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Deacons, face of the Church in daily life

Vatican City, 4 June 2016 – This morning the Holy Father received in audience in the Hall of Popes the members of the International Centre for the Diaconate, which at the end of last year celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation, and who are on a pilgrimage to Rome on the occasion of the Jubilee of Mercy.

In his address to the deacons, Francis recalled the new commandment that Jesus entrusted to the apostles during the Last Supper – "just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another". "By loving each other, the disciples continue the mission for which the Son of God came into the world", the Pope explained. "And they understand, helped by the Holy Spirit, that this commandment implies service to their brothers and sisters."

However, in order to take care of people and their needs in a practical sense, the apostles chose a number of "deacons", or servants. "Deacons express in a particular way Jesus' commandment: imitate God in the service of others, imitate God Who is love and is driven even to serve us. God's way of acting, with patience, benevolence, compassion and willingness to better us, must also distinguish all the ministries: bishops as successors of the apostles, priests, their collaborators, and, in the concrete work of 'serving tables', deacons. Deacons are the face of the Church in everyday life, of a community that lives and journeys in the midst of the people, and where the great are not those who command, but rather those who serve."