

Sermon for Diaconal Ordination on 4 October 2025
Feast of St. Francis, St. Mark's Cathedral, Seattle WA
Preacher: The Rev. Lynette Poulton Kamakura, Deacon
Job 39:1-18; Psalm 121; Acts 4:32-35, 5:1-11;
Luke 12:13-21

In the words of St. Francis, let us pray: Almighty, most high and supreme God, Father, holy and just, Lord, King of heaven and earth, we give you thanks for yourself. Of your own holy will you created all things spiritual and physical, made us in your own image and likeness, and gave us a place in paradise, through your only Son, in the Holy Spirit. Amen.¹

Please be seated.

So, Laura, are you ready? Today we are here to celebrate the entry of Laura into Holy Orders, the beginning of her ordained ministry, but just another step along her life-long spiritual journey. We will be hearing a lot today about the diaconate—one of my favorite topics. We are also celebrating the Feast of St. Francis, himself known as a friar and a deacon, so there should be a bit about him in the sermon as well. Of course, as good Episcopalians, we should include our scriptures. And the message to Laura, our ordinand. And, as we have been taught, all good sermons should include a wonder question. So here is mine, I wonder how I am supposed to fit all of this—St. Francis and deacons, scripture and ordinand, into a single sermon. Oh, and by the way, all this in 15 minutes or less, preferably less.

One of the first lessons deacons, or anyone preparing sermons, has to learn, is to keep the Holy Spirit on speed-dial. To develop the kind of relationship with her so that, when we face a blank page, we are able to ask for help and, perhaps most importantly, to listen to what the Spirit has to say.

What kept coming to mind as I meditated and prayed was a distillation, a condensed version, that we, in the Episcopal tradition, often use to describe the work of a deacon. Many of you will recognize it—feel free to join in. The deacon is to bring the world into the church, and to carry the church into the world. Bring the world into the church, and carry the church into the world. It's a great motto, parallel structure, repeated nouns, but just what does this mean. Let's take a look.

Bring the world into the church. How? How does a deacon bring the great big beautiful messy world into this sacred space? What does that look like? Deacons do this, in part, by teaching, by preaching, by reminding, most importantly, using fancy church words, by exhorting. In plain English, by nagging, continually, insistently, often annoyingly, nagging about the hard things, the difficult things, the broken things in our

¹ <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit-blog/holy-quotes>

world. By making sure that those of us sitting here today in our fancy clothes, having enjoyed a good breakfast before driving over here in our personal vehicles, by reminding us that there are those who do not have food.

There are those who do not have clean clothes. There are those who do not have shelter or beds, much less functioning cars. There are those who are living in fear, each and every day, fear for their lives. Fear of deportation. Fear of losing their jobs. Fear of getting sick and not having the money for treatment. There are those in our country, in our communities, who deal with racism, with sexism, with homophobia, with transphobia, with all the other -isms and -phobias that litter our society.

There are parents with children of color, with children who are members of the queer community, with children who are immigrants, there are parents who live each and every day in fear for the safety, much less the well-being, of their kiddos. There are broken, hurting, and hurtful people out there in the world, who are doing awful things, sometimes even in the name of the God we love, and it is a deacon's job to keep this, all of this, front and center in our worship.

Now, most of us, most of us, when we come to church on a Sunday morning, are coming to put aside our earthly trials and tribulations for a while. We come for a few moments of peace, of beautiful music, of quiet prayer, of supportive community. And it is the role, the responsibility, of the deacon to enter into this church and shake things up a bit. To remind us that, while God is the God of Love, God is also the God of Justice, the God of Peace, the God of Healing. So those deacon sermons are not always (actually, not often) sweetness and light. Rather, they are hard-hitting and true. A bit like Jesus in the temple, turning over the tables and driving the moneychangers out with whips.

Or in our gospel today, the deacon is the one who reminds us that we do not have years to relax, eat, drink and be merry. That we are not supposed to store up treasures for ourselves, that we are supposed to be out there, in the world, giving of ourselves, loving justice, showing mercy, walking humbly with our God, that we are called upon to be rich, not in worldly goods, but rich toward God.

As you may have guessed, the deacon is not always the most popular speaker. Their sermons can, and probably should, make us uncomfortable. Using terminology that those of us raised in evangelical traditions recognize, the deacons' sermon convict. They leave us squirming our seats, but they don't just dump on us with problems. Rather, the deacons' sermons will also assure us that God is the God of Hope and Expectation. They will remind us that God's work is not confined to one hour on Sunday, but rather goes with us, all of us, with us, and through us, and in us, out those doors.

Which brings us to the second part of the deacons' job—carrying the church into the world. Once again, what does this mean, in practical terms? What does this look like? What does a deacon actually *do*? The answer to that is, a lot, and a lot of different things.

For some, the work is finding shelter for the unhoused. For some, it's entering the prisons, walking beside those who are incarcerated, sharing the message of redemption, reconciliation, and hope. For some, it's feeding the hungry, organizing and running food banks, making up and handing out lunches, raising money for feeding programs. For some, it's mentoring kids, reading with them, helping with after-school programs.

For some, it's working in hospitals as chaplains, as volunteers in spiritual care, walking beside those who are struggling with addiction, with depression, with their relationships or their mental health. Para algunos de nosotros, es trabajar con inmigrantes, refugiados, aquellos que buscan asilo, haciéndolos bienvenidos en nuestro país.

For many, for most, it's advocacy, making signs, attending rallies, marching and chanting and singing in solidarity with those in need, loudly and publicly pushing for change. And always, always, it is bringing the love and justice and peace and hope of God with us into this broken and hurting world.

Now, I'm sure that, at this point, many of you are glad that you are not Laura, that you won't be required to bring the world into the church, and to carry the church out into the world. But guess what, you are not off the hook on this one. Because, as my southern relatives say, all y'all, you *are* the church, we *are* the church.

The job of the deacon is to call our attention to the brokenness, the hurt, the needs of the world. And to carry us, the church, to carry us, to guide us, to encourage us, sometimes to drag us, kicking and screaming, back out into that world, to share the love of God.

The deacon does not do this work alone. Not even just the deacon and the Holy Spirit. Rather, the deacon works *with* the church, to center the marginalized, the needy, the afflicted, to assist us all in our tasks of spreading God's love and peace in our homes, our neighborhoods, our communities.

St. Francis understood the deacon's role. In Chapter XVII of his Rule of 1221², Francis told the friars to make sure they had proper permission before they preached. Then he added, "Let all the brothers, however, preach by their deeds." "Let all, preach by their deeds. Sometimes, this is translated, "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words when necessary." Sometimes deacons use words. Always, we act, we do, we make and build and lift and carry. We preach the gospel with our hands and our feet, with our arms and our backs, we preach the gospel by our deeds.

So, Laura, in a few minutes, you will take your ordination vows and be welcomed into the community of deacons. And after the congratulations and the pictures and

² Capdox.capuchin.org.au

maybe a bit of cake, you will go out into the world to formally carry out the ministry that has been in your heart for so long.

As St. Francis has encouraged and with Bishop Phil's agreement, you will have permission to preach the Gospel, the Good News. You will be able to stand in the pulpit and remind those of us in the pews that all, including the marginalized, the excluded, those still outside the church doors, all are loved by God. And you will be commissioned to carry that message of love and hope and healing out into the world. To spread God's riches all around. Using words, when necessary, but always, always, always, with the generous sharing of yourself. Amen.