

**Homily for the Ordination of Deacons**

**Stefan Kaniewski, Ryan Kehoe, and Charles Delano to the Transitional Diaconate  
and David Beach to the Permanent Diaconate**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception  
Springfield, Illinois**

**April 12, 2024**

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear priests, deacons, consecrated religious, seminarians, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is good for us to be here for the ordination of Stefan Kaniewski, Ryan Kehoe, and Charles Delano to the Transitional Diaconate, and David Beach to the Permanent Diaconate. Each of you has travelled a different path to get to this watershed event in your life as you receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders for service to the Church in the Sacred Order of the Diaconate, and each of your lives will continue to unfold in different directions, but you will always share the indelible character of being marked to serve others, not to be served, following the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who poured out His life for us.

Each of you has also spent many years of study and formation in preparation for this ministry, acquiring the professional tools you will need

in your ministry. You have studied and learned much philosophy, theology, and other academic disciplines as well as practical pastoral skills such as presiding at liturgies and preaching homilies. All of this is very important, but I would propose to you that your primary task in ministry will be to strive to become a saint, while helping others to become saints.

In this regard, we must acknowledge that the path to sainthood involves a *via negativa* as well as a *via positiva*. The *via negativa* involves avoiding the seven capital or deadly sins: pride, envy, anger, avarice, gluttony, lust, and sloth. The *via positiva* involves more than avoiding these sins, but growing in the virtues that not only counteract them, but which foster an increase in our capacity to love God and neighbor.

There is actually a name for the science of how to grow in virtue. It is called *aretology*. Aretology was founded by the ancient Greek philosophers and enriched by Judeo-Christian thought and spirituality. The name *aretology* derives from *aretē*, the Greek word for virtue. The high school seminary I attended actually bestowed an “*Arete Award*” every year, not necessarily on the smartest student with the highest grade point average, but who demonstrated leadership and character.

Aretology comprises two kinds of virtues: intellectual virtues are related to human knowledge; ethical virtues are related to human behavior. Ethical virtues are also called human virtues or natural virtues. Supernatural virtues or divine virtues are described by Christian thought, for example, the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. The main human virtues are prudence, courage, temperance or self-control, and justice. St. Ambrose (in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) called them cardinal virtues from the Latin word *cardo*, which means “hinge”, because all other virtues hinge or depend on these. Prudence is our ability to make the right choices. Courage is our ability to stay the course in the face of challenges. Temperance or self-control is our ability to subordinate our emotions and passions to the spirit. Justice is our ability to give every person his or her due.

My list of the virtues that counteract the seven capital or deadly sins are as follows:

The antidote to pride is humility—not acting with arrogance, but giving credit to others where credit is due.

The antidote to envy is gratitude—since envy is coveting what someone else has, gratitude helps us to focus on appreciating the gifts that God has given to us and being satisfied with those gifts.

The antidote to anger is patience. Some suggest that the antidote to anger is meekness, but that sounds too passive and acquiescing. A more proactive check on anger is the patience to withhold a negative emotional reaction while trying to correct whatever sparked our anger in the first place.

The antidote to avarice is generosity – instead of greedily seeking more for oneself, avarice is countered giving generously to others.

The antidote to gluttony is, I would suggest, asceticism. I say that because asceticism calls for more than temperance or moderation. Asceticism comes from the Greek word *askeō*: “to exercise” or “to train”, in the sense of learning to control physical or psychological desires in order to attain a spiritual ideal or goal. It is also somewhat different from mortification, in that mortification involves dying to one’s desires, while asceticism implies a more positive restraint of one’s desires in the quest to arrive at a higher level of spiritual fulfilment.

The antidote to lust is chastity or purity, mindful of Our Lord’s teaching that the pure of heart are blessed, for they shall see God (Matt. 5:8).

The antidote to sloth is diligence—carrying out one’s tasks and responsibilities with a sense of dedication and zeal. It is good to note that the word “diligence” comes from the Latin word, *diligo*, which means to esteem,

prize, love, or delight in something. Diligence means we esteem our work and do it with love.

I encourage everyone who aspires to be a saint, that is, who hopes to go to heaven after this life on earth, to do an examination of conscience every day at the end of the day, as I do, to review not only whether we have committed any deadly sins and, if so, to make a perfect act of contrition and resolve to confess them as soon as possible, but also to examine the positive ways in which we have grown in virtuous living. Avoiding sin and growing in virtue with the help of God's grace is the formula to sainthood, that is, sharing in the eternal happiness of God's kingdom forever.

Stefan, Ryan, Alex, and David: As you begin your diaconal ministry, I would like to share with you some helpful points from a book I am reading by Francis X. Maier called, *True Confessions: Voices of Faith from a Life in the Church*, just released by Ignatius Press. The name Fran Maier, as he is known to us who are his friends, may not be well-known outside of the inside circles of ecclesiastical life because he has worked diligently but effectively behind the scenes, serving for 23 years as senior aide to Archbishop Charles Chaput, O.F.M., Cap., in the Archdiocese of Denver and then in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Prior to that he served for fifteen years as editor-in-chief of the

*National Catholic Register* newsweekly, and earlier as a screenwriter and story analyst based in Los Angeles. He is currently a senior fellow in Catholic Studies at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

In his book, *True Confessions*, Fran Maier summarizes the frank and in-depth interviews that he conducted with 103 bishops, clergy, religious, and lay men and women from various backgrounds over a 17-month period, from December 2020 through May 2022. While the persons interviewed do not hesitate to point out the shortcomings that they see in the life of the Church as well as her strengths, they do so out of love for the Church and a fervent desire to fix the flaws of the human failings of the leaders and members of the Church.

In his introduction to the book, Archbishop Chaput wrote, “At heart, the Church is a ‘she’, not an ‘it’: the Bride of Christ; a mother of tenderness and the teacher of truth. And even in an age that derides her and dismisses the need for a God; even in an age when her weakness is often brutally obvious, the Church is younger, stronger, and more beautiful than her enemies have the capacity to understand or see.”<sup>1</sup>

Then Archbishop Chaput added a personal note about Fran Maier. He wrote, “In Denver, in the early days of our collaboration, I sometimes

stopped by Fran's office at the end of the day to think out loud or exchange ideas. I asked him once why he worked for the Church when he could do something else that paid more. He looked at me quizzically, and then said, "Because I love her."<sup>2</sup>

In Chapter One of the book, Fran Maier then explains why he loves the Church:

I love the Church because she is my home, my extended family, the mother who takes us back whatever our failures and mistakes. I love her for the grandeur of the art, music, law, architecture, and literature she has inspired. I love her for the brilliance of her intellectual legacy, which has no parallel in human experience. I love her for the good that remains in the civilization she shaped. I love her for her patience and mercy. I love her because she treasures and refuses to abandon the weak. I love her above all because what she teaches is salvific and true. There has never been a Christianity without the Church. She's essential to the Christian life. The Church preceded the Gospels, not the other way around. And the Christian faith has never been *merely* a personal relationship with God, as important as that is. It has always been, beginning in the Upper Room, an assembly of believers, an *ekklesia* – a Church. I love the Church despite the sins of her leaders and her people, including my own.<sup>3</sup>

Stefan, Ryan, Alex, and David: As we celebrate your ordination to the diaconate this evening, we pray that the grace of the Holy Spirit will fill your hearts with love for the Church, so that your diaconal service may always be given, not as a burden to be undertaken, but as a love to be shared with the Bride of Christ.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Francis X. Maier, *True Confessions: Voices of Faith from a Life in the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2024), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Francis X. Maier, *True Confessions*, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Francis X. Maier, *True Confessions*, p. 22.