

Three ordained to transitional diaconate for Archdiocese of Baltimore

Just before he ordained them to the transitional diaconate, Archbishop William E. Lori had some advice for William Keown, John Streifel and John Martínez.

Pray. Pray hard. Pray without ceasing.

“It’s not enough to be a professional prayer,” the archbishop said in his homily at their May 27 ordination Mass at the Baltimore Basilica.

“After all, we are only the Lord’s agents,” he continued. “We plant the seeds of faith - we water them and tend them - but it is the Lord who gives the growth in answer to our prayers.”

What does constant prayer look like?

“Ensure that every day includes holy Mass, the breviary, a holy hour and the rosary,” the archbishop said. On top of that, “punctuate your day with prayer, with meditation and with praise.”

Constant prayer, the archbishop emphasized, is a core requirement of the diaconate, and key to meeting the other two - being “gentle in ministry” and “effective in action” - for which the assembled prayed in the liturgy’s opening.

The faithful filled the basilica for the joyful occasion, and the seminarians of the archdiocese - as well as approximately 20 permanent deacons and 45 priests - came in support of Deacons Keown, Martínez and Streifel, who, God willing, will be

ordained to the priesthood in 2018.

Archbishop Lori, the main celebrant, was joined by Cardinal Edwin F. O'Brien, archbishop emeritus of Baltimore and grand master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, as well as Bishops Adam J. Parker and Mark E. Brennan, auxiliary bishops of Baltimore, and Bishop Denis J. Madden, auxiliary bishop emeritus of Baltimore.

Deacons Keown, Martínez and Streifel placed their hands in the archbishop's, promising to be obedient and respectful to him and his successors. They lay prostrate before the altar, a sign of their complete dependence on God, while the faithful chanted the Litany of Supplication, asking the communion of saints to intercede on behalf of the three men.

Finally, Deacons Keown, Martínez and Streifel knelt before the archbishop, who placed his hands on their heads, conferring on them the Holy Spirit. Archbishop Lori completed the sacrament with the Prayer of Ordination, and the men were vested with the diaconal stole and dalmatic.

"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become," the archbishop told them as he gave each the Book of the Gospels. "Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach."

"I'm very proud of my son," said Carol Keown, who had traveled from Hendersonville, Ky., for Deacon Keown's ordination.

She said she was "very surprised" when he told her he was being called to be a priest.

"It's a big sacrifice," she said.

After his ordination, Deacon Keown acknowledged some nerves during the drive to the basilica, but they were short-lived.

“Now I feel a great deal of peace and joy about this ministry I’m about to begin,” he said.

As for Deacon Martínez, his joy overrode everything else.

“I’m more than happy – I don’t know what to say,” he blurted before bursting into laughter and continuing to hug well-wishers.

Deacon Martínez’s sister, Karen Martínez, said she was happy for and inspired by her brother.

“For me, it’s amazing,” she said. “He does everything for God.”

Both of Deacon Streifel’s parents are deceased, but Ronald and Christy Cheeks, parishioners of St. James in Boonsboro, his home parish, attended the ordination.

After Deacon Streifel’s 2011 graduation from Mount St. Mary’s University in Emmitsburg, he discerned his vocation to the priesthood while working at the Cheeks’ home improvement company, More Than a Carpenter, a name that references both a commitment to going above and beyond and to Christian principles.

Ronald Cheeks said that “he could tell not long after I met him” that Deacon Streifel was on the path to the priesthood.

“I know he’s been told by many people, since he was younger, that he should be a priest,” Cheeks said.

Deacon Streifel said he was “overjoyed” to make the penultimate step toward the

priesthood.

“Sometimes you think you might not make it - the seminary gets hard sometimes - but this is a wonderful, joyful, spirit-filled beginning to the culmination of formation,” he said, adding that he is looking forward to “discovering and unpacking” his role as a deacon in the days to come.

Deacon Streifel will be serving his diaconate year at St. Ignatius in Hickory. Deacon Keown will serve at St. Margaret in Bel Air and Deacon Martínez at St. John in Westminster.