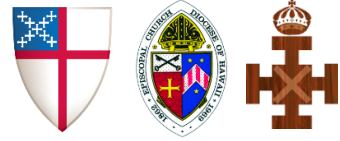


From the Bishop

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick
The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i



A DEACON'S CALLING

May 11, 2023

Na ke aloha o ke Akua ma loko o Iesu Kristo, e aloha iā 'oukou ā pau!

I have long prayed for more vocational Deacons in this Diocese. Such Deacons are called to a particular ordained ministry that is different than those of Priest or a Bishop who pass through a transitional diaconate. Who is truly called to be a vocational Deacon?

The purpose of all ordained ministry is to support the life and ministry of all the Baptized to engage God's mission of reconciliation in the world. The Catechism (see page 855 of the Book of Common Prayer) instructs that "[t]he ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church."

So, the question is: How does the Deacon support the ministry of lay persons? Again, the Catechism says (see page 856): "The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments." At ordination, the Deacon is called upon to "interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world" and then the Deacon promises to "look for Christ in all others, being ready to help and serve those in need" (see the Deacon's ordination on pages 543-544).

The Deacon stands at the boundary of the Church and of the community to call God's people into the community, to serve those in need, and to bring the concerns of the community back into the center of the Church's life. The Deacon renews the Church by reminding God's people – lay and ordained – of the needs, hopes, and fears of those not immediately in our midst.

For me, the model of the diaconate is St. Francis of Assisi (d. 1226). Yes, blessed Francis was a Deacon. He recalls for me three essential qualities that mark a Deacon:

1. **Servanthood:** The Deacon reminds the Church of our basic role as servant to others. This requires humility. Unlike others, the Deacon can be moved from congregation to congregation by the Bishop as the need arises. The Deacon must be adaptable to different environments and to working with different people (clergy, lay people, those in the community, and those in need). Like Francis, the Deacon witnesses to the servanthood of Christ Jesus.
2. **Joyousness:** The role of the Deacon, in bringing the world to the Church and the Church into the world, requires a sense of humor. Francis had to preach to the birds when no

human being would listen and could sing a song of God's love when no one was around. The Deacon needs the resilient joy to call to a Church that sometimes doesn't listen and to continue to serve when the problems of the world seem overwhelming. Giving it all over to Christ with a smile, the Deacon is a holy pain in the neck to the Church, fellow clergy and, even, the Bishop.

3. Caring for the forgotten: Francis modeled care of the outcast as he ministered to lepers. The Deacon is Christ's eyes to see the unwanted and the forgotten, Christ's voice to call the Church to respond, and Christ's hand to show us how to respond.

Are you called to be a Deacon? Do you know someone in your congregation who is already fulfilling a Deacon's ministry that we need to call out for ordination?

You will be hearing much more about the vocational diaconate over the next few months. Until then, I would welcome hearing from anyone in the Diocese about a possible vocation as a Deacon. Please contact me at "[Ask the Bishop!](#)" if you have any questions or thoughts.

Aloha ma o Iesu Kristo, ko makou Haku,

+Bob

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick
(Pronouns: he, him, his)

Bishop Diocesan
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