

# THE Deacon Servant

OFFICES OF DEACON SERVICES | DIACONATE FORMATION | ARCHDIOCESE of MILWAUKEE



ARCHDIOCESE of MILWAUKEE  
**DIACONATE**  
*Where love becomes service.*

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## DIRECTOR'S REPORT



**Deacon Jim  
Starke**

Each night when I am reciting evening prayer, I try to include personal intentions at the end of the intersessions. The list normally includes my wife, children, deceased parents, and maybe a crazy relative or two. I

also try to include the intentions for that special person God placed in my path that day who needs my prayers.

I found that I could use that last list of special intentions as a litmus test of the effectiveness of my hours spent that day. If I went a day (or even worse, a whole week), given all the encounters I may have had, and not recognized at least one person with a special need for prayers, then maybe my diaconal eyes were closed. Maybe I was so focused on completing a ministerial task or liturgical function that I failed to look up at the person I was serving and recognize their need.

In previous newsletters, I spoke of the importance of cultivating our relationships with our archbishop, our pastors, our wives, and families. If we fail to tend to these relationships daily, our diaconal ministry will fold like a house of cards. Many of the points were lifted directly from the USCCB's National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons. Equally important

is the relationship between the deacon and his community, whether it is with his parish community, place of employment, the local food pantry, or homeless shelter.

“In his preaching and teaching, the deacon articulates the needs and hopes of the people he has experienced, thereby animating, motivating, and facilitating a commitment among the lay faithful to evangelize service in the world.”

(NDFMLPD, No. 63)



If these relationships are not properly cultivated, the deacon's liturgical and teaching ministries eventually become a collection of hollow platitudes. We may not recognize this. However, the people in the pews certainly will.

Stepping down from the sanctuary and into the street is challenging,

especially for someone like me, who gravitates towards stability, certainty and predictability. Aside from the occasional rogue server, the sanctuary is almost like our safe space. It is the place where we are in most control: read the text, lift the cup, “go in peace.” As long as we follow the rubrics and know we are doing what is expected of us, we are in control.

The street is the exact opposite. It is defined by its sheer lack of control. I can memorize the GIRM. However, I will not have its support when I am holding the

## MANAGING APPLICANTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2024 AND ONGOING INQUIRY



Deacon Dale Nees

**“Assessment of readiness at the application level is accomplished in a variety of ways.”<sup>1</sup> (No. 187)**

**“The diocese’s committee on admission ... should nominate to the diocesan bishop only those applicants whom they have judged as possessing the**

**necessary qualities for entrance and successful completion of the aspirant stage. ... If an applicant is judged not to be ready but to be a suitable aspirant in the future, the director of formation should convey to the applicant various options for how he might prepare to achieve the basic entrance requirements. It is also essential for the director of formation to keep frequent contact with these potential candidates.”<sup>2</sup> (No. 188)**



Most of us recall individually how involved our own process of applying for admission into the aspirant stage of formation was. From the staff perspective, it requires an incredible amount of coordination in receiving a multitude of applicant documents. This round, we started using new software to track our applicants’ progress, and it is working very well for us. It is software that is typically used for recruiting new employees. The beauty is that it allows us to scan documents and post comments which are time stamped for better clarity. Each Diaconate Formation staff member can see exactly where an inquirer is in the process and the history of contacts that have been made along the way. In the system today, we have 30 inquirers, 14 of whom have had their canonical interviews and have been cleared through our process to pursue endorsement by their pastor or parish director. We have already, even amid the Christmas season, received 12 of those endorsements back. We are anticipating all 14 applicants will go before the Committee on Admissions in mid-April to mid-May 2024. We hope to make the most of the functionality of this electronic tracking tool as applicants complete the various parts of their application and submit them to our office.

The other benefit, beyond tracking this round of applicants for September 2024, is the ability to maintain a better handle on the remaining 16 inquirers who are still discerning. It is a huge advantage to have a more automated

way to manage their information in a central repository, which allows us to better evaluate their progress toward readiness. Not only is tracking easier, but communications can more easily be shared with inquirers as well. I am grateful for the collaboration between Jenny Michaels, our coordinator in the Office of Diaconate Formation, and Jennifer Pollock, Associate Director of Recruitment and Engagement for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, in bringing this great innovation into reality. While we have much more to learn about the full potential of this new resource, it has already helped us to better meet the expectations of the National Directory.

*Deacon Dale Nees*

<sup>1</sup>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. 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), 102.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 102-103.

► **DIRECTOR’S REPORT - Continued from Page 1.**

hand of someone suffering in the hospital. I can spend sleepless nights studying Beal’s “Commentary Code of Canon Law” and still find myself without words for the family who have just lost a loved one. *Lumen Gentium* is one of the most beautiful Church documents but rarely finds its way into the conversation with a homeless person.

For those of us who had the privilege of having Dr. Dennis Silva for Old Testament Scripture, you probably remember his summation of the Old Testament as repeated examples of patriarchs, prophets and kings who demonstrated “Lived Trust.” In diaconal formation, we were given exceptional training. We walked away with several ministerial tools. Ministering outside the comfort of the sanctuary, where “control” is more of a punch line than a reality, requires more than ministerial tools. We are required to rely on that same lived trust. Our relationships with those in our community define our ministry in the sanctuary. That experience of lived trust will enliven and authenticate our message of faith, hope and love.

## A HEART FILLED WITH GRATITUDE



*Dcn. Manuel Maldonado-Villalobos*

I would like to take a moment to reflect on our lives and our formation program. As 2023 ends and the new 2024 starts, we always celebrate with our families and friends. We celebrate all the good experiences

and pray for new ones in the coming year. We gather around the table as a family to share a good meal and to remember stories — the good and the bad. We remember the people we met and the people who left us behind. We share our joys being with our loved ones, and at the same time, we remember those we love and who cannot be present. The celebrations of the Christmas season brought us a mix of feelings and desires. However, in the midst of it all, we prayed, and we were grateful. We remember to be grateful for our lives, health, family, friends and jobs.

As a formation community, a formation family, the season was a time for a little break from classes to celebrate and continue our traditions and customs with our loved ones. For sure, there was a feeling of gratitude and relaxation from formation and assignments. St. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, exhorts us in these words: “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) Gratitude becomes the center of this time and season, and I would like to show my gratitude to many people who are part of this formation family. Everything that we do as formators is thanks to the people who are always present in our lives and support us. As I reflect on our

formation program, I want to take this time to thank everyone who is part of this family.

We would like to thank our primary formator, Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI. A big thanks to our Auxiliary Bishops Jeffrey Haines and James Schuerman, and our vicar for clergy, Very Rev. Nathan Reesman. Their guidance and support make our formation program a solid and vibrant process. Our hearts are filled with gratitude to the pastors and parish directors of our candidates; their support is key in forming our future deacons in the image of Christ the Servant. That servant image is taught thanks to our great faculty: priests, deacons, religious, lay theologians and professionals who offer their knowledge to our students and their wives to prepare them to be of service to our Church and society today. And the list continues. We always say that the deacon goes beyond the parish to serve. It is also true for our formation family.

Our gratitude goes beyond our formation classes and days. We offer words of gratitude to our general vicars, priests, spiritual directors, deacons and wife mentors, members of the Committee on Admission and Scrutiny, past and present, the Formation and Family Committee, archdiocesan staff, parish communities, benefactors, and the whole deacon community for their presence, guidance, support and prayers.

A big thanks to our candidates, their wives and their families. Their response to discerning a call to a vocation of service is a blessing for our Church. Finally, our hearts are filled with gratitude to God for giving us the opportunity to serve him by serving

## TIMELESS MISSIVES

*By Dcn. John Monday © JPM 2/10/2012*

Black squiggles on white paper  
forming words  
crawling across the paper.  
Words from another language  
words speaking of other times  
and places.

Words like Paul and John and Peter  
and Titus and Corinthians  
and Romans and Ephesians

Words speaking  
of a God of a Savior.

Words of a people  
trying to understand  
the mind and will of  
a divinity  
and  
the  
One  
Sent  
to save them  
and  
claim them  
for eternity.

How are we to live  
and give  
and witness  
to the miracle  
of love and hope  
and everlasting promise  
fulfilled in Jesus.

our Church, forming deacons and families to serve his people.

May this year 2024 be filled with blessings and great experiences as we all, as a family, serve God and his people with a grateful heart.

*Dcn. Manuel Maldonado-Villalobos*



## THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER



*Maritza Espino*

“Deacons are obliged to give priority to the spiritual life and to live their diakonia with generosity. Clerics have a special obligation to seek holiness in their lives because they are consecrated to God by a new title in the reception of orders as dispensers of God’s mysteries in service of His people. They should integrate their family obligations, professional life, and

ministerial responsibilities so as to grow in their commitment to the person and mission of Christ the Servant. A married deacon is encouraged to develop prayer time with his wife and family.”<sup>1</sup>

Developing or creating habits of praying can be challenging, especially when our daily obligations like work, family and formation are full-time jobs. Yet, once we have developed our prayer life, this can be a life changer, it can be transformative for ourselves, for our families and for those we are surrounded by.

Quite often I hear from the candidates in formation their struggles as they try to fit in the Liturgy of the Hours into their ordinary lives — yet prayer is essential as they continue to discern their vocation. “Integrating prayer in their families’ obligations, professional life and ministerial responsibilities” in essence is having a personal intimate relationship with God. This sounds easy, but it requires time and commitment just like in any other relationship. Prayer is also essential for the couple (husband and wife); this can be challenging because we often think prayer is private and personal. Nonetheless, a couple can create through prayer a strong relationship in God’s love which invites them into a special place of intimacy with each other and God. As the couples go through formation, one of our current wives’ workshops is to pray together with *Lectio Divina* — this is a time where we pray together and discern what God through the Scriptures is asking of us at the present time and how we can carry it forward into action for the upcoming week. My hope and prayers are that they adapt to this form of prayer and that it becomes part of their spiritual practices not only while they are in initial formation but as a lifelong practice that continues to form them throughout their entire life. Ideally, *Lectio Divina* is a great way to pray together with the Scriptures. Needless to say, this is not the only way; there are endless forms of prayer practices and devotions in which each couple needs to find and discern their own prayer needs and devotions based on their family reality.

Nurturing our relationships through prayer not only transforms our personal lives and our marriages, it transforms our families. There is a quote by St. John Paul II: “families that pray together stay together” — prayer creates strong family

bonds; it becomes the foundation and strengthens us as we navigate the ups and downs of our ordinary lives. Blessed Luis of Granada describes the process: “once [people] have made some progress in the spiritual life and have acquired some devotion, their love of God prompts them to find ways of expressing their sentiments in a more personal and intimate way. ... As one’s devotion increases, the type of prayer practice habitually by the individual will likewise rise from vocalized prayer to mental prayer and eventually contemplation.”<sup>2</sup>

*Maritza Espino*

<sup>1</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. 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), 68.

<sup>2</sup> Luis of Granada, *Pathways to Holiness*. Trans. and adapt. by Jordan Aumann, O.P. (New York: Alba, 1998), 107.

## MEMORIAL MASS 2023

The 2023 Memorial Mass was a resounding success. Thank you to the deacons of Districts 7, 8 and 9. We also extend our appreciation to Bishop James Schuerman, Fr. Nathan Reesman, Fr. William Arnold and the members of St. Katharine Drexel who assisted.



*Deacons Randy Wells and Mark Jansen assisted Bishop Schuerman; Fr. Reesman, Vicar for Clergy; and Fr. Arnold, Pastor of St. Katharine Drexel.*



*Mary Copson, Mary Banach, Linda Klingseisen and Dcn. Jeff Copson participate in the expression of remembrance.*

## DEACON SENATE: NOVEMBER 2023

Since the last publication of the Deacon Servant Newsletter, the Council met Nov. 15. The meeting was held in via Zoom. Below are the some of the more important points of note from the meeting:

- The Senate welcomed Dcn. Ed Benvenga, who will be taking over as representative for Districts 1, 2 and 3.
- Treasurer Scott Campbell is currently putting together the 2023-2024 budget. There was a slight cost overrun on the Memorial Mass that was offset by a surplus from the Deacon Retreat. The cost of the Deacon Wives Morning of Reflection will be submitted to the Office of Continuing Formation for reimbursement.
- The discernment sessions for the next class are completed. The Office of Diaconate Formation is in the process of canonical reviews and collecting pastor endorsements. The new deacon video is in the final editing process and should be available for viewing shortly.
- Thank you to all who were involved with organizing the 2023 Memorial Mass. There were 75 deacons, wives and widows in attendance. Bishop Schuerman; Fr. Reesman, Vicar for Clergy; and Fr. Arnold's participation was very much appreciated. The consensus of all the feedback was that the afternoon was a great success.
- Thank you to Deacons Larry Normann, Dennis Petrie and Paul Klingseisen for organizing the 2023 Deacon Retreat. Fifty-two deacons attended. The retreat was a synodal experience of its own, with lots of discussion, some comfortable, and some not so comfortable. In the end, everyone left with things to ponder, and it was a good opportunity to get to know each other and bond as deacon brothers. Next year's retreat will be Nov. 7-10 at the Redemptorist Retreat Center. It was moved out one week to avoid potential parish conflicts with All Saints and All Souls Day.
- Deacon Day 2024 is scheduled for Saturday, April 13 at St. Gregory the Great. Dcn. Br. Silas Henderson, O.F.M., will be the presenter. Archbishop ListECKI will be the presider.

*The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024. The plan is to meet via Zoom.*

## REST IN PEACE

† **Dcn. Guillermo De La Garza** was ordained April 11, 1976, in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. He served St. James, Kenosha, and the Spanish-speaking community in the Kenosha area. In 1979, Dcn. De La Garza and his family moved to Corpus Christi, Texas, where he served an additional 23 years. In 1986, he was formally incardinated into the Diocese of Corpus Christi. He continued his ministry to the diaconate with the then Diocese of Corpus Christi, first being sent to serve the community of St. Joseph Catholic Church on Meadow Avenue, then being transferred to San Luis Rey Catholic Church on Sanders Avenue. His service continued following his tenure there to Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church for a short period. He then finished his service in ministry at Christ the King Catholic Church on Guadalupe and Tilden, having remained there until his retirement in 2002 for the Diocese of Laredo, but

remained active in his ministry to God's people, even through any health adversities, even after retirement. He cherished serving the people of God throughout the city of Laredo.

Services were held at San Agustin Cathedral in Laredo, Texas, on Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023.

† **Enaida Reyes, wife of Dcn. Edwin Reyes '07**  
Enaida and Dcn. Edwin Reyes were married for 53 years. 'Naida' graciously served the deacon community as both a spiritual director and mentor for many of the deacon and candidate wives. Naida and Dcn. Reyes also served several years on the Committee of Admission and Scrutiny.

Services were held at St. John Paul II Parish in Milwaukee, Nov. 18, 2023. Bishop James Schuerman presided.

## Prayer Requests

Dcn. Tom Filipiak '94	Dcn. Desales Wisniewski, O.F.M. '83
Dcn. Jim Chrisien '98	Dcn. Dave Zimprich '84
Dcn. Pat Frye '84 and his son Jeffery	
Dcn. Julio Lopez '98	<b>RECENTLY DECEASED AND THEIR FAMILIES</b>
Dcn. Ricardo Munoz '81	Esperanza Benavente, mother of Dcn. Jorge Benavente '98
Dcn. Bruno Nguyen '00	Dcn. Guillermo De La Garza '76
Lucy Paczkowski, wife of Dcn. Dale Paczkowski '12	Helen Keller, wife of Dcn. Martin Keller '88
Dcn. Virgilio Rodriguez '75	Virginia Keller, daughter of Dcn. Martin Keller '88
Dcn. Salvador Rosado '98	Ken Ponec, brother of Dcn. Gerry Ponec '81
Dcn. Ron Schneider '96	Enaida Reyes, wife of Dcn. Edwin Reyes '07
Benjamin Stilling, grandson of Dcn. Jay Wittak, '05	



## DATES TO REMEMBER

### April 13, 2024

Deacon Day 2024: St. Gregory the Great, 3160 S. 63rd St., Milwaukee; times to be determined

### May 4, 2024

Post Ordination Formation Class of 2022, MMCP, 3501 S. Lake Drive, St. Francis; times to be determined

### Oct. 20, 2024

Deacon Memorial Mass: St. Mary, 7307 40th Ave., Kenosha; 3 p.m.

### Nov. 8-10, 2024

Deacon Retreat, Redemptorist Retreat Center, 1800 N. Timber Trail Lane, Oconomowoc



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P.O. Box 070912 | 3501 South Lake Drive Milwaukee, WI 53207-0912

**Deacon Jim Starke, Director Deacon Services, (414) 769-3409**  
**Deacon Dale Nees, Director Diaconate Formation, (414) 758-2212**  
**Manuel Maldonado-Villalobos, Associate Director, (414) 758-2207**  
**Maritza Espino, Associate Director of Pastoral Formation, (414) 758-2205**

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Archdiocese of Milwaukee

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