

Λειτουργία

MINISTRY

Today's meditation will take us into the sanctuary, and from there into the world. Deacons have always been spectacularly close to the heart of the liturgy: look at any photograph of the Pope at Mass and you will see him surrounded by Deacons.

But they also have a perennial role at the interface between the Church and the World. Deacons in Rome habitually administered goods and property, dealt with secular authorities, and ran financial affairs; this put them in a good position to be the ministers of charity to Christ's poor.

The carrying-out of the ministry God has asked of us is in some ways the same for all of us. Every relationship imposes its own "liturgy" on us: wife and husband to each other, parent to child, parishioner to parish, Deacon to Church. Each of these ministries must be brought into the liturgy of Christ to the Father, which is like a great book in which all other ways of ministry can be explained and directed.

Coming to Mass is bringing our "liturgies" to God, so that he may form in us the special likeness to his Son which gives our work its value and holiness.

As the ordination liturgy for Deacons will say to you, *Now you must not only hear the Word, but preach it.* Before you can do this, you must understand the rôle your preaching has in the lives of those who hear. Your words are not there to beautify or charm, but to enter the minds of the congregation as easily and clearly as possible, so that they can be inspired to share the vision of their lives which the Paschal mystery offers them.

Reading from Scripture

A powerful meditation on Christ the Priest is **the Letter to the Hebrews** (especially chapters 3 to 10) which tries to build a bridge for Jewish converts between the sacrifices of the Temple and the sacrifice of the Cross. It wonderfully expresses the humble obedience of Jesus the man, as he accepts subordination to the Father's will. There is a wealth of inspiration here for the correct attitude of a liturgical minister: even more for the way of a minister immersed in the world.

The most important text must surely be **the Priestly Prayer** (John 17) which gives us a window into the praying mind of Christ on the threshold of the Passion.

On the subject of the Deacon and works of mercy, perhaps the **Parable of the Good Samaritan** (Lk 10) will be a good place to start: the Deacon as everyone's neighbour!