

## **We Are All Deacons, or Should Be.**

By Deacon Joe Sandrini  
Director of Diaconal Formation

The entire Church: clergy and laity, rich and poor, old and young - all are called to the diakonia (servant works) of Christ. This means none of us can honestly call ourselves Christian unless we live out Jesus' acts of service in our own lives. Failing to serve others, while claiming to be His disciple, only makes us liars to ourselves and the world.

Wow, that's pretty stark - pretty black and white! What about just being a good person, loving God and believing in Jesus? Well, that is important and part of the equation. However, Jesus lays out pretty plainly the terms and conditions of discipleship (what it takes to be a Christian), and they are not quite that simple. Also included is to love your neighbor and enemy. Wanting and working for what is best for them, not yourself, and helping them to humanly flourish.

This means we need to be like Jesus and put some flesh on our love - to be personally present and make His love real in the world. We do this, as Christ teaches, through performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Serving others from a life lived in light of the Beatitudes.

Of course, being self forgetful in the service of others is not something that comes naturally to most folks. Our fallen nature inhibits this. Jesus knows that, and He provides us the help we need through grace. His gifts which strengthen and guide us to become the children of God we are meant to be. It is also why the Lord, throughout Scripture and His Gospel, reminds us that prayer, fasting and alms giving help foster a spirit of selflessly serving others. They hone the cutting edge of our ability to serve by drawing us into closer relationship with Him.

In part, this is why we are asked in our Lenten commitments to embrace prayer, fasting and alms giving. To be drawn more deeply into the mystery of Christ, being formed in His image precisely through increased humility and trust in our heavenly Father. Then so strengthened, we are better able to go out into the world as Christ's eyes and ears; hands and feet; embracing arms and proclaiming lips – A Church that really is the body of Christ serving those most in need.

This is what makes each and every one of us a disciple and a deacon. People fortified by grace who live out the servant mysteries of Christ.

However, as Deacon James Keating has noted, “In order for the diaconate to be internalized in the theological imagination of the Church, (ordained) deacons have to suffer the coming of Christ as characterized within their own hearts. This suffering is diaconal formation.” That means for the rest of us to recognize, embrace and live out the Church’s diaconal mission, our ordained deacons must be well formed and exemplary in their vocation to service. They must be living icons of Christ the Servant, leading examples and encouragers of servant ministry.

Responding to the ongoing need to foster a diaconal spirit in our Church, beginning in September the Diocese will prepare a group of men over the course of five years to be ordained permanent deacons. Your prayer, fasting and alms giving are needed to help this become reality. And, one way you can materially help is to consider increasing your annual gift to the Living and Giving in Christ campaign. Part of the funds raised help meet the nearly quarter of a million dollars the entire diaconal formation program is projected to cost.

On the other hand, maybe you are a man who is really drawn to the servant mysteries of Christ. A man the Holy Spirit might be calling to consider the permanent diaconate as a vocation. If so, hopefully you were able to attend one of the five diaconate information meetings recently concluded. While important, attendance at one of those meetings was not mandatory. But what is required, if you think you may at least be called to look into the diaconate, is that you submit your application material for Aspirancy by May 1, 2016. The information you need and application forms are all available on the deacon’s page of the diocesan website (<http://www.dioceseofcheyenne.org/Vocations/diaconate.html>). If you have any questions, please contact Deacon Joe Sandrini by e-mailing [jsandrini@dioceseofcheyenne.org](mailto:jsandrini@dioceseofcheyenne.org) or telephoning 307-275-0641.