

THE *Deacon Servant*

OFFICES OF DEACON SERVICES | DIACONATE FORMATION | ARCHDIOCESE of MILWAUKEE



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DIACONATE
Where love becomes service.

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Deacon Jim Starke

One of the great blessings I get to experience is meeting with each of the newly ordained deacons and their wives. It is a pleasure to accompany them on their journey as they navigate the renewal

of their first-year covenants. It is often with great excitement that they list the wonderful experiences God placed them in, their appreciation for the formation they received, and the ways in which these new ministerial experiences continue to form them. It is truly a grace to see how the Holy Spirit is continuing to work through not only their ministries but their marriage and families.

However, almost to a person, the greatest struggle the deacons and their wives experienced this first year was managing the balance between their spiritual life, their family life, and his ministry. There is something about those brand-new vestments with their razor-sharp pleats that makes a deacon want to say "Yes" to every request. When a deacon proclaims the words, "I do not have the time for that" he feels like he is betraying his ordination vows. However, it doesn't take long before their relationships with God, with their families, and eventually the parishioners begin to feel the damaging effect of that enthusiasm.

In the last newsletter, emphasis was placed on the importance of the relationship

between the deacon and the bishop. Equally, if not more important, is the relationship between the deacon and his family. Our first promise was made to our wives and families. Ministry should never interfere with our ability to provide for our families' material needs. Nor should it prevent us from attending to their emotional and spiritual needs. When in doubt, our priorities should always be God, family, ministry; in that order. While ministry is often rewarding and life giving, one of the most difficult decisions a deacon must make is knowing when to step away from his ministry for the sake of the higher priorities.

Our diaconal identity as a minister of the Church and our identity as a husband and father are not mutually exclusive. They must be completely integrated.

The people of our parishes, who see us on Sunday serving at the altar as deacon, must also see us in the pew alongside our family serving as deacon. The more we prioritize one vocation over the other, the more confusing the sacramental image of the diaconate becomes. The more we can integrate the two vocations, the more visible it will be to those around us.

When I met with first year deacon couples, my first question was always directed at the wives. I asked, "How is he doing?" Instead of answering, "Great, Wonderful," or "What a Blessing," the wives were more apt to offer the unvarnished truth. "He needs to learn how to say 'No.'" While some of the older/wiser deacons eventually mastered that ability, I suspect most of us have a long way to go. But it is a journey we must travel.



MEET THE NEWEST CANDIDATES IN DIACONAL FORMATION



Deacon Dale Nees

“The candidate stage of initial formation is the occasion to confirm a man’s diaconal



vocation and prepare for ordination. Throughout this stage of formation, the candidate himself assumes the primary responsibility for his discernment and development. ‘Self-formation does not imply isolation...or independence from formators, but responsibility and dynamism in responding with generosity to God’s call, valuing to the highest the people and tools which Providence puts at one’s disposition. Self-formation has its roots in a fine determination to grow in life according to the Spirit and in conformity with the vocation received.’”¹

Pictured are our newest candidates along with their wives, who underwent the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Holy Orders on September 9, 2023 with The Most

Reverend Jeffrey R. Haines presiding. They are from left to right: John C. Schroeder (Kara), Marc D. Bucaro (Megan), Dylan T. McHugh (Emily), John M. Van Hecke (Alicia), Jan D. Anderson (Michelle), Rene B. Rillorta (Jona), Richard T. Fedor (Megan), Kevin R. Doll (Dawn), Thomas J. Brefka (Claire), Justin T. Spaeth (Michele), and Chris M. Lauterbach (Christy). When asked by Bishop Haines whether they were resolved to prepare themselves “in mind and spirit to give faithful service to Christ the Lord and his Body, the Church?” ...they responded with a firm and unified “I do,” thus accepting their responsibility for this stage of their formation. The day was beautiful, and it is always lovely to have the opportunity to meet more of their family members and celebrate with a shared meal.

So now the three years of candidacy begin. Those who have had experience with formation for Holy Orders know it will necessitate their openness and dedication to grow into a new ministerial identity. Thank you for your support and accompaniment of these men and their families. Please keep them in your prayers so the “God who has begun the work in” them brings “it to fulfillment.”²

Deacon Dale Nees

¹United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States of America: Second Edition* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2021), 117.

² Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *The Roman Pontifical* (Vatican City; Vox Clara Committee 2012), 223.

A DEACON’S OBLIGATION TO REACH OUT

Life is often stressful enough without the added obligations of the deacon. It is the Archbishop’s sincere desire to support the family in navigating these difficulties. If deacons and their wives are experiencing marital difficulties, both wives and husbands are not only welcomed but encouraged to reach out to the Church. Deacons are also reminded that it is their obligation to the Order and the Church to notify the Archbishop’s office if a marital situation reaches a critical point. They should be brought into conversation before the option of a civil remedy is considered. The Office of Deacon Services is set up to assist deacons, wives, and families in any way it can. Please reach out.

THE DEACON, SERVANT OF HOPE



**Dcn. Manuel
Maldonado-
Villalobos**

Last August I had the opportunity to participate with other Hispanic brother deacons from our archdiocese and other dioceses in the United States, and the Caribbean, in the Annual Conference of Hispanic Deacons. It was a weekend full of brotherhood and growth. The focus was on The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Deacon. There were very good presentations and great speakers. One of the presentations that caught my attention was

by Dr. Felix Palazzi Von Buren, from Boston College.

In his presentation, “*Diakonia at the Service of Hope*,” he spoke about the importance of our vocation and ministry as a service of hope. As deacons, we are called to live and be the image of Christ the Servant in our families, work, churches, and community at large. But we have to go even further, beyond our homes and churches. Our mission is to be witnesses of hope and bring hope to every corner of this world, even in the most hidden and forgotten corner of society. Herein lies our threefold identity: Word, Liturgy and Charity. Each of them makes us instruments of hope. When I go to the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, I see that it is filled with this invitation to be servants of hope. When referring to our triple identity, I remember directory # 41:

“Fundamentally, however, there is an intrinsic unity in a deacon’s ministry. In preaching the Word, he is involved in every kind of missionary outreach. In sanctifying God’s People through the Liturgy, he infuses and elevates people with new meaning and with a Christian worldview. In bringing Christ’s reign into every stratum of society, (Charity) the deacon develops a Christian conscience among all people of good will, motivating their service and commitment to the sanctity of human life.” (Cfr. NDFMLPD # 41)

This unity in our ministry and service to others brings this important element of hope. Our life and our diaconal ministry must be symbols of hope. And this hope is when we live, and we make the Kingdom of God present in the midst of this world. Dr. Felix gave us an answer about that Kingdom that Jesus calls us to make present:

“A kingdom that has not a king, but a father with the womb of a mother; a kingdom that has no armies, but has fraternal and service relations; a kingdom where riches do not consist in hoarding gold and silver but in relations of gratuitousness and justice; a kingdom of which Jesus never mentions walls or borders, but speaks of rooms and banquets; a kingdom in which power is in service and not

in privilege; a kingdom to which all are invited without exception.”¹

As deacons, our service must be at the service of the Kingdom. This Kingdom brings hope to all those we encounter. Through our service and faithful dedication to the call to be servants, our brothers and sisters will see or rediscover a Christ who gives them hope. A Christ who is already present in our families, work, churches, and community at large. Even in the most hidden and forgotten corner of society.

There is much more richness and teaching in this and the other presentations that took place at the conference. I just want to remember a small part of the blessing of being a deacon and my call to be a servant of hope. We are servants of the Kingdom and our “*diakonia*” is to be ambassadors of hope.

Dcn. Manuel Maldonado-Villalobos

¹ Translation from Spanish: La diaconía al servicio de la esperanza. 37 CONFERENCIA NACIONAL WALTHAM MA 2023, Asociación Nacional de Diáconos Hispanos, agosto 3 al 6, 2023.

A DEACON’S REFLECTION ON GRIEVING

Suffering is part of life. In my ministry as a Servant of Christ, I experienced not only difficult times of my own, but also in the lives of those I serve. Their sufferings become my suffering. I have come to believe, no matter how difficult it is when suffering, there is a power in it. With the help of God, and those who care, I have always come out stronger in my faith in God. I accept it as a privilege to share in the suffering of Jesus.

There are times when reaching out to someone going through the loss of their loved one, to try to find the words of consolation and comfort, all I can do is listen to their stories, pray with them, and pray for them. As I walk in my own pain and sorrow, it has opened my heart to let those in grief know that they are not alone...to have faith in God...that He is with us...that He has never abandoned us.

In times of suffering, it brings a stop to our lives for a time... It might bring us to our knees...but, like Jesus, it is through prayer and our faith in God that we will find healing and peace in our heart. It will also make our faith stronger and brings us closer to God and those around us.

At this time of suffering in the loss of my loved one, I come to believe that the Holy Spirit is (and has) always been acting and speaking to me...in the journey of my life.

*With Love,
The Least of the Deacons.*

Dcn. Roberto Fuentes ‘02

THE JOURNEY FOR DISCERNMENT OF A WIFE OF A FUTURE DEACON



Maritza Espino

The path for discernment is not only for the husband who feels he is being called to the permanent diaconate. Instead, it is for both and for their family. *Although it is clearly understood that the wife of the married aspirant is not seeking ordination, nevertheless, their marriage and family are involved in the discernment of this diaconal vocation. The aspirant and his wife need*

*to realistically assess how her own life, Church service and family are affected and respected. The enrichment and deepening of the reciprocal and sacrificial love between husband and wife constitute perhaps the most meaningful way in which the wife of the aspirant is involved in the discernment of her husband's vocation.*¹

During the first trimester, wives are required to attend classes and workshops for six weeks. The day begins with Morning Prayer at 8 a.m. and ends with Evening Prayer at 5:30 p.m. This is an all-day formation, and for those with young families, this means that they must arrange babysitting for their kids. That in itself is a sacrifice on their part, especially for the wives who must leave little ones in the care of someone else while they accompany their husbands. This journey also requires the wives to take on extra responsibilities that perhaps at one point their husband had or shared, such as taking and picking up kids from school, taking them to music lessons, sports practice, helping with homework, cooking, doing laundry, cutting the lawn, etc. Additionally, some wives are employed full-time. Yet they freely choose to support their husbands in the rigorous demands of their studies in order to be transformed and equipped to serve God's people through the permanent diaconate.

After the first trimester, the ladies come twice per trimester to an all-day formation tailored toward their needs. We offer formational workshops that offer human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral formation that will help them as they continue with their own discernment. The program is blessed to have faculty experts that support us by facilitating the wives' workshops. Their day is made up of a total of four workshops of 90 minutes each, and they join their husbands for Morning and Evening prayer as well as Mass. It is a full day commitment in which they have time to focus and reflect on their own vocation. This is also a time to share their stories, experiences, joys, sorrows, and challenges in their journeys and check in and pray for each other. Through this time together they are doing discernment which in fact is a *decision-making process that honors the place of God's will in their lives.*²

These courageous ladies do not journey alone. Their family, parish faith community, close friends, spiritual directors, mentors, diaconal formation team, as well as the Order of Deacons and

the Universal Church continues to pray for their marriages and family vocations as well as their vocation to the Holy Orders of the permanent diaconate.

Prayer for Discernment

*God our Father,
You have a plan for each one of us,
You hold out to us a future full of hope.
Give us the wisdom of your Spirit
so that we can see the shape of your plan
in the gifts you have given us,
and in the circumstances of our daily lives.
Give us the freedom of your Spirit,
to seek you with all our hearts,
and to choose your will above all else.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

~Discernment Prayer from the
Carmelite Sister of the Divine Heart of Jesus

Maritza Espino

¹The National Directory For The Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons, Second Edition, n. 200 (August 2021).,

²Loyola Press, Discernment: Making Inspired Choices, On-line Article by Joe Paprocki, D.Min. Available from: <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/ignatian-spirituality/discernment/discernment-making-inspired-choices/>.

2023 VATICAN II AWARD

Congratulations to Dcn. John Ebel, recipient of the 2023 Vatican II Award for Leadership in the Permanent Diaconate.

The recipient of this award is a permanent deacon who is serving the Church in an exemplary manner, witnessing to sacrificial love in family, work, and parish life, with a particular heart toward service to others, especially the least among us.



John and Maryanne Ebel

Ordained in 1996, Deacon John has served the Archdiocese of Milwaukee for twenty-seven years in both the parishes and the Office of Diaconate Formation. Dcn. John served at St. Bernadette, St. John Vianney, and Christ King parishes. His passion was working with engaged couples, pastoral counseling, and evangelization. Dcn. John served the last ten years of ministry as the Director of Deacon Formation. He re-developed the formation program to bring it in line with the National Directory for the formation of Permanent Deacons. He is well respected by the deacons under his responsibility.

DEACON SENATE: SEPTEMBER 2023

Since the last publication of the Deacon Servant Newsletter, the Council met September 19th. The meeting was held in person at the MMPC. Below are some of the more important points of note from the meeting:

- The Senate welcomed Dcn. Dennis Petrie as the new president and Dcn. Ted Faust as the President Elect/Recording Secretary.
- The Treasurer Scott Campbell is currently putting together the 2023/2024 Budget. He is waiting on a couple of pieces of information before recommending an adjustment in deacon dues.
- Dcn. Dale Nees continued to stress the need to promote the diaconate in the individual parishes for the class beginning in 2024. There are currently 11 candidates (Year III / Class of 2024) and 11 candidates (Year I / Class of 2026). The new 5 Year curriculum has been approved and will begin in September 2024.
- Dcn. Jim Starke presented a summary page outlining the objectives/mission of the district meetings. The representatives were asked to share the document with the district members. We will propose including the document in the next revision of the Clergy Manual.
- Dcn.'s Petrie, Normann, and Klingseisen are continuing to organize this year's deacon retreat. Registration forms were emailed/snail mailed in September.
- Dcn.'s Paczkowski, Chmielewski, Cody and the Ministers of Care Committee are continuing to organize the Memorial Mass. Registration forms were emailed/snail mailed in September.
- Fr. Cliff Ernautinger presented a need for deacons to participate in the special ministry he is overseeing. Because of the sensitivity of this ministry, more information will be shared at the district meetings.
- The Office of Charismatic Renewal presented an opportunity for the deacon community to host a special presentation next October by Ralph Martin and Peter Herbeck. The topic would be on the deacon's role in evangelization. Before we can adequately gauge interest, we requested more information.
- The future Memorial Mass Assignment Schedule was revised to prevent back-to-back hosting with Deacon Day. Districts 1-2-3 will host Memorial Mass in 2024. Districts 4-5-12 will host in 2025.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday November 15, 2023. The plan is to meet via Zoom.

REST IN PEACE

† **Dcn. Edward Blaze**, age 94, of Milwaukee passed away Sunday, August 20, 2023. Edward was born July 12, 1929, in Lake Charles, LA. He attended Milwaukee Institute of Technology and received an associate degree in electronics from Milwaukee School of Engineering. He worked for the Wisconsin Telephone Company until his retirement.

Dcn. Edward is survived by Dorothy Blaze, his loving spouse of 71 years, and children Lindston, Michael, Cynthia, and Valerie. Edward and Dorothy have nine grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his son Darrel.

Dcn. Edward was ordained a Permanent Deacon December 26, 1975 at the St. John Cathedral, Milwaukee, WI with Archbishop William T. Cousins presiding. It was the first ordination class of Permanent deacons in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Edward was initially assigned to St. Leo Catholic Church, Milwaukee. He

served from 1975 to 1996. His ministries included baptismal preparation, assisting in liturgy, distributing the Eucharist, and visiting the homebound.

In 1996, Dcn. Edward was assigned to All Saints Catholic Church where he served until the time of his death. Along with his liturgical duties, Dcn. Edward supported the Legion of Mary ministry, provided transportation for parishioners, and assisted those parishioners seeking to obtain their G.E.D. He was also part of the parish's Gospel Choir. His passion was leading bible studies at the House of Correction. At the time of his death, Dcn. Edward was writing a book about the profound influence the Holy Spirit had made on his life.

Services were held at All Saints Catholic Church on Monday, August 28. Approximately 20 deacons and spouses were present. Deacons Jack Champagne and Frank Pemper assisted.

Prayer Requests

Jeff Buth, son of Dcn. Buck '81

Dcn. Randy Wells '96

Lee Cesarec, widow of
Dcn. Michael '84

Dcn. David Zimprich '84

Maria Ignacia Flores, mother of Juana
Avila (Dcn. Antonio Palacio '07)

RECENTLY DECEASED AND THEIR FAMILIES

Joan Legget, wife of
Dcn. Jim Leggett '83

Dcn Edward Blaze '75

Dcn. Troy Major '02

Adele, Wiese, mother of
Dcn. Scott Wiese '12

Carolyn Nickel, wife of Dcn. Jim '05

Ted Clark, son of Dcn. Bill Clark '03

Eneida Reyes, wife of Dcn. Ed '07

Al Scherrer, brother of
Amy Starke (Dcn. Jim '16)

Dcn. Virgilio Rodriguez '75

Heriberto A. Avila Villavicencio,
father of Juana Avila (Dcn. Antonio
Palacio '07)

Dcn. Bob Starr '03



DATES TO REMEMBER

Oct. 22, 2023

2023 Memorial Mass, 3 p.m., Bishop Jim Schuerman, St. Katherine Drexel, Beaver Dam

Nov. 3-5, 2023

Deacon Retreat, Redemptorist Retreat Center; Dcn. Larry Norman, Directing; Bishop Haines, Saturday Mass president; Rev. Nathan Reesman, Sunday Mass president

Dec. 2, 2023

Deacon Wives Morning of Reflection, MMCP, "Creating a Mary Advent in a Martha World"
8 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

April 13, 2024

Deacon Day 2024: St. Gregory the Great Parish (63rd and Oklahoma), time and theme to be determined

May 4, 2024

Post-Ordination Formation Class of 2022, MMCP, times to be determined



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