

I have to confess I am a bit upset with Monsignor Checchio: in this sacred place, beneath the very chair of St. Peter, so near his tomb, the rector moments ago *fibbed* to me! He told me these men were *worthy!* They, of course, are far from it . . .

But, come to think about it, this *Rite of Ordination* is full of *fibs*, of *contradictions!* *Just consider:*

- - as radiant as you, deacons to-be, rightly are about your call to holiness, you began this Mass by admitting you’re a sinner . . . by earthly logic, a *contradiction*;
- - as convinced and confident as you are in your vocation, in a moment you will fall to the ground in fear and helplessness . . . in the eyes of the world, a *mixed-message*;
- - beaming to be a deacon, yet hopefully, not for longer than ten months . . . odd
- - you will promise to love, yet pledge never to take a wife . . . *strange!*
- - you are ready to preach the freedom of the children of God, but submit in obedience to your bishop . . . *illogical!*

- - you tell us you have never been more *filled* with purpose and meaning, yet then talk about *emptying* yourselves . . . another *contradiction!*

The contradictions go on:

- - we gather on the feast of one whose spiritual footprint is so big it is worldwide, yet we call her "Little . . .";
one whose image I have found in chapels and homes from Hong Kong to Kenya, India to Ethiopia, Wall Street to the Bronx, yet who never left her cloister in Lisieux;
a twenty-four year old who died unknown, but whose image was found on over 100,000 French soldiers killed in the Verdun during World War I . . .
bizarre . . .
- - you gather in the most renowned church of Christendom, built over the grave of a clumsy, cowardly fisherman, who lead an infant Church thought a bit odd and moribund, left for dead on this hill across the Tiber;
- - a man who - - in the ultimate paradox of all, - - was martyred on a literal sign of *contradiction, a cross, upside-down!*

Who, at that moment, *upside-down*, looked out and finally, at last, understood the *head-over-heels* message of his Master, who had turned his values, his doubts, his security, his life, *topsy-turvey* thirty-five years earlier on the shores of that lake in Galilee when He invited him to, "Come, follow me!"

At last: only as Peter views the world, Rome, the *Caput Mundi*, *upside-down*, does he understand the meaning of this teacher, this Savior, who turned the *world upside-down* and in doing so made it again *right-side-up* with God on a *cross upside-down*.

So must you be, new deacons:

head well-grounded;

feet pointed toward heaven;

eyes looking out at a new angle, a new vision; earthly logic upended;

hands useless, and efforts to save yourself futile;

a world which at times thinks you crazy, and a culture wondering why you would not just surrender and give in . . .

an upside-down logic;

a new wisdom of contradiction;

a re-ordered life at *cross purposes* . . .

a disciple . . .a deacon . . .

Sia lodato Gesu Cristo!