

Deacon Convocation - Homily Reflections

With the pastors present, I express to you the deep gratitude of so many for your continued service to souls. The word “continued” is used to signify that your participation in the life of the Archdiocese in so many ways and your prayers are still necessary and important parts of the ways in which you provide a valued assistance in support of the mission of the Church.

The deacon is the Church’s great servant, as you learned many years ago, in preparing for ordination. The Greek word from which “deacon” is derived denotes service, indeed obedient service.

The gospel passage is a familiar one. The five wise virgins were ready when the Master came and they are to be models for us, reminders that we do not know when the Lord will come, but, whenever he does come, we should be ready and waiting.

The great saints teach us attitudes that can be keys to happiness and the ultimate success which is salvation. St. Francis of Assisi has been called the “most saintly of the Italians and the most Italian of the saints.”

In the Fioretti of St. Francis of Assisi there is a story told about Brother Masseo who wanted to test the humility of St. Francis, so he asked him, “Why after you? Why after you? Why after you?”

St. Francis asked him what he meant by the repeated question. “I mean, why does all the world seem to be running after you, and everyone wants to see you and hear you and obey you. You are not a handsome man. You do not have great learning or wisdom. You are not a nobleman. So why is all the world running after you?”

On hearing this, St. Francis rejoiced greatly in spirit, and he raised his face toward Heaven and stood for a long time with his mind absorbed in God.

Coming back to himself, he genuflected and praised and gave thanks to God. Then with great fervor of spirit he turned to Brother Masseo and said: “You want to know

why after me? You really want to know why everyone is running after me? ...God did not find on earth a viler creature, and therefore he chose me, for God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the base things of the world and the despised, to bring to naught the noble and great and strong, so that all excellence in virtue may be from God and not from the creature, in order that no creature should glory before Him, but 'let him who takes pride, take pride in the Lord,' that honor and glory may be only God's forever."

At this Eucharist, when we together say, "O Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof," may the Lord hear us and deepen in our hearts true humility before God.

Cardinal William H. Keeler