



In the Person of Christ the Servant: A Theology of the Diaconate Based on the Personalist Thought of Pope John Paul II

Deacon Dominic Cerrato Ph.D.

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Since its implementation in 1968, the diaconate has been struggling to find its voice within the larger Church. Its suppression as a permanent part of the three-fold hierarchy for over 1000 years has left the order theologically impoverished leading to confusion as to the role and mission of the sacred office. This book is a response to the International Theological Commission and indeed the Church herself, to develop a more refined theology of the diaconate using Pope John Paul II's Personalism and Theology of the Body.

??The unique aspect of Deacon Cerrato's contribution is that it grounds diaconal theology in the interplay between divine and human love. Where other theological approaches tend to reduce deacons to their function, to what they do; a personalist approach roots deacons in who they are, Christ the Servant. In this regard, diaconal service is not doing something, but instead giving Someone. This contextualizes the diaconate in terms of a salvific gift-of-self that wills the good of another for the sake of the other.

Using Pope John Paul II's approach to Scripture, Deacon Cerrato takes these insights to explore what it means "to serve at table" (Acts 6: 2-3). Finally, in what he calls the Establishment Hypothesis, Deacon Cerrato shows how all of these insights lead to a more integrated and organic understanding of Holy Orders.

Endorsements:

What Deacon Cerrato has accomplished is to pioneer a more creative approach to diaconal identity beyond the ready ecclesial documents which, while indispensable, do not contain all that the faith-filled intellect wants to ponder and receive from the truth of the diaconal mysteries. Let this work of Deacon Cerrato open your imagination and coax us all to think anew.

Deacon James Keating, Ph.D.?

Director of the Institute of Priestly Formation

The Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in its opening line tells us that "the origin of the diaconate is the consecration and mission of Christ, in which the deacon is called to share." Sophisticated philosophical language can tell us what this means; but the lived reality is what deacons are called to do. Deacons are not simply church decorations understood by their functional placement at the altar. They share in the very servanthood of Christ our Savior. We are grateful that Deacon Cerrato has given us such a thorough and engaging study of the theology of the diaconate.

Most Rev. Jeffrey Monforton,

?Bishop of Steubenville

This book thankfully focuses on the "what" or essence of the mystery of Christ the Servant. Service is always relationship, ministry is Christ's relationship with those in need. Cerrato plumbs the depths of Scripture,

Patristics and takes advantage of certain philosophical currents to unfold the deeper mysteries of Christ the Servant, present and engaged in what is today called the Permanent Deacon. This work has opened up and advanced new vistas for a deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ the Servant actualized in ordained ministry.

Deacon Stephen Miletic, Ph.D.

Professor of Scripture, Franciscan University of Steubenville



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