



DEACON TALK

Council of Deacons Newsletter • Archdiocese of Milwaukee

December 2017



Director's Report

The Deacon Retreat was again a wonderful opportunity for many of us to gather in prayer, solidarity, and in renewed commitment to our vocational call as both disciple and deacon. Each retreat offers a special spiritual focus and this year's Director, Fr. Jerry Herda, was exceptional in his role. We extend our gratitude to Fr. Jerry for guiding us on this special and holy weekend.

Over 60 Milwaukee deacons gathered along with four brothers from Madison and one from Superior. Of the Milwaukee 60, there were 10 from the classes of 1983 or earlier. One was ordained in 1978 and thus will celebrate his 40th anniversary in June of 2018.

The gathering of such a diverse group really highlights the brotherhood and solidarity of our vocational call. There is truly a shared holiness and

for us more recently ordained deacons it is an opportunity to share in the experiences and the lessons and challenges of our early ordination classes.

This gathering of the deacon community also reminds us that there may very well be some "lost" deacons out there. Even the "lost" are important members of our history and family. They may be lost because of health, technology, mobility, distance, or even by choice. However the lost still deserve at least our prayer if not direct evidence of our support.

Two weeks ago one of those lost deacons was brought to my attention. By a chain of phone calls, I was informed that Dcn. Ken Miller`77 was in hospice care. It opened a door for me, as well as other deacons who served alongside Ken nearly 30 years ago, to make a real connection. At very least we open the door to praying for Ken and maybe we can mark a path for healing and hope for him and his family.

The diaconate offers a sense of solidarity to all permanent deacons. Don't we all sense a bond with St. Stephen and St. Lawrence whose faithful proclamation of the Gospel and witness of service to those in need? May I offer for your reflection a request to pray for all our lost deacons and a renewed effort to re connect with them.

If I can assist in this effort in any way please contact me. The wisdom and strength of our early deacons can be an inspiration for all of us. Let's be sure that those of us ordained in the 2000's can experience the wisdom all the deacons who have paved this path of holiness.

Blessings and the Peace of our God be with you all!

Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

In This Issue:

Director's Report.....	1
President's Report.....	2
Personnel Board	2-3
Deacon Senate Meeting.....	3-4
2017 Deacon Retreat	4
New Deacon Welcome	4
Deacon Wives Morning Reflection	5
Rest in Peace.....	5-6
Know Your Deacons.....	6
Prayer Requests.....	6
Dates to Remember.....	7

President's Report

Greetings Brother Deacons and Wives,

As I write this report, I have just finished enjoying a wonderful and much needed time of retreat with a record number of deacons in Oconomowoc. It was wonderful to have arrived early to spend some time in pre-retreat readiness. I also was extremely blessed, due to a series of unexpected events, to trial the new St. Joseph's Hermitage. I highly recommend it and I am already considering how I might manage another opportunity to experience it further.

For those who were unable to be present on the retreat, you were certainly in our prayers. I urge you to find another opportunity soon to fulfill that part of your covenant, which certainly aids us to be more effective in our diaconal ministries. Without some meaningful time to reflect, reset and renew, we may not be in a position to appreciate how much our spiritual batteries need recharging.

Fr. Jerry Herda, our Vicar of Clergy, emphasized the importance of remembering. I myself was especially struck by one of his shared quotes by Pope Francis from the Joy of the Gospel: "The believer is essentially 'one who remembers.'" It begs a question on the Mass raised in *An Abundance of Graces: reflections on Sacrosanctum Concilium*: "How many parishioners walk through the Church doors on Sunday knowing they are entering into the representation of the Paschal Mystery, where the Risen Christ as high priest is offering himself to the Father and joining them, his Body, to himself in this sacrifice where God is perfectly glorified, and they are made holy and drawn into union with God and each other?"

As deacons, we share in the "pastors' duty to ensure that the faithful take part (in the liturgy) fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects." I believe that the themes Fr. Jerry offered us are great catechetical stepping-stones:

- A. Remembering**
- B. "Do this in remembrance of me"**
- C. Forgive and Forget Remember**
- D. Attitude of Gratitude**

Naturally, the catechesis of others springs forth from ongoing formation, spiritual direction, and retreats. All of which are so wisely spelled out in the expectations of a diaconal covenant and summarized annually through Formation Reports which are due very soon. As we close yet another liturgical year, may we remember the lessons learned while looking forward to a new year of grace.

Sincerely Yours with Fraternal Charity,

Dcn. Dale Nees

Deacon Personnel Board

The Deacon Personnel Board met on 10/7/17 at the Cousins Center. Deacons present: Gulig, Campbell, Nosacek, Chmielewski. Excused: C. Schneider, Stanula, Fr. Herda.

After opening prayer, introductions, and approval of the 6/27/17 minutes, our first order of business was to meet with two deacons who were called to meet with the Board. Both deacons were called in to respond to their 8-year history of failing to file an Annual Formation Report. The filing of the Formation Report with the Deacon Services Office is a requirement of both the Clergy Manual and the Diaconal Covenant. The report documents the fulfillment of annual diaconal responsibilities such as, seeing a spiritual director, attending an annual retreat, participating in 20 hours of continuing education, and meeting with deacons of the district. The Clergy manual states that failure to meet these expectations and failure to file an Annual Formation Report for two consecutive years requires the deacon to meet with the Personnel Board. Failure to comply also opens the possibility that a deacon's faculties could be suspended by the Archbishop.

The two deacons presented themselves humbly and remorsefully for their non-compliance to the guidelines and expectations of their diaconal call. Their only excuse was that they were too "busy" but they quickly acknowledged that this was not a valid excuse. They discussed their current ministerial / parish activities and also promised to move into full

compliance. A detailed explanation of what full compliance looks like was presented to them by the Board.

Both deacons agreed to complete all the expected requirements. The Board was satisfied with the discussion and exchange with the deacons and is hopeful that no additional action by the Board will be necessary. A report of this positive meeting will be forwarded to the Vicar for Clergy as well as the respective pastor of the two deacons. The Director will keep the Board updated on their compliance.

Multiple deacon specific issues were then on the table, including: covenant renewals, new assignment requests, new appointments, status changes, and individual deacon challenges.

The Board chose Dcn. Rich Gulig as the Chairperson. Rich welcomed the call to leadership and offered his commitment and appreciation to the Board. He also reminded the Board of the importance of confidentiality in all our business.

The next Personnel Board meeting was scheduled for Saturday January 27 at 9:30 - 11:00 AM at the Cousins Center. The meeting closed with prayer around 11:15.

Respectfully submitted, Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

Deacon Senate

The Deacon Senate met on September 20, 2017 at the Cousins Center. Deacons present: Nees, Campbell, Jansen, Wiese, Fogarty, C. Schneider, Bowen, Maack, Kilkenny, and Chmielewski. Excused: Ebel, Paczkowski. Opening prayer led by Dcn. Chmielewski.

We had two guest presenters this evening: Michelle Nemer (Synod Office) and Anne Haines (Urban Ministry). They first updated us with a summary of the "Deacon / Lay Ministers" gathering on 8/25/17 and then presented information on the upcoming Leadership Gathering scheduled for 11/3 and 11/4. However, their primary focus was a proactive discussion of the 175th Anniversary of the Archdiocese celebration, which will kick off in

November 2018 and run through November 2019. Specifically they presented the planning committee's idea of a "Service Saturday" that each Deanery would host in either the spring or fall of 2019. The service project(s) could be a Deanery wide activity or an individual parish activity (or something in between, i.e. cluster or neighbor combined activity). The close of the service Saturday would have one of our Bishops preside at the usual Saturday evening Mass of a Deanery parish with a special emphasis on "service."

Michelle and Anne are hoping that the local deacons will help provide guidance and coordination to the event. They are asking the district gathering groups to enter a discussion about the service project and to possibly schedule a Saturday date in 2019 so as to get a Bishop on the schedule for a Liturgical celebration. Stay tuned for more information.

Other issues discussed at the Senate meeting included: A formal welcome to Scott Campbell as the new secretary / treasurer. Scott did provide a 2-page summary of recent financial transactions and promised to continue reporting in this fashion at every Senate meeting. The current checking balance is about \$11,000. The Senate also agreed to raise to \$200 the Council donation at a deacon funeral (usually to the parish or designated charity of the deceased deacon.)

Plans are all set for Memorial Mass in Sheboygan 10/15, just waiting on RSVPs.

Invites to the Deacon Retreat went out this week and will go out to the Madison deacons next week.

Holy Hour for Life will now take place in October – Respect Life Month – beginning in October 2018. The Archbishop approved our request to move this Archdiocesan event from January.

The Dominican Republic will remain on the Senate agenda. There are early discussions of a deacon trip in the fall of 2018.

Chuck Schneider will be replacing Tom Fogarty as the rep for districts 14/15/16. Welcome Chuck and thank you Tom!

On 9/27/17, Pope Francis will kick off a worldwide 2-year initiative called "Share the Journey." The focus is

the plight of immigrants and refugees. Follow along at sharejourney.org

The meeting ended with prayer and the next Senate meeting is set for 11/15/17 at 6 PM at the Cousins Center.

Respectfully submitted, Dcn. Mike Chmielewski



***2017 Deacon
Retreat at
Redemptorist
Retreat Center
in Oconomowoc***

This year's rendition of the Annual Deacon Retreat was again held at the Redemptorist Retreat Center in Oconomowoc. It was a resounding success, with 65 deacons attending, including three from the Madison dioceses and one from the La Crosse / Superior diocese. A few of the deacons who live in the Oconomowoc area even drove to and from the retreat center from home to give a few more deacons a chance to attend. The retreat was scheduled from Friday evening, Nov. 3, through Sunday morning, Nov. 5.

About 25 deacons arrived on Thursday evening for an extra day of personal prayer and reflection and were treated to a gorgeous, sunny, crisp fall day for walking outside. We enjoyed the many wonderful features of the Redemptorist site, including a newly completed Mother of Perpetual Help Shrine and Outdoor Stations of the Cross. Mass, Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer were celebrated each day. And we also had 3 meals each day of the fine cuisine provided by the Retreat Center Cafeteria staff.

Fr. Jerry Herda, our Vicar for Clergy, guided us on the retreat, with the theme, "The believer is one who remembers", taken from Pope Francis' "Joy of the Gospel." Fr. Jerry used the first three sessions of the retreat to explore remembering the past, living in the present, and having hope for the future. He referred many times to the quote from Soren Kirkegaard; "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." Outside of the sessions, silence was encouraged among the retreat attendees. But at the

close of each evening, we did our traditional gathering in the lower level room of the Retreat Center for "Deacon Talk." The fellowship was wonderful and the snacks and refreshments were great, too.

Fr. Jerry focused the closing Sunday morning session on being grateful. He asked each attendee to cite one of the many things they are grateful for. It was an emotional and joy-filled closing exercise. We then celebrated the Eucharist, the true celebration of gratitude for the life God has given us. In the spirit of gratitude, we would like to acknowledge and thank Deacon Ralph Kornburger for the many, many years that he organized these retreats. This year, Ralph was able to mostly just attend the retreat, while Jim Banach, John Mezydlo and Dennis Petrie did their best to fill his shoes. At first we thought it was going to take three of us to fill in for Ralph, but we think we have things figured out so that John Mezydlo and Dennis Petrie can take it forward for the years to come.

Next year's retreat will be November 2-4 and will be led by Bishop Jim Schuerman. Mark it on your calendars now!

Deacon Dennis Petrie

New Deacon Welcome

On 9/12/17, we officially welcomed Deacon Mark Leonardelli and wife Ann into the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Deacon family. Mark and Ann moved here from Naperville, Illinois (Joliet Diocese). He was ordained a Permanent Deacon on 8/27/2011 and last served at Holy Spirit Parish in Naperville.

Mark and Ann moved to Cedarburg this summer after Mark changed his secular employment. This is, however, a "homecoming" of sorts for Mark, as he is a graduate of Nathan Hale High School in West Allis and UWM and then earned his Master's Degree at Marquette. He left the Milwaukee area in 1988. His professional background is in Sales and Marketing, Financial Planning, Business Operations, and Visionary Leadership. As Deacon, besides serving at the altar with all the usual diaconal faculties, Mark highlights his relationship with SVDP including as a Conference Spiritual Director.

Mark and Ann have two adult children, a daughter in Green Bay and a daughter in Minneapolis. Mark and Ann have no grandchildren ... yet. Mark also states, "A Big Packers fan!!" Mark has been assigned as deacon to St. Francis Borgia Parish, Cedarburg.

Welcome Mark and Ann to our diaconal family.

Blessings, Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

Deacon Wives Morning Reflection

At the Deacon Wives' Morning of Reflection, Jennifer Christ titled her presentation, "Life's Necessary Losses, Grieving soulfully; Opening to Transitions." She calls this our pattern in life. It moves from Gift to Loss to Gift.

When we grieve from a death, we feel pain. How we carry our grief is personal. Grief is an extension of love. Our love becomes our loss. We must start on a new journey. There is no way out of the journey. Grief makes us ask profound questions. Our suffering is our invitation to change. We are gifted, perhaps with a more compassionate heart, or learning to know our selves better.

Another loss is developmental loss. When gifted with a younger sibling, we lose our place. We are no longer the baby of the family. When we leave home for an apartment and a job, we lose the safety of home and parents. We all lose friends, our own youth, our parents, our health, our generation. We lose our dreams. We dream of our children going off to college, to keep the faith we instilled in them, and to live the good life. Then they choose a path of their own.

During the morning, we had time to journal on the topic of Tender Losses. Such as remembering one whom we loved and lost through death, naming the things we loved about this person, and listing challenging characteristics they had. Three optional questions followed with the last being, how our loved one's spiritual presence influences us.

Jennifer's handout gifted us with three topics to journal on at home: Loss of Former Selves, Loss of Well Being, and Loss of Faith. Prayers, poetry, and Scripture passages are also sprinkled throughout the pages.

We ended with a healing service, asking God to Create Us Anew, as we prayed over each other.

Meriel Christensen



Rest in Peace

Deacon Willard M. (Bill) Widmar died on August 22, 2017. Dcn. Bill was born on 3/3/36 in Racine, WI. He graduated from St. Catherine High School in 1955 and immediately began his employment at S.C.

Johnson where he worked as an Industrial Electrician and in Field Operations for 42 years until his retirement in 1997. He began serving in the U.S. Navy Reserves 1954, specializing in electronics, and was honorably discharged in 1962. He furthered his professional skills in electronics at MSOE and Racine Tech.

Bill married his beloved Joan on 5/6/61 and they had two sons: Willard Jr. (Kristy) and Lawrence. Joan died in 1999 after a lengthy illness. Bill is further survived by one granddaughter, Katlynn, two great-grandchildren, two brothers, and other extended family.

Bill began his diaconate formation in 1988 at St. Francis Seminary. He was ordained a Permanent Deacon on June 13, 1992 by Archbishop Rembert Weakland O.S.B. in Mater Christi Chapel at the Cousins Center. Bill was assigned to St. Paul the Apostle Parish, Racine, where he served his entire diaconate. He moved into Senior status in 2014 and retired from covenanted service on 7/1/2017. Bill regularly served at the altar, witnessed marriages, and

presided at baptisms. He was also very involved in visits to the parish sick and homebound as well as presiding at communion services at local nursing homes. The true passion of his ministry was his focus and care for the chronically mentally ill.

Visitation for Dcn. Bill was held on Monday August 28, 2017 at 10 AM at St. Paul the Apostle, Racine.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at 11:30 with St. Paul Pastor, Fr. Yamid Blanco presiding and former Pastor Fr. Terry Huebner and Fr. Mike Wolfe concelebrating. Deacons Dan Kehrer (classmate) and Keith Hansen (St. Paul) assisted at the altar. Bishop Schuerman represented the Archdiocese at the prayer and offered the final commendation. The prayer included 33 deacons, wives, and widows who honored Bill's diaconal service with a formal procession into the worship space and an honor guard recession to the hearse.

Fr. Huebner reflected on the Gospel passage from John 14:1-6 about the many mansions prepared by Jesus. Fr. Huebner was quite sure that Bill knew where he was going. He saw in Bill a strength and humility in his life of service: service to his family, his country, his parish, and his God. He reflected that Dcn. Bill's life can be a model for us.

Burial took place immediately after the Mass at Holy Cross Cemetery in Racine. Please keep Dcn. Bill's family in your prayers. May he rest in peace.

Know Your Deacons

St. Ephrem, poet, orator, teacher, and deacon; was born about 306. He is the only Syrian recognized as a doctor of the Church. When his home in Nisibis was overrun by the Persians, he fled to Edessa where he led a biblical school. He was ordained a deacon but declined becoming a priest. He reportedly avoided presbyteral consecration by feigning madness.

Ephrem had a prolific pen which best illumines his holiness. It is said his poetic account of the Last Judgement inspired Dante. He also wrote hymns, which earned him the title "Harp of the Holy Spirit." He was one of the first to introduce song into Catholic public worship.

He preferred the simple life, living in a cave overlooking Edessa. He died around 373 and we celebrate his feast day on June 9. (Franciscan Media)

Prayer Requests

Deacon Tony Martino`84
Deacon Francisco Blas`02 and wife Florencia
Deacon Roberto Fuentes`02 and wife Lorenz
Deacon Jay Wittak`05 and wife Susan
Deacon Dick Govek`92 and wife Dorothy
Deacon Ed Weber`81 and wife Sue
Deacon Baleriano Gonzalez `84
Deacon Ron Schneider `96
Deacon Ken Miller `77
Deacon Chuck Hankins `02
Susan Finley, wife of Dcn. Mike

The Recently Deceased and their Families

Maxwell J. Holt, 5/13/13 (Indigent burial 8/10/17)
Deacon Willard Widmar, 8/22/17
Anna Podlesnik (Indigent burial 8/22/17)
Susan Sommers, 9/24/17 (wife of Dcn. Dave`00)
William Jordan, 8/3/17 (Indigent burial 9/28/17)
Carmen Reyes, 10/9/17 (Mother of Dcn. Edwin`07)
Rosa Maria Garcia, sister of Dcn. Villarreal.





Dates to Remember

Deacon Day 2018: April 14, 2018
St James, Menomonee Falls, 8 AM – end of lunch
Presenter, Dcn. Bill Hampton
Catholic Relief Services

Deacon Wives Retreat 2018: April 26-29, 2018
Siena Retreat Center, Racine

Post Ordination Formation for class of 2016
(second session), 6/2/2018, Cousins Center

Ordination, Class of 2018, September 8, 2018
Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, Milwaukee

Memorial Mass 2018: October 28, 2018, Bishop Jeff
Haines presider, site TBD, District 6/10/13 planning

Deacon Retreat: November 1-4, 2018, Redemptorist
Retreat Center, Director Bishop Jim Schuerman

**Published and Edited by Deacon Services
P.O. Box 070912, 3501 South Lake Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53207-0912
414-769-3409**

Deacon Michael J. Chmielewski, Director