

**REMARKS OF ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE, APOSTOLIC NUNCIO,
AT THE BEGINNING 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 in Christ,

At the beginning of this liturgy, as the Apostolic Nuncio, the representative of the Holy Father Pope Francis to the United States, I want to express His Holiness' spiritual closeness and paternal affection for all gathered here today, especially our permanent deacons and their families. I also want to express Pope Francis' profound gratitude for your diaconal ministry and service to the whole Church. I want to welcome you on behalf of Archbishop Aymond, my brother bishops, and all the priests – your co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord.

More than 50 years ago, with his *motu proprio Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*, Blessed Pope Paul VI issued general norms for restoring the permanent diaconate, recalling the role and functions of deacons in the life of the Church. Since that time, the permanent diaconate has flourished, particularly here in the United States, where nearly 18,500 permanent deacons carry out their three-fold diaconal *munera* of Word, Charity and Liturgy, which “represent a unity in service at the level of Divine Revelation: the ministry of the word leads to ministry at the altar, which in turn prompts transformation of life by the liturgy, resulting in charity.” (Congregation for Clergy, Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons, 22 February 1999, n. 39)

Pope Francis described the diaconal ministry in this way:

“There is no altar service, there is no liturgy that is not open to the poor, and there is no service to the poor that does not lead to the liturgy; there is no ecclesial vocation that is not of the family. This helps us to re-evaluate the diaconate today as an ecclesial vocation.” (Pope Francis, Encounter with priests and consecrated persons in the Duomo, Milan, 25 March 2017)

As we celebrate this liturgy, as God's family, with an openness to service of God in the poorest of the poor, let us ask for the grace to receive the Word of God which will be proclaimed; to assist worthily at the altar in the worship of God; and to be transformed by the gifts that we receive so that we might transform the world through acts of charity and mercy.

Therefore, let us acknowledge our sins and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries ...