

# Washington cardinal ordains deacons from North American College in Rome

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory of Washington ordained 21 men from the Pontifical North American College to the diaconate Sept. 30 in St. Peter's Basilica.

Hundreds of family members, friends and students attended the Mass at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter's, watching the joy-filled liturgy rich in symbolic tradition.

Those concelebrating the Mass included U.S. Cardinal James Harvey, archpriest of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, and Australian Cardinal George Pell, former prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy. Also in attendance were U.S. Cardinal Edwin F. O'Brien, retired grand master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem and a former rector of the U.S. seminary in Rome, and several U.S. bishops.

Two of the new deacons studying at the college are Australians; one was ordained for the Archdiocese of Sydney and the other for the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The 19 Americans were ordained for 15 different dioceses across the United States, with three from the Archdiocese of Washington.

Cardinal Gregory, who was elevated to the College of Cardinals by Pope Francis 10 months ago and took possession of his titular church in Rome at the end of September, delivered the homily.

"The Church has always had exceedingly high standards when it comes to choosing those whom she summons to sacred orders," he said. The order of diaconate is an important "transitional moment" for those who will continue to prepare for the

priesthood, and it is an important opportunity to grow in Christ and humbly serve God and his people.

The office of deacon is associated with “the ministry of charity,” he said. A deacon must be “a man of charity, (with) real and heartfelt compassion and concern for the poor, the neglected and the marginalized members of our world. A deacon without a heart for charity will be a hollow and worthless son.”

“Deacons are called to visit the sick, to work for justice, for immigrants, to comfort those who are in sorrow, to help the hungry find food, the naked clothing and the homeless a dwelling place. Deacons must visit those in prison and in nursing homes,” the cardinal said. “Deacons are never far removed from those that the Lord Jesus has identified as the least of his sisters and brothers.”

However, their ministry is much more than “mere social work” because they are filled by the Holy Spirit with the grace of their office, he said.

They can offer the bread of eternal life from the Lord’s altar and proclaim the Gospel, sharing God’s invitation to seek his kingdom.

“Today you become preachers, please do so with fidelity to the truth of the Gospel and the Church’s tradition,” Cardinal Gregory told the new deacons. “People are looking for inspiring preachers who challenge them, encourage them to deepen their faith and help them discover God’s presence in their lives.”

He asked them to “be attentive celebrants of the Church’s liturgical life, consider carefully the details of the rituals so that people will be edified by the Church’s worship and sanctified by the sacraments and the Church’s prayer” and never distract them by being “too casual or too obsessive.”

Their embrace of the gift of celibacy will be less burdensome, he said, when they live like Christ with transparent modesty, great simplicity and draw strength from constant prayer and conversation with God.

“When your prayer life is strong and faithful, when your lifestyle is unencumbered by too many possessions, comforts and distractions, your living and your loving will reflect the same appearance as Christ himself provided for people who found his teaching and his ministry so compelling,” the cardinal said.