

Humility

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"Thank you, Deacon, that was a beautiful homily." "Thanks for visiting my mother, you are wonderful." You are generous, you are a good man, you are kind, you are....

Sometimes we find ourselves accepting praise with something other than a humble heart, and even go searching for it.

There's a story about a deacon who was on a three-hour flight from New York who encountered an elderly priest he did not know.

"Is this 17A," said the elderly priest, looking at his ticket and then at the man sitting next to the window and praying the Liturgy of the Hours.

"Yes," said the man, pulling himself together, and picking up *Deacon Digest* and his Bible from the empty seat and stepping out into the aisle to let the priest take his window seat.

"Father, I'm Deacon Lou Blue," he said a few moments later, closing his Breviary.

"I'm pleased to meet you, Mr. Blue," said the elderly man.

"That's Deacon Blue."

"Have you been ordained long?"

"Five years," came the response, "and they have been the most wonderful and marvelous years of my life," said the deacon, launching into the story of his life, the importance of his ministry, how his pastor cannot do without him, how parishioners love him, praise his homilies and can really relate to him.

As the flight continued, he offered his analysis of the crisis in the priesthood and the shortage of priests -- including how deacons bring new life to the Church and a new understanding of vocation -- and the absolute need for the bishops of the United States to do this that or something else, etcetera and so forth.

"Thank you. It has been very enlightening to share this time with you, Lou," said the elderly priest as they were preparing to deplane.

"That's Deacon Lou, Father. Give me a call if you are ever in the area," said the deacon, pulling a business card from his pocket.

As he came through the gateway to the waiting area, the deacon noticed a cluster of TV cameras and stylishly dressed media people. Curious, he asked some of the people standing by what was happening.

"They're here for the visiting cardinal from Rome," they said.

Looking back, the deacon saw the media people crowded around the elderly priest he had just "entertained" for the past three hours.

Jesus warns that when we do good deeds in order to be seen and win praise, then we have already received our reward. See Matthew 6:1-21.

As the most majestic trees are rooted in nutrient bearing soil, humility is rooted in prayer. In prayer, we are humble before God and come to know who we are, realizing that all the talents we have are gifts from God. The one who is humble is true to himself, knows who he is and has no need to pretend to be something other, nor to draw the favorable attention of others.

Let us be always aware that we are heralds of Christ Jesus, who is meek and humble of heart.