

Go and Preach the Gospel!

Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan, *People of God*, June/July 2014

St. Basil the Great once said, “Whoever has been called to the preaching of the Gospel should obey instantly and without delay.” An appropriate quote for the men who are called to holy orders this month of June in 2014! Each man is called to a different level of ordination.

Rev. Mr. Christopher Bernabe, Rev. Mr. Dominic Pierson, and Rev. Mr. Felipe Valadez are currently transitional deacons. They use the term “Rev. Mr.” because they are in a kind of a holding pattern between being a seminarian and a priest. These three men will be ordained to the priesthood on Saturday, June 7, at 10:00 a.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Santa Fe. They will again make the promise to obey me as archbishop and my successors. They will receive the authority to forgive sins in the name of Jesus Christ and to celebrate Mass where they will change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation). They already made the promise of celibacy and received the authority to baptize, witness marriages, and preach the Gospel during their diaconate ordination. All three are being ordained to the diocesan priesthood so they do not take a vow of poverty. Only those who are ordained to a religious community take a vow of poverty during ordination. In fact, diocesan priests do not take vows at all— they make promises; religious community priests do take vows. These three men will be welcomed by their brother priests during part of the ceremony. Upon ordination to the priesthood, they will continue to be under my authority, or my successors’ authority. They are not under the authority of the vicar for priests (currently Fr. John Cannon) or the vicar general (currently Msgr. Lambert Joseph Luna), but they can go to them for guidance.

The following six seminarians: Michael Garcia, Joseph Van Tao Nguyen (if his immigration papers come on time), Edgar Sanchez, Benoit Trieu Van Vu, William Woytovich and Rob Yaksich will be ordained to the transitional diaconate on Saturday, June 7, at 10:00 a.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Santa Fe. They make the promise of obedience to me as archbishop and my successors and the promise of celibacy. They will receive the authority to baptize, witness marriages, and preach the Gospel. Upon ordination they will be referred to as “Rev. Mr.” They will be welcomed by permanent deacons during part of the ceremony. Upon ordination to the transitional diaconate they will be under my authority, or my successors’ authority. They are not under the authority of the vocations director (currently Fr. Michael DePalma) but they will continue to receive direction and guidance from him.

We have 11 men to be ordained to the permanent diaconate! They are: Kevin Barkocy, Luis Bernal, Ted Branch, Mark Buie, Harold Gallegos, Steve Garcia, Chris Gilbert, Sal Mercado, Maurice Rodriguez, Joseph Valdez, and Larry Torres. Their ordination will take place on Saturday, June 21, 10:00 a.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Santa Fe. These men will be given the authority to baptize, witness marriages, and preach the Gospel. These men will all make the promise of obedience to me as archbishop and to my successors. Only Harold Gallegos and Larry Torres are currently single. However the other nine men understand that if their wife dies, they are not free to marry again unless the Vatican grants

them permission to do so. They will be welcomed by their brother permanent deacons during part of the ceremony. These men will not use the term “Rev. Mr.” per our archdiocesan tradition, their title will be deacon. They will be welcomed by their permanent brother deacons during part of the ceremony. Upon ordination to the permanent diaconate, they will be under my authority, or my successors’ authority. They are not under the authority of the director of the permanent diaconate (currently Deacon Steve Rangel) but they can go to him, or their assigned pastor, or the spiritual director of the permanent diaconate (currently Fr. Timothy A. Martinez) for guidance.

In all of the above cases the “authorities” given to each man are only valid if he enjoys the faculties of the archdiocese. Faculties are the privileges which I, as archbishop, or in my absence my designate, usually moderator of the curia (currently Fr. John Cannon), grant. An ordained man who is placed on, or granted, a leave of absence does not enjoy the faculties of the archdiocese.

Ordinations are a very visible sign of the health of a diocese. We indeed enjoy a good bill of health! We have a record number of seminarians studying for us this fall – 44! Let us all pray that God will grant all of these men the graces they each need to serve the people of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe – the faithful, the inactive and the unchurched!