

The man in the mirror is...

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A wise and holy man once told me that when it comes to living his life in Christ, he pays no attention to the attitudes and opinions of others. It matters not, he said, what his colleagues and co-workers think, nor is he swayed by the views of friends and family.

When he gets up each morning, said this wise man, it is he who looks into the mirror, into his eyes, and asks if today he is closer to the image of Christ in his life than he was yesterday. Unless the image of Christ is more clear, he said, he is drifting away from keeping Christ at the center of his life and reflecting more surely the image of Christ in his words and his actions.

As Christians, baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, we live with Christ and die with Him. In Baptism, we "put on Christ," and, in the words of St. Paul, "to me, to live is Christ." (Phil 1:21) and now "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me (Gal 2:20). As children of God and partakers in the divine nature (2 Pt 1:4), we are called to live lives worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told His disciples and He tells us: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Mt 5:48). As more than one commentator has said, that is Jesus' call to us to be transformed into an image of God's own holiness so that we may transform the world into the Kingdom of God.

That is a daunting task, but nonetheless it is our lifelong work, the goal of our lives here and now. It begins with changing ourselves or, rather, letting ourselves be changed, letting ourselves be made over into the image of Jesus Christ, the ever-faithful Son of God, who "humbled Himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross." (Phil 2: 8)

We do not work alone in this great task of life. It is only possible through the grace of God and the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to follow Christ, to be united with Him, and "can strive to be 'imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love' by conforming [our] thoughts, words and actions to the 'mind... which is yours in Christ Jesus,' and by following His example." (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 1694)

As deacons, we are called to live in the image of Christ the Servant. In the Prayer of Consecration during the ordination of a deacon, the Bishop asks God to send His Holy Spirit on the ordinandi that they may be strengthened by His grace to carry out faithfully the work of ministry.

"May he excel in every virtue: in love that is sincere, in concern for the sick and poor, in unassuming authority, in self-discipline, and in holiness of life. May his conduct exemplify your commandments and lead your people to imitate his purity of life. May he remain strong and steadfast in Christ, giving to the world the witness of a pure conscience. May he in this life imitate your Son, who came, not to be served but to serve, and one day reign with Him in heaven."

May our prayer be that we always remain faithful in following Jesus and reflecting His image in our lives and ministry.