

**REMARKS OF ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE, APOSTOLIC NUNCIO,
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE LITURGY FOR THE 16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
NATIONAL DIACONATE CONGRESS,
CATHEDRAL OF ST. LOUIS, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, JULY 22, 2018**

My dear friends,

Having been nourished by Word and Sacrament, our hearts should be prepared to transform the world, having been first loved by God. We can now hand on the gifts that we have received, particularly to the poor and vulnerable – to those who live at the peripheries or margins of our society.

Writing the preface to a book by an Italian permanent deacon, Enzo Petrolino, Pope Francis suggested that the diaconal ministry must be lived as an integrating part of the work done by the Council to prepare the whole Church for a renewed apostolate in the world today” and that permanent deacons could be defined as “pioneers of the new civilization of love.” Recalling that Pope John Paul II said that “service of diaconal ministry finds its identity in evangelizing,” Pope Francis noted that “The Church finds in the permanent diaconate the expression and, at the same time, the impulse to become itself a visible sign of the *diakonia* of Christ the Servant in the history of mankind.” (Pope Francis, Preface to *Il Diaconato nel pensiero di Papa Francesco*, 2017).

It is one thing to serve at the altar, it is another to be an evangelizing force in the world. In my travels throughout the United States, I have seen how permanent deacons contribute to the vitality of the Church through their humble and generous service. The deacons I have met have been able co-workers with their bishops, priests, and the laity in many dimensions of ecclesial life, especially apostolic works; sacramental preparation, including marriage preparation; hospital and prison chaplaincy; and in many other important ministries.

With generosity, permanent deacons have served as men of communion, modeling Christ the Servant, to those at the peripheries, especially to the poor. It is my sincere hope that you – with the help of your families and pastors and in communion with your bishops – will continue to bring the joy of the Gospel to the whole world.

As we conclude Mass and mindful of your specific vocation, I invite you to reflect on the words of the dismissal said by the deacon at the end of each Mass:

- Go, forth; the Mass is ended: Be a missionary as one who is sent by Christ and by the Church to evangelize;
- Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord: Be a herald of the Good News, bringing glad tidings to the poor and broken-hearted;
- Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life: Be transformed by the mysteries you have received and renew your commitment to holiness that all may see your good works and glorify the heavenly Father; and, finally,
- Go in peace: Go in the power of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus breathed on the Apostles on the evening of the Resurrection as he offered them the gift of peace. Share the peace of Christ with all those whom you meet – your family, your friends, and even your enemies. Be instruments of the gift of peace.

The response of the faithful to the dismissal by the deacon is “Thanks be to God.” Let me then say once more, “Thank you” and “Thanks be to God” for you and your service to the Church.

Grateful for the ministry of so many permanent deacons and for all those who have supported them – bishops, priests, the wives and families of deacons, and parishioners – the Holy Father paternally imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord to all those gathered for this liturgy and for the 2018 National Diaconate Congress.