

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Introduction

This idea for a series of meditations on the service of The Ordination of a Deacon began when I was prompted by the Holy Spirit to review the service on the seventh anniversary of my ordination to the diaconate. As words and phrases came alive in a new way for me, it occurred to me that perhaps I should spend some more time in contemplation and prayer to see what God might want to reveal to me in this phase of my life of ordained ministry.

I outlined my plan, which to my surprise, totaled 40 areas of thought. So, in addition to perhaps being used in reflections around an ordination anniversary, I thought it might be useful to others for a period of reflection in preparation for making those vows, or as a Lenten reflection series.

With the list and outline prepared, I spent the weekend in a retreat where I took a fall and broke a bone in the forearm of my dominant hand. Intent on beginning to write, I decided to proceed, printing sloppily and slowly with my other hand. What seemed to be a hindrance became a blessing as I found myself slowing down my thoughts due to the need to focus on the task of putting them on paper. Using my non-dominant hand also forced the use of the opposite side of my brain to move this reluctant arm and hand, and the result was a new view.

The reflections reveal my own experience, and perhaps, will invite you to a new experience of your own. It is my hope that the reflections will bring renewal, a new understanding of your own part in God's ministry, and the blooming and flourishing of your life in ordained ministry.

May mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance,

Marti Holmes
Archdeacon, Diocese of Alabama

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Lent 2020 Meditation Calendar

Date	Reflection
Wednesday, February 25 <i>Ash Wednesday</i>	Day 1
Thursday, February 26	Day 2
Friday, February 28	Day 3
Saturday, February 29	Day 4
Monday, March 2	Day 5
Tuesday, March 3	Day 6
Wednesday, March 4	Day 7
Thursday, March 5	Day 8
Friday, March 6	Day 9
Saturday, March 7	Day 10
Monday, March 9	Day 11
Tuesday, March 10	Day 12
Wednesday, March 11	Day 13
Thursday, March 12	Day 14
Friday, March 13	Day 15
Saturday, March 14	Day 16
Monday, March 16	Day 17
Tuesday, March 17	Day 18
Wednesday, March 18	Day 19
Thursday, March 19	Day 20
Friday, March 20	Day 21
Saturday, March 21	Day 22
Monday, March 23	Day 23
Tuesday, March 24	Day 24
Wednesday, March 25	Day 25
Thursday, March 26	Day 26
Friday, March 27	Day 27
Saturday, March 28	Day 28
Monday, March 30	Day 29
Tuesday, March 31	Day 30
Wednesday, April 1	Day 31
Thursday, April 2	Day 32
Friday, April 3	Day 33
Saturday, April 4	Day 34
Monday, April 6	Day 35
Tuesday, April 7	Day 36
Wednesday, April 8	Day 37
Thursday, April 9 <i>Maundy Thursday</i>	Day 38
Friday, April 10 <i>Good Friday</i>	Day 39
Saturday, April 11 <i>Holy Saturday</i>	Day 40

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 1

Read through the service, The Ordination of a Deacon (BCP pages 536-551). Throughout the 40 days of meditation, keep this service available to follow along the reflections. Today, is there a specific word or phrase that caught your attention as never before? Read through that small section a second time. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you about the word or phrase and how it impacts your vows.

I am so surprised that there are words and ideas in this service that had not come to my attention previously. I am also shocked that what I thought was there is absent. Oh, why did I fail to notice this in the times I have read this service before today? Where else have I been putting my ideas and words instead of seeing and attending to what is before me?

O God, open my heart to your call, and strengthen me in my ordinal vows.

Day 2

The Examination (BCP page 543) "My brother, every Christian is called to follow Jesus Christ..."

What does it really mean "to follow." Who is this Jesus that I claim to be the pattern, the blueprint, the example of the life I am to live in my thoughts and behavior? Am I truly a reflection of him, or am I looking only at the few ways he aligns with me? Where is my selfish ego taking the lead?

Jesus, show me The Way, and give me the humility to joyfully follow.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 3

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...through the power of the Holy Spirit..."

The power of the indwelling love of God in me is a reality that I rarely acknowledge. Today, accepting the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as my guide in this calling is squarely in my sight. Do I truly trust that God would allow me to be a vessel from which this Holy Love can flow freely? Or, am I more often attempting to increase my knowledge about God, or trying to behave in ways that others will see me as meriting worthiness? Will I ever trust being empty and open to receive?

O God, open my heart and remove my self-centered desire to be acknowledged, valued, or rewarded by other people. Fill me with your life-giving spirit and increase my gratitude for your grace and love.

Day 4

The Examination (BCP page 543) "to a special ministry of servanthood..."

Who am I vowing to serve? It is God and God's ministry that I promise to serve. Am I truly, freely choosing to enter into this ministry? Or, am I being led by something other than gratitude for this grace of love and forgiveness I have received from God? Am I bringing an attitude of dour obligation, or righteous indignation, or heroism to this ministry? Or, am I, each day, responding to God's gifts with a joyful offering of myself into God's dream for the world?

O God, grant me courage to look honestly at my motivation and strengthen me in servanthood to you.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 5

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...all people..."

I am to serve all people. There are no qualifiers here. Do I really keep this promise? Or, do I think some folks don't need or deserve my service, care, and prayers? Are there some that cross my path who I believe are simply the responsibility of other clergy, other clergy orders, denominations, or faith? Do I think that only the financially poor or the obviously physically ill, or those in prisons are the only ones I am to serve? Do I need to guard against becoming just another who "crosses to the other side of the road" as justifying my actions under the guise of traditions or preferences that serve my self-interest?

Jesus, forgive me for failing to look for you in the face of every individual human being.

Day 6

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...particularly..."

Our Roman Catholic siblings in faith use the phrase, "with special attention to" instead of "particularly". Today, I remember that "particularly" does not mean "exclusively." I promised to serve all people, with some extra love for those who are struggling and suffering the most. Both expressions invite me to notice all people - those near me, and those throughout the world. Today, I remember that every person has some struggle and pain in life.

Jesus, help me today to give extra and specific attention to those who I can easily see are suffering. Increase my ability to see the suffering where it is less obvious or deeply hiding.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 7

The Examination (BCP page 543) “...the poor...”

Who do I think/believe are “the poor”? Why do I think that way? Do the ordinals say the financially poor? It just says, “poor”. Jesus, in the Beatitudes says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit...”

Protect me from my presumptions, Lord. Help me to see those who are also poor –

in spirit and hope,
in friends and family,
in education and opportunity,
in understanding, compassion and generosity,
in gratitude and joy.

Jesus, help me remember that “all people” really does mean all people, and all things related to people. Strengthen me in faith and love so that I will serve them so that others may see the light of your love shine through me.

Day 8

The Examination (BCP page 543) “...the weak...”

Who I think/believe are “the weak”? What in my life has formed me to think that way? Do the ordinals say the physically weak? Weak willed? What do I think makes a person weak?

Protect me from my presumptions, Lord. Help me to see those who are also weak –

in self-discipline and selflessness,
in kindness and tact,
in mind, body, and self-esteem,
in faith and hope
in taking a stand against oppression and evil.

Jesus, help me remember that “all people” really does mean all people, and all things related to people. Strengthen me in faith and love so that I will serve them so that others may see the light of your love shine through me.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 9

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...the sick..."

Isn't seeing the sick as plain as day? They are in the hospital, recuperating at home, or living with some illness. Why am I wondering who I think/believe are "the sick"? Is there more to being sick than I understand?

Protect me from my presumptions, Lord. Help me to see all those who are sick,

individuals who are sick -

in mind, in thought patterns and abusive behaviors;
those religions and other man-made systems, agencies, companies and
governments that need your healing;
the earth that suffers from our abuse.

Jesus, help me remember that "all people" really does mean all people, and all things related to people. Strengthen me in faith and love so that I will serve them so that others may see the light of your love shine through me..

Day 10

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...the lonely..."

She lives alone. He is mourning the loss of his beloved wife. Their loved one suffers the loneliness of Alzheimer's Disease. We know who is lonely – it is clearly shown in their downcast expression. Are there others who are lonely? What has formed my understanding of loneliness?

Protect me from my presumptions, Lord. Help me to see the lonely who –

I dislike;
serve in leadership positions which, by nature, isolates them;
boast and gloat;
so often complain and are defensive or angry;
insist that they have all the answers or must have their own way;
are ambitious, continually seek attention, or demand affirmation.

Jesus, help me remember that "all people" really does mean all people, and all things related to people. Strengthen me in faith and love so that I will serve them so that others may see your light of love shine through me.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 11

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...study..."

This word jumps out in a new way today. Have I fulfilled this promise? Have I made a practice of study, or have I merely spent minimal effort over the Holy Scriptures? When was the last time I actually studied them, engaged in deep discussion with colleagues, or consulted works of scholars and contemplatives?

O God, strengthen in me the self-discipline to daily study the Holy Scriptures, relying on not only my understanding, but seeking also the wisdom of other faithful followers.

Day 12

The Examination (BCP page 543) "... to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them..."

These words bring to mind the important lessons I learned in High School Home Economics, and college Biochemistry and Nutrition courses. Many things I ingest have little or no nutritional value – and some may be harmful. Also, a pattern for sewing an article of clothing might be appropriate for a prom dress, when what I need and want to make is a warm wool coat. Am I carefully taking in the best soul nourishment in the meaning of the scriptures, and opening my heart to transform my thoughts and behaviors to match the life pattern drawn by Jesus?

Jesus, you are the pattern that God provided for me to follow. Guide me in understanding scripture so that my soul will be properly nourished and my faith strengthened.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 13

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...make Christ....known..."

Oh, how I so often forget this important vow! Have I been so busy doing acts of charity and social justice that I fail to bring Jesus into the conversation? Am I becoming a 'Do-Gooder' only – failing to offer to others the transforming power of God through Jesus, the God Incarnate, Redeemer, teacher, and friend? Preaching the Gospel without words may be appropriate advice from St. Francis in some situations, but I have promised to make Christ known. The teaching, healing, transformative love from Jesus is what I have promised to follow and share.

Jesus, I pray that you will help strengthen my ability to be an evangelist for you in word and deed.

Day 14

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...make...and his redemptive love known"

How clearly do I explain, and how vividly do I show, what it means to know redemptive love? Do the people I contact each day hear and see that kind of love through me? Can they see that I am a person who continues to fall short, fall down, make mistakes, and, yet continually find hope in God's forgiveness? Am I more concerned with maintaining an image than revealing my trust and faith in second (and third, and fourth, and....) chances with the God I trust will forgive me?

O God, help me to always know deep in my heart the freedom and grace of Christ's redeeming love. May my gratitude for your love, forgiveness, and grace in my own life be a beacon for those needing your healing touch.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 15

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...by your word and example..."

Today, I particularly notice the "and". I vowed to do both. "By your word" means to preach, teach and write about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and their overwhelming relationship of love. And it is to be seen in all of my behaviors and relationships. Am I keeping that entire promise? Are there parts that I avoid because I don't like them, or struggle to do them? Are there things in my behaviors that shout to the world that I am a clanging cymbal? Do I avoid teaching, preaching, or parish ministries because I believe that I am only called to teach by my example of doing charitable acts through outreach? I made a vow.

O God, I need your help to overcome my reluctance to do what I have promised, and to become more fully aware of those shortcomings that hinder me. I ask for strength, courage, and patience to keep this sacred vow.

Day 16

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...those among whom I live..."

These are the people in my everyday life: neighbors, friends and family. These are the very people I love the most, who know me the most intimately, who see me at my worst, and who I disappoint the most deeply. These are the people who push my buttons, get on my last nerve, and who disappoint me the most deeply. These are the very people with whom I become the angriest and they generally have the greatest capacity to drive me to distraction. And, in these words, they are first, a priority, for receiving care, kindness, forgiveness, and ministry from me. Am I making Christ known to them?

Jesus, Help me to be always grateful for these special people that, by your grace, surround me each day. Help me to not take them for granted, and to remember to give them my best.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 17

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...and work..."

New York Mayor, Ed Koch, used to ask the city residents, "How'm I doin'?" So, I ask myself, "how am I doing" at letting Christ and his redemptive love be known at my work (place of employment, agency where I volunteer, home)? What is the best way to do that during a budget or strategic planning meeting? How can my students see that love when they are struggling to pass my class? Will my patients or clients experience Christ in my presence? When they ask about my life in faith, will I be able to share that in a way that they can hear?

Jesus, help me stay focused on you so that this promise has the opportunity to be fulfilled in my daily life.

Day 18

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...and worship..."

The parish family at my current assignment is the first community that comes to my mind. Are they able to see Christ and his redemptive love through me? Am I welcoming, accepting, forgiving, and affirming? Do they see a joyful, calm, approachable deacon before, during, and after the worship service? Or, can they only see a deacon focused on the details of worship and church? Do they experience a fussbudget, or a person of God who focuses on the spirit and welfare of the people?

O God, help me remember that I am to love all people, build them up, and strengthen them in service to you. Help me be an example of your redemptive love in word and deed as we worship together.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 19

The Examination (BCP page 543) “You are to interpret...”

The definition of interpretation is to bring out the meaning of something in a way that the listener/observer can understand. Am I remembering to speak about faith, the needs of others, and the business of the church with respect for those who listen? Am I creating an environment that allows them to understand the true, deeper meaning? Am I really encouraging them to speak, and am I listening to their doubts and questions in a way that is helpful? Or, am I sending signals of judgement, guilt, and inadequacy?

Lord, help me develop skills in communication, culture, and emotions so that I can interpret and translate your dream of a caring, compassionate, beloved community in ways that can create an opportunity for hearts to be transformed.

Day 20

The Examination (BCP page 543) “...the church...”

The church is more than a parish building. It is more than the diocese. It is more than the Episcopal Church, and more than the Anglican Communion. It is not a building at all. It is God’s church – that community of all believers. It is important to see my ordination into God’s service through the Church in a larger perspective. I cannot isolate the understanding of my vocation into just one, limited physical location. The call to ministry ripples out to all the edges of the community of believers.

Help me, Jesus, grow in my ability as an interpreter, in humility, and in confidence so that the dignity of the listener and the message of your ministry remain my focus. Keep my need for validation, attention, and the stroking of my ego in check, so that the ripples I send are clear, but not so strong as to damage people in the path.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 21

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...needs..."

"You can have anything you want, Sweetheart, as long as what you want is what you need." I hear my dad's words often when I debate myself when considering purchases. What are my 'needs'? Thinking about Maslow's Hierarchy caused me to wonder, and so I looked it up. To my surprise, I was reminded that this ranking of needs is in relation to motivation – rather than needs for maintaining life. Thinking of faith and the teachings of Jesus, the motivation for self-actualization was never his goal. Rather, he was teaching a selfless life. A refreshed definition of needs is being revealed to me, as I see that Maslow's premise a person's needs (drive for self-actualization) is in stark contrast to Jesus' teaching and example of self-emptying and the dying of self.

Jesus, open my eyes to see the needs that you see for all people in your world. Help me to respond with care, compassion, and dignity to those in need.

Day 22

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...concerns..."

Concern: something that pertains to a person; a matter that affects a person's welfare or happiness.

Concerns are personal. What affects the welfare of a person with diabetes is very different than that which affects a person awaiting a lung transplant. The concerns of the mother of a special needs child differ from those of the owner of a business who is struggling to pay employees and vendors in a difficult economic period. How am I to interpret these various concerns? How can I become more aware of the concerns of even those people that I may believe are self-sufficient? Am I respecting the dignity of every human being in making these interpretations?

O God, help me to see as you see. Grant me your help and guidance to gain wisdom and a greater awareness of the many concerns of your people.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 23

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...hopes..."

Hope – that deep feeling of expectation and trust - is so easily trampled by needs, concerns, worry and doubt. Am I an example of hope in my words and actions? Can the church see the world's hope for abundance and a flourishing life through me, or do I primarily show the negativity of want, lack, and scarcity? Am I truly proclaiming the Good News?

O God, protect me from falling into the trap of seeking only that which is absent. Help me to continually return to you, so that I may shine your light of life abundant. Help me be a beacon of hope so those around me see hope for themselves.

Day 24

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...of the world..."

How do I define the world? If the church is people and not a location, then the church can no longer be defined by structure. No longer is the church "inside the walls". So, where does the "world" begin? Jesus said that we are in the world but not of the world, so, then, I see that the world is everywhere we are. Perhaps "the world" in this examination refers to the temporal – the present physical reality for all people in our time on earth – and not merely to those people outside of the walls of our faith community.

Jesus, you said that we are in the world but not of the world. Help me see that the needs, hopes, and concerns of the world are everywhere – inside and outside the walls of the church. Guide me to show the community of believers that we are all called to care for the temporal needs of all people – both outside and inside the community of faith.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 25

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...to assist the bishop and priests..."

In what way am I called to assist, and exactly how do I assist? In my healthcare career, assisting one another is the only way we can adequately care for the ill and injured. We have differing jobs, or roles. The reality is that the tasks for those roles often overlap. I assume responsibility for the person in need as a full member of the team. Care of those who suffer is God's mission of the Church. Laity, deacons, priests, and bishops work together to care for the people and spread the Kingdom. We share that responsibility, and God's mission is our focus.

O God, help me to see the full, complete ministry of the diaconate, to appreciate the privilege of serving You, and to trust that this distinctive sacred order is of equal meaning and value with the other ordained orders.

Day 26

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...in public worship..."

How often do I downplay the role of the deacon in public worship? How often have I heard deacons say that parish ministry or public worship is just not an important part of the call of the deacon? When was the last time I studied the theology of the deacon in the worship services? When was the last time I actually read the rubrics and canons regarding the role and responsibility of the deacon in public worship? I have pledged to serve as a leader of worship.

O God, help me to know and fully live into the sacred order of deacons. Grant me confidence to lead worship as I have promised, and to take my place among the ordained ministers of the church. Guide me to also be respectful of ecclesiastical authority.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 27

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...ministration of God's Word..."

The root meaning of minister is "master" or "teacher". The "master/teacher" serves in a way that helps others learn. Learning, I am aware, will only occur in an environment of trust. Here, I promise to minister to (teach) others the Word. Jesus is the Word revealed. I promise here to teach scripture and traditions. I cannot choose to limit this obligation to merely reading the Gospel in the celebration of the Eucharist. I am called and promise to continue my study and learning so that I may share that with others.

Jesus, direct and lead me to become the master/teacher who is able to proclaim, preach, teach and live as an example of your life and Word.

Day 28

The Examination (BCP page 543) " ministration.....and Sacraments..."

I am to assist "in the ministration of....the Sacraments". It does not say that I assist the bishop and priests as they minister the Sacraments. I am to assist "in the ministration" of the Sacraments. And, it is plural – Sacraments. I am accepting an important responsibility for the spiritual care of the people. How familiar am I with what the rubrics and canons say I am promising to do? Have I developed the skills and abilities to administer those Sacraments?

O God, guide me to learn the full ministry of the sacred order of deacons. Give me patience with those who would limit my ability to respond to the spiritual needs of the people. Give me grace to respond fully where it will comfort those who suffer or are in need, and to yield where it will demonstrate your love.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 29

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...At all times, your life and teaching..."

The ordination vows commit my entire life to God and God's ministry in our world. Vows like ordination and marriage are an "all in" commitment. There is no time when I can separate myself from this way of life. It is how I commit to live each day. My life is an example to others, and I promise to teach. Teaching is added. It is separated from the example of my life. This promise draws my attention to both the example of my doing, and the active role of teaching – the inviting, calling, forming, and inspiring disciples to serve God in his world by caring for all in need or trouble. Every part of my life has been committed to ministry. Do I really know what I have promised God?

O God, guide me in all I do and am. Protect me from being overwhelmed; lead me in my daily walk; strengthen me in leading and teaching others; and keep my heart open to learning from you.

Day 30

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...show Christ's people..."

The ministry that I have committed to living is a formative example for Christians – to show them what Jesus means when he instructs us to serve. For so long the voices of some church leaders have been saying that I am to place my ministry focus and energy in the secular community rather than with Christ's people. But what is the actual vow to which I pledge my life? Serving is deeply rooted in my soul, and here the ordinals call me to focus that service on teaching, forming, and inspiring members of the Christian community to see the temporal needs of all people. How much more service, and how many more lives can be touched if I focus on fulfilling the actual vows I have made?

Jesus, grant me the courage and strength to fulfill the vows I have made.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 31

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...serving the helpless..."

Who are the helpless? In our individualistic, self-empowered society, do I really believe that there are helpless people? Certainly, there are almost no completely helpless people in my parish, service area, or local community. Except, our culture may say:

- the sick, well, unless their choices brought about the sickness...
- the poor, perhaps – but could they have done something different along the way...?
- those with physical handicaps – but then, with so many advances, they are so independent...

Our culture affects who I see as helpless. Who are the helpless – the powerless – near me? Where do I see the person who is powerless -

against the addiction that enslaves them;
against the belief that they are unlovable;
against the social systems that keep them in poverty;
against the cultural systems that keep them locked in unseen abusive relationships;
against the socio-economic classification, or narcissism that blinds them to the needs of others;
against the language patterns that have formed their thoughts of discrimination and status;
against the unchurched rearing that leaves them without conscience, trust, and faith in a loving God.

O God, open my eyes and heart to see the helplessness in each person and to reach out to them in ways they can hear. Give me confidence in knowing that helpless does not mean hopeless.

Day 32

The Examination (BCP page 543) "...serving Christ himself."

Am I truly looking for and recognizing the Christ in every person? It is so difficult to find Christ in some people, especially in those who seem to have the purposeful intent to discredit, disagree, disgrace, belittle or vilify me or others close to me? It is so difficult to serve Christ in those who seem to be so self-sufficient, sure, and smug. What is it in me that is urging me to put up defenses or blinders? Is it my overly demanding ego? Or, could it be pride, insecurity, or my need for acceptance?

Jesus, help me see more clearly my own needs, weaknesses, and shortcomings so that I can see past the shortcomings in others and serve them.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 33

The Examination (BCP page 543) “...commit yourself to this trust and responsibility?”

What have I pledged my life to do? Being entrusted with God’s ministry carries so much expectation and pressure. Accepting the onerous responsibility for furthering God’s dream, and for the care of God’s children is a bold and, perhaps, foolhardy, decision. One of my mentors explains that sacrifice happens when we give up something we love for something we love more. How does this sacrificial commitment affect my family and friends? It is a sacrifice for me, and it is a sacrifice for them, too. Likely, at ordination I did not recognize the full affect this sacrifice would have on our relationships. Am I entering fully into this sacrifice?

O God, be present in my sacrifice, and help my family and friends in theirs.

Day 34

The Examination (BCP page 543) :...guided by the pastoral direction and leadership of your bishop?”

Oh, how I want to take charge! I am called to be a leader; I see what needs to be done and want to get right to it. And, here, I am promising to be a follower of an earthly authority – to be guided by another human with faults like mine. That one word – pastoral – catches my attention. To be pastoral means to have the characteristics of a shepherd – gentle, guiding, caring, courageously protective. Why would I not want to be guided pastorally?

Jesus, help me remember that my bishop represents you, my Shepherd. Give me confidence in and respect for his/her guidance and leadership, knowing that all authority is granted by you.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 35

The Examination (BCP page 544) "...faithful in prayer..."

Some days seem so packed with things I must do that I don't make time to sit down and say prayers. In those times I am grateful for the words and practices of continuous prayer and contemplation from Brother Lawrence, Ron Delbene, and Richard Rohr that were introduced to me so many years ago. This definition of prayer opens to me other ways to pray that fit seamlessly into my life. Learning to be strict and thorough in keeping God as near as every breath is the only way I can begin to be constant, reliable, and faithful in prayer.

Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, and help me.

Day 36

The Examination (BCP page 544) "...wholesome example..."

I lost my temper. I responded harshly to a criticism. I ignored a needy person. I keep failing. When I think of wholesome as "having it all together" or being somehow close to perfect in behavior, I start falling apart. Wholesome – who knew that the origin of the word does not mean 'perfect'? It does mean 'a healthy sense', or 'of benefit to the soul'. A line from a Kris Kristofferson a song, 'Why Me Lord', that I heard, now rings in my head. "Maybe Lord, I can show someone else, what I go through myself, on my way back to you."

O God, help me have confidence that you can use these struggles, failings, and responses that continually turn me back to you. Help my faulty life be a benefit to those you have called me to serve.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 37

The Examination (BCP page 544) "...seek not your glory but the glory of the Lord Christ..."

It seemed like an easy task to count the number of times I used the pronoun "I" in one day (2 so far in this meditation!). That little counter just kept clicking all day, and I feel sure there were even more that were missed. (3). This challenge was more difficult than I thought it would be (4). In just one day, it became crystal clear that there was so much focus on me, and on being noticed, acknowledged, and valued. I was totally unaware that there was so much seeking of my own glory (5). The day taught me something important and I need to learn it again each day (6).

Jesus, you ask us to die to ourselves and live in you. Help me to seek only your glory.

Day 38

The Consecration (BCP page 545) "...modest and humble...")

It is so nice to receive a compliment, but for most of my life I struggled with how to respond. Not wanting to appear immodest or conceited, I would brush off compliments with, "Oh, it's nothing," or some similar comment. That is, until a crusty old gentleman responded to one of those responses with, "What? Do you think I'm too stupid to know good when I see it?" Busted. It had never occurred to me that my attempts at modesty and humility were insulting to those offering a kind word. Becoming aware that being free from vanity and ego (being modest), and not proud nor arrogant (being humble), are about knowing the true source of my gifts and talents. That source is NOT me. Self-deprecating, self-effacing, coy replies are now replaced with "Thank you," and a silent prayer of thanksgiving to God.

Thank you, God, for calling me to serve your children and letting your light shine through me. It is a privilege.

Meditations on The Ordination of a Deacon
Forty Days of Reflection

Marti Holmes

Day 39

The Consecration (BCP page 545) "...strong and constant..."

Jesus, was falsely accused, beaten, derided, tortured, and killed. Fully man and fully divine, he was strong and constant, in good times and in the very worst, most tragic moments. In my life in this ministry to which I have been called, I promise to be strong and constant in so many things – faith, prayer, study, worship, teaching, proclaiming, and serving.

O God, I pray that each time I fail to be strong and constant that you will lift me up to try again. Take my trials and use them to increase my strength and resolve.

Day 40

The Consecration (BCP page 545) "...through *him* many may come to know and love you."

Almighty God, it is my entire life that I offer in service to you and your ministry of Love. Help me stay focused on this call to ordained ministry so that you and your reconciling love may be known to those I serve. I pray that your light shines through me as I offer back to you the gifts and talents you have bestowed upon me. May my life benefit each and every person you place in my path, and may I see you in each of them.