

There are no part-time deacons

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No one is a part-time deacon. Once the bishop has imposed hands on a man to ordain him to service as a deacon, he is always and everywhere a deacon.

Whether he is sitting quietly at prayer, in a classroom, at the altar, helping a troubled neighbor, visiting the sick, in the supermarket or the mall, preparing a couple for marriage or parents for the Baptism of their newest child, on the job or at home mowing the lawn, filling the dishwasher or sitting at the kitchen table with his wife enjoying a quiet dinner for two, he is still a deacon.

Always and everywhere, we are deacons ordained to ministry and called to be conformed to the image of Christ the Servant who came not to be served but to serve. We are called in every place and every hour to bring the presence of Christ to people who do not know Him, who ignore Him or scorn Him.

St. Francis of Assisi, our brother in the Order of Deacons, once told his followers to go out into the world and preach the Gospel, but to use words only if they must. And so it is for us. It is our actions, more than our words, which bring the presence of Christ into a world that longs for the love of God.

At the Jubilee for Deacons held in Rome during the Millennial Year 2000, a deacon from France was among five men to speak about their diaconal experiences. He spoke of the “diakonia of the drops of water.” It is a simple message we should all take time to ponder.

As the deacon at Mass prepares the chalice for the priest, pouring the wine and adding a little bit of water, he says to himself: “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity.”

As we serve at the altar and prepare the chalice by pouring a few drops of water into the wine that will become the Blood of Christ, it seems like an almost insignificant gesture. Like those drops of water, we are drawn into the mystery of Christ and nothing we do is insignificant when we bring ourselves as witnesses to Christ into the sacrificial offering.

In the “diakonia of the drops of water,” what we bring to the altar is ourselves, who we are, not our titles, not our job descriptions, not our achievements. We come in humility, knowing that we are flawed images of the Lord who came to serve, but knowing all the same that we have been called and ordained and graced in the Sacrament of Service, to live a ministry of Word, Liturgy and Charity.

As we near Ordination Day 2003, let us remember the “diakonia of the drops of water,” and that it is who we are, in our struggles and our failures, and ultimately as faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus, that we join ourselves in the drops of water in the wine that becomes the Blood of Christ.