

Office for Diaconate Formation
Archdiocese of Milwaukee
Archbishop Cousins Catholic Center



The Servant

From Deacon John's Desk

Dear Friends of the Diaconate,

It's hard to believe that Pentecost has come and gone and that the liturgical season of Easter has concluded as we swing into the last semester of the 2012-2013 year! I find it providential that in the midst of the aspirants and deacon-candidates embarking on their parish pastoral placements and the increasing number of men expressing an interest in the diaconate that the Archbishop should release his pastoral letter on the ecclesial nature of the Church with the title "WHO do you say that I AM? Nearly all of the men who express an interest in exploring the diaconate relates a story which entails a response to that age old question that Jesus put to his disciples. Likewise our aspirants and deacon-candidates are confronted with that very question as they learn to do effective theological reflection and through parish ministry assignments, personally meet Christ in those they visit, discovering the mutuality of ministry, and that Jesus is both Savior and Victim. All the men in formation strive to enter into the *mystery* of the Church, to be the *sacrament* of Christ the Servant, so as to be more fully in *communion* with all people, most especially the poor, the sick, the marginalized and the forgotten. Deacons in formation today are challenged to recognize that the mission of Christ is the Church most fully alive in the Spirit when it gives "...witness to the gospel value of sacrificial love..." in our day. United with our bishops, priests and lay faithful through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, together we acclaim that "Jesus Christ is Lord" who came to serve and not be served!



Deacon John A. Ebel, Director



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John Paul II recalled "Deacons, both married and celibate, to serve God's People by their witness to the gospel value of sacrificial love, a quality of life too easily dismissed in today's society." For those whom the Lord calls and whose lives' give such a witness, the ODF is the place to continue your journey.

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“Look at Christ!” By: Bishop Donald Hying

“Look at Christ!”

By: Bishop Donald Hying

When I think of a deacon, the word “servant” comes immediately to mind. From the very beginning of the Church, deacons were ordained to assist the bishop and to serve the very human needs of the people of God, especially the poor and the sick. Jesus articulates his own mission in words of self-emptying kenosis, “The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” When we embrace the mission of the Gospel with a servant’s heart, God uses us to unleash once again the saving power of the Paschal Mystery of Christ through deeds of charity and works of justice which echo and point to the ultimate merciful act—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This diaconal service makes us vulnerable. If we love as Jesus loves, we will open ourselves to the hurts, darkness, sins and sufferings of others. This pain will wound us deeply, but it is the only way for a Christian. The word “compassion” comes from two Latin words “cum” and “passere” which put together mean “to suffer with.” This deep sharing in the pain of others, done in union with Christ, becomes salvific and transformative, both for others and for ourselves. We imitate the profound vulnerability of Jesus, who was born in poverty, touched the sinner, the sick and the dead, washed the feet of his disciples, pours his life out both in the Eucharist and on the cross.

This diaconal service demands a radical availability. The needs of the Church and those who are suffering determine our response. Ministry is never on our terms. Such a humble stance requires a profound generosity of spirit. We pour ourselves out, even when such a gift is not noticed, appreciated or even understood. We follow the Master who allowed the pain of the other to fashion his own response. To the paralytic, salvation looked like the ability to walk. To the tax collectors, it looked like loving acceptance. To the hungry crowd, it looked like bread and fish. We must know the hearts and wounds of our people in order to understand what they need and how we can help.

Humility is the ground and base of diaconal service. Christ and His Church are the center of our lives; our ministry is ordered to the extension of His reign in human hearts. We are not deacons to draw attention to ourselves, to look important, to find gratification in our public role. It can never be “Look at me!” It must always be “Look at Christ!” Humility is simply self-knowledge. We know our greatness as children of God, made in his image and likeness, as persons of infinite worth. We know our littleness in our poverty, dependence and radical insufficiency. Without God, we simply cease to exist. Humility liberates us from jealousy, pride, resentment, self-pity and sadness. We discover the greatness of the call to serve and we do so with joy, gratitude and love.

Many thanks to all of the permanent deacons throughout the Archdiocese of Milwaukee who embrace their ministry with a servant’s heart and through a dizzying variety of activities cultivate the flourishing of the Lord’s vineyard. We are so grateful that you have responded to this sacred call.



"¡Mira a Cristo!" Por: Obispo Donald Hying

"¡Mira a Cristo!"

Por: Obispo Donald Hying

Cuando pienso en un diácono, la palabra "siervo" de inmediato viene a mi mente. Desde el comienzo de la Iglesia, los diáconos fueron ordenados para ayudar al Obispo y al servicio de las necesidades humanas del pueblo de Dios, especialmente los pobres y los enfermos. Jesús articula su propia misión en la palabra "kenosis" anonadamiento (auto-vaciarse): "El Hijo del Hombre no ha venido para ser servido sino para servir y para dar su vida en rescate por muchos." Cuando abrazamos la misión del Evangelio con un corazón servidor, Dios nos usa para desatar una vez más el poder salvífico del Misterio Pascual de Cristo a través de obras de caridad y los trabajos de justicia que se hacen eco y señalan el fin último del acto misericordioso -la muerte y resurrección de Jesucristo.



Este servicio diaconal nos hace vulnerables. Si amamos como Jesús nos ama, nosotros vamos a abrirnos a las heridas, la oscuridad, los pecados y los sufrimientos de los demás. Este dolor nos va a herir profundamente, pero es la única manera para un Cristiano. La palabra "compasión" proviene de dos palabras en latín "cum" y "passere" que al ponerse juntas significa "sufrir con". Esta profunda participación en el dolor de los demás, hecha en la unión con Cristo, se convierte en salvadora y transformativa, tanto para los demás y para nosotros mismos. Imitemos la profunda vulnerabilidad de Jesús, que nació en la pobreza, tocó al pecador, a los enfermos y a los muertos, que lavó los pies a sus discípulos, y puso su vida tanto en la cruz como en la Eucaristía.

Este servicio diaconal exige una disponibilidad radical. Las necesidades de la Iglesia y de los que sufren determinan nuestra respuesta. El ministerio nunca es en nuestros términos. Tal postura humilde requiere una profunda generosidad de espíritu. Nos exponemos nosotros mismos, incluso cuando tal regalo no se nota, apreciado o incluso entendido. Seguimos al Señor que permite que el dolor del otro se moldee a su propia respuesta. Para el parálítico, la salvación se veía en la capacidad de caminar. A los recaudadores de impuestos, en una aceptación amorosa. Para la multitud hambrienta, se ve en el pan y los pescados. Debemos conocer las heridas de los corazones de nuestra gente con el fin de entender lo que necesitan y cómo podemos ayudar.

La humildad es el fundamento y la base del servicio diaconal. Cristo y su Iglesia son el centro de nuestras vidas, nuestro ministerio está ordenado a la extensión de su reino en los corazones humanos. No somos diáconos para llamar la atención sobre nosotros mismos, para parecer importante, para encontrar satisfacción en nuestra función pública. Nunca debe ser "¡Mírame a mí!" Siempre tiene que ser "¡Mira a Cristo!" La humildad es simplemente auto-conocimiento. Conocemos nuestra grandeza como hijos de Dios, hechos a su imagen y semejanza, como personas de valor infinito. Conocemos que nuestra pequeñez esta en nuestra pobreza, la dependencia y la insuficiencia radical. Sin Dios, simplemente dejamos de existir. La humildad nos libera de la envidia, el orgullo, el resentimiento, la autocompasión y la tristeza. La humildad se descubre en la grandeza de la llamada a servir y lo hacemos con alegría, gratitud y amor.

Muchas gracias a todos los diáconos permanentes de la Arquidiócesis de Milwaukee que abrazan su ministerio con un corazón de siervo ya sea a través de la enorme variedad de actividades que cultivan el florecimiento de la viña del Señor. Estamos muy agradecidos de que hayas respondido a este llamado sagrado.

News and more

Wives Mentoring Program Launched:



This Winter 2013, we added a new element to our formation program! The Wives Mentor Program brings together our candidate-wives with newly ordained wives who have volunteered to become companions on the journey of formation.

What is a wife's mentor? A mentor is simply defined by the Oxford American Dictionary as a "trusted advisor." In the ODF a Wife's Mentor is the wife of an ordained deacon who has agreed to journey with a woman in formation and to be a trusted companion on the formation path. Mentoring is associated with the roles of nurturing, educating and guiding. The basic mentoring relationship is simply friendship with someone a little more experienced, a person who acts as a guide in regard to a new career, profession, job or development stage. The relationship is most appropriately defined in terms of the characteristics of the relationship and the function it serves than in strictly defined roles.

Mentoring is intended to be an opportunity for a deacon-wife to provide support through meaningful and effective communication, responsiveness to requests for resources, and establishing a mutually respectful relationship wherein which both the candidate-wife and the mentor-wife can grow in God's love as the wives of deacons.

The mentoring program is a means for the candidate-wife in formation to form a relationship with a more experienced, ordained deacon's wife. The mentoring relationship begins after acceptance into candidacy and continues generally until ordination. Some mentors/mentees may determine their relationship is not life-giving and may choose to be re-partnered. As ordination approaches many relationships evolve into friendships which diminish the need for a formal structure for mentoring beyond the period of formation. Wives are encouraged to become active in the community of wives of ordained deacons for ongoing and mutual support.

Mentor-wives are assigned to candidate-wives by the Director of Formation to function as a mentor to discuss any concerns the mentee may have concerning participation in the formation program. Mentors also become a companion in faith and in prayer. This spiritual relationship will allow the mentee to more fully open herself to the formation journey; understand her husband's ministry; the value of the process and balance required in formation, and perhaps discover that both the mentee and the mentor share similar concerns.

Pastoral Letter: Who do you say that I am?

Archbishop ListECKI recently released a Pastoral Letter on ecclesiology, entitled *Who Do You Say That I Am?* The Pastoral Letter and an accompanying Parish Leadership Reflection Guide was mailed to priests, deacons, parish directors and other parish leaders. Parishes have been invited to use the Parish Leadership Reflection Guide to discuss the Pastoral Letter with parish staff and pastoral council members sometime this spring.

The Archbishop also announced that the Archdiocese of Milwaukee will be holding a Synod on Pentecost weekend 2014 (June 6-8, 2014). A Synod, simply put, is an assembly where the faithful deliberate on the pastoral needs of the (arch)diocese. The Pastoral Letter is the foundation off of which the Synod planning will occur.

The Archbishop has asked parishes to hold parish or cluster sessions in October and November for all parishioners. These sessions will be rooted in the Pastoral Letter and will give parishioners an opportunity to provide input on pastoral goals and future initiatives for the archdiocese.

District gatherings will be held in February and March 2014 to pray, dialogue and further discern these goals and initiatives. The plans and topics that come forth from these district sessions will be finalized at the Archdiocesan Synod June 6-8, 2014. Following the Synod, Archbishop ListECKI will issue a "synodal declaration" which will identify goals, priorities and recommendations for implementing the vision of the Synod.

Our web address is:
<http://www.archmil.org/offices/Diaconate.htm>

