

Homily of Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Deacon Leonard Lockett, the Vicar for Catholics of African Descent, gave a talk during the 2018 Altar Servers Breakfast hosted by St. Francis of Assisi Church on Saturday, February 3rd 2018. In his talk he gave a number of distinctions between a ministry and a job in the Church. He said:

Some people have a job in the Church and others are invited or seek out for themselves a ministry in the Church.

If you are doing it just because no one else will, it is a job. If you are doing it to serve the Lord, it is a ministry.

If you quit because someone criticizes you, it is a job. If you remain in spite of someone's remarks or opinion, it is a ministry.

If you will do it as long as it does not interfere with other activities, it is a job. If you are committed to staying, even if it means letting go of other activities, it is a ministry.

If you quit because no one thanked you or praised you, it is a job. If you stick to it, even though no one recognized your effort, it is a ministry.

It is hard to get excited about a job. It is impossible not to get excited about a ministry.

If your concern is success, it is a job. If your concern is faithfulness and service, it is a ministry.

If God calls you to a ministry, please do not treat it like a job.

We can summarize Deacon Lockett's talk with St. Paul's words in the second reading, "All these I do for the sake of the Gospel."

The story of Job's affliction is well known. The first reading is his lamentation over his affliction. Job was so brokenhearted that he felt that his problems were beyond solution. He concluded, "I shall not see happiness again." Job was wrong because when he endured to the end, he received double blessings from God.

Job described his condition: months of misery, troubled night, filled with restlessness until dawn, days come to an end without hope, and shall never see happiness again. There are persons who feel like Job in one way or

another. Such persons should take consolation that things turned around for Job. Such persons are invited today to endure like Job, and to trust in the saving and healing power of Jesus. Jesus encourages us in Matthew 24:13, "But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."

In the Gospel, Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law who was sick with fever. Further, all who were ill or possessed by demons were brought to him. He cured many of them, and drove out many demons. The Psalm of today says, "Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted." Let us, with faith, bring our sicknesses, our demonic attacks, and our brokenhearted to the Lord. May the Lord heal us and restore us. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. Amen.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP