

# Daily Prayer

THURSDAY, JULY 16

Today's prayer is based on I Timothy 3.8-13, ESV.

*Deacons likewise must be dignified,*

Father, I find it so interesting that the first quality you are looking for in one who serves -  
is *dignity*.

You look for *dignity* in ones whose role will be taking care of things so that  
elders can pursue spiritual matters unencumbered by these matters.

Lord, we have seen the un-dignified, they seem to be quite visible.

On reflection we realize we have also seen true dignity -  
not false pride or pretense -

but a quiet, humble dignity in those who can just take care of things.

Your body needs more quiet, competent servers.

*not double-tongued,*

You also place a high value on honesty,  
again, in those who serve, for obvious reasons.

*not addicted to much wine,*

Sobriety seems to be valued in both spiritual leadership and in the helping ministry.

*not greedy for dishonest gain.*

Lord, I cannot imagine folks seeking office in your church  
with a view to their own profit -

although, if a Judas can find his way into your inner circle,  
we had best be cautious even in this.

*They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.*

Lord, the *mystery* of the faith must be that it, and all the benefits that go with it,  
are offered at no charge whatsoever,  
it and its benefits must be received by faith plus nothing.

Many stumble here, Lord, certain that the way of the world is your way too -  
our way being *everyone must pay for their passage*,  
and your way being *Jesus paid our passage*

and we receive that benefit freely, without meriting it in the least.

To be fair, Lord, we feel we must owe you something

and we would feel better about ourselves if we could contribute in some way.

How do we maintain a clear conscience when we feel we have received  
something for nothing?

Like you said, it is a *mystery*, but there it is.

How about if we decided to live lives of grateful dependence,  
acknowledging you in everything,

*accepting* the forgiveness you offer  
and rejoicing in it?

That looks to me like the only path to a clear conscience in the faith.

*And let them also be tested first;*

Lord, this testing is a good idea - give us wisdom in implementing this.

*then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.*

Lord, we wonder where we will find such people.

Thank you for your promise that what you have started in us  
you will bring to completion.

Do your work in us in our day,  
and help us identify those in whom your Spirit is bearing fruit.

*Their wives likewise must be dignified,*

Spouses of these servers likewise must be dignified,

*not slanderers,*

not spreading malicious lies as a matter of course,

*but sober-minded,*

instead being of substantive thoughtfulness, not frivolous,

*faithful in all things.*

and faithful in everything.

*Let deacons each be the husband of one wife,*

Servers as well as spiritual leaders are expected to live in faithfulness in marriage,

*managing their children and their own households well.*

as well as demonstrating their competence for larger responsibilities  
by managing their children and households well.

*For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves*

Good service in the diaconate is a good thing,

with all those great character traits bringing their own blessings.

*and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.*

Thank you, Father, for the great assurance that comes

when we can look at our own lives

and see your hand at work in them

for Jesus and His kingdom's sake. Amen.

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God of our life, there are days when the burdens we carry chafe our shoulders and weigh us down; when the road seems dreary and endless, the skies gray and threatening; when our lives have no music in them, and our hearts are lonely, and our souls have lost their courage. Flood the path with light, run our eyes to where the skies are full of promise; tune our hearts to brave music; give us the sense of comradeship with heroes and saints of every age; and so quicken our spirits that we may be able to encourage the souls of all who journey with us on the road of life, to your honor and glory.

Augustine

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