

Baltimore archdiocese deacon candidates ‘trust the Holy Spirit’s timing of that call’

FULTON - Deacons and candidates for that ministry alike agree that the timeless call to serve transcends any crisis facing the Catholic Church.

That was among the takeaways from a Deacon Day of Enrichment Oct. 6 at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Howard County, where approximately 25 deacons of the Archdiocese of Baltimore renewed their vows, and another 13 entered their admission to candidacy for holy orders.

That came during a morning Mass celebrated by Bishop Mark Brennan, who afterward led a candid open forum about the state of the church in the wake of the clergy sexual abuse scandal, and the role of deacons in that church.

The 13 have completed a year in discernment to confirm their calling, and are in the first of three years of formation, which includes assignments in parishes, hospitals and other ministries.

In his homily, Bishop Brennan reminded the candidates of the importance of the roles they serve during that process.

“The community of disciples, the church, has got to get to know you, and see how you respond,” he said. “If you are to serve God’s people now, you must seek the Lord’s faith in daily, personal prayer. If you do. ... you will be equipped interiorly to haul in a great catch for the Lord for your diaconal service. You will be able to say confidently, ‘Here I am. Send me.’”

During the open forum with deacons, candidates and their wives, Bishop Brennan cited the Gospel of Mark when was asked about prayer for the aspirants.

“The model for us as priests is the same one that we have as parents have for their children,” he said. “In fact, we can use children as models for us as adults. ... We

must provide affection and love, and be a blessing to them.”

Concelebrants included Father Michael Triplett, pastor of Lady of Grace Parish in Parkton and director of deacon formation, who said the diaconal ministry is “all about service.”

Two men in their third year of formation spoke afterward of that commitment, in the light of the issues raised during the open forum.

“The mission hasn’t changed at all,” Jack McCabe said. “The dynamic of what the spotlight is looking at has, but we are here to believe what we read, teach what we read, and practice what we teach.

“There’s a call, and if you trust the Holy Spirit enough to hear the call, then you have to trust the Holy Spirit’s timing of that call. We were called to be in this ministry of charity at this time, because that is a need that exists in the church right now.”

Chuck Hoppe, meanwhile, said, “We’re the people running into the fire. It does not change the mission that we are stepping into. We are still the ministers of charity, helping and preaching the word. That mission hasn’t changed.”

Deacon Kevin Reid, liaison to the deacon community in the Office of Clergy Personnel, sees deacons as essential, describing them as the “bridge between the people of God and the church. (They) are very much involved in the efforts to restore faith in the church.”

After lunch, St. Francis of Assisi parishioner Bob McCarty, author of “Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics” (St. Mary’s Press of Minnesota, 2018), led a three-part discussion focused on his research regarding disaffiliation, the stories of the young Catholics he interviewed, and his recommendations on creating a religious identity in a secular world.

He spoke about the need for Catholic leaders to change their approach in ministering to young Catholics.

“The territory for pastoral ministry has changed in the last 15-20 years,” he said.

“We need humility and wisdom to look at the territory and see where we need to change the map.”

*For more information about becoming a deacon in the Baltimore Archdiocese, visit the **Clergy Personnel Division page**.*