



Good Shepherd Sunday

Office of Vocations

Message from Fr. Josh Swallows – Vocations Director

To all the Faithful throughout the Diocese of Orlando, Blessings to all of you on this Sunday in which we celebrate the Good Shepherd, our loving God who delivers us from every evil.

I realize it may seem a bit strange during this time of the coronavirus to talk about anything other than COVID-19 and everything we are going through, but the Lord is still doing amazing things in the hearts and lives of many of our people throughout the diocese, and I think we could all use something to celebrate! On April 25, I was blessed to watch three of our seminarians, Francisco Ojeda, Robert Marquez, and Nathanael Soliven, give their “yes” to Jesus Christ in a powerful way, ordained to the Transitional Diaconate. We call them ‘transitional’ deacons because this is not their final destination, as they will hopefully be ordained priests next year. It was beautiful, albeit this year even I was asked to watch it [via livestream](#) and could not attend. I was worried about what it would be like for these men without having their Church to celebrate with them, but I did not need to worry. One of them, now Deacon Robert Marquez, told me before his Ordination that their spirits were high and said, “We were worried about it at first, but things have been good. One of our formators told us, ‘Well, your Ordination this year will truly be historic.’ We have all been staying positive. Don’t worry Father, we are keeping the faith alive down here.” Honestly, just talking to him and hearing how truly positive and joyful he sounded was a testament to the character of these new deacons and the power of the Holy Spirit. The Good Shepherd is obviously looking out for them! We also have two men, Deacon Thomas Pringle and Deacon Adam Marchese, who have been called to Orders and will be serving as our newest priests very soon. The Lord continues to lead them, and they continue to trust Him, and it is awesome to witness.

Archbishop Thomas Wenski shared something during the Diaconate Ordination that struck me, and I thought it would be good for all of us to hear. He told the seminarians, speaking in the context of all that we are dealing with, that they would never be lonely. He said they would never be lonely because they pray and know the Lord. Our Savior is truly Risen and alive in our hearts, and Jesus Christ is and always will be with us. We need not fear! The whole experience of Ordination was so hopeful and encouraging for me that I wanted to share it with all of you, my diocesan sisters and brothers. Today we celebrate that voice that speaks deep within the human heart and pray that all of us have the courage to follow wherever the Lord leads us.

Q & A with Some Discerning Hearts

Q: Do you have any insightful realizations to share about your discernment process?

A Young Woman Discerning at Holy Family Catholic Church

A: I will keep it simple...5 points...

1–**Pray. Pray. Pray!** If prayer is not a consistent daily commitment, you cannot possibly discover what it is the Lord is trying to tell you.

2–**Partake of the Sacraments as frequently as possible!** If you are able, attend daily Mass & monthly Confession.

3–**Journal.** Using a journal is extremely beneficial for the discernment process (and just life with Christ in general)! Write down your thoughts, desires, prayers, graces, etc. This enables you to look back at the amazing things God is doing in your life and how He is answering your prayers.

4–**Start talking to people!** Find a spiritual director or talk to your parish priest...someone who can walk with you and point things out from a different perspective. It is good to talk about your desire for a holy life with other holy friends or a discernment group... talk things out with others who “just get it!” **You are not alone!**

5–**It’s okay to wrestle!** Wrestle with questions, doubts, fears, surrender, grief, yourself, and God. It is from there that you can start to let go of your own will. However, it’s important to not stay in the hypotheticals and wrestle forever. Get more information on what you are discerning! Read articles, books, ask a religious sister, religious brother, or a priest about her/his Vocation Story...then act! **Go on a visit** to Religious Community or to the seminary! **BE NOT AFRAID!**

