

**Monday 21 January, 2008**  
**Rite of Candidacy for the Diaconate**  
**Transfiguration Catholic Church**  
**Marietta, Georgia**

**Wilton D. Gregory,**  
**Archbishop of Atlanta**

Candidates! If there is one thing that most Americans might well agree upon at this time of year is that we don't need one more candidate! The field is pretty much crowded as it is and our patience is almost worn thin with those that we already have. And yet tonight we shall receive seventeen more! These seventeen however are not running for any public office – but for Christian service. They are not making any campaign promises, but only one gesture – that is to be the servant ministers of this local Church in time as our deacons – if God continues to summon them to and the Church confirm them in this office.

The word candidate is almost exclusively identified with the political process and yet this evening we are celebrating another type of candidate who seeks not positions of power but titles of service.

A deacon, after all, is the Church's primary servant minister and you men have all said in one fashion or another that you want to be servants of God's people – you are candidates for service to the poor, the elderly, the young, the hospitalized and imprisoned - all those who turn to the Church for our assistance, support and care. A servant seeks first to attend to the needs of others and then only after they have been cared for does a servant think of himself.

A candidate for such an office realizes that few people might understand his reasons for seeking the privilege of serving, those who do understand that the First Servant of the Church has established the pattern and the legacy to be followed.

You men present yourselves this evening as husbands and fathers wedded to your families in Christ. It is there in the home that most of you have discovered the great meaning of commitment and love. There in the home you have become attentive to the needs of those who depend on you for life, safety, nourishment and hope. Those life-lessons must serve you well as you continue your preparation for the Diaconate. A man who is a loving and devoted husband will bring many gifts to the ministry of Deacon – gifts that will serve the Church well in caring for those whom Christ has called the least of Her sisters and brothers.

You men have already begun your preparation and so the Church in North Georgia knows something about your dedication and your potential. This evening you are declaring and the Church is receiving a formal declaration of your good intentions to become our deacons in the future. We are encouraged by that assurance and receive your declaration with great joy.

We already have enough candidates for political office. But the reception of seventeen new candidates for the ministry of deacon is indeed good news – even in an election year!

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