

THE *Deacon Servant*

OFFICES OF DEACON SERVICES | DIACONATE FORMATION | ARCHDIOCESE of MILWAUKEE



DIACONATE FORMATION
Where love becomes service.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Deacon Services 1
- Diaconate Formation 1
- Responding to the Call ... 2
- Personnel Board 3
- Deacon / Wives Listening Session 4
- Roman/Episcopal Gathering 4
- Vatican II Award 4
- Deacon Retreat 2019..... 5
- Deacon Senate..... 5
- Know Our Deacon II 6
- Prayer Requests 7
- Dates to Remember 7

DEACON SERVICES REPORT



Deacon Mike Chmielewski

Greetings, deacon family, and New Year's blessings to you all! As we begin a new year and roll out our second Deacon Servant Newsletter, I want to thank all of you for all you do for God's people and His Church.

I am always amazed at the array and depth of your ministries. As I review Covenants and Formation Reports, and even more so, as I talk with you at all the various events and activities, I am awed by your generosity of service.

We are all called to be a reflection of "Christ Servant" in our ministry, and the opportunities for service often seem endless. However, I would like to draw your attention to an area of service that many are unaware of. It is service to the diaconate, and in particular, service to our local deacon community.

There is always a significant need for service in our governance, formation and the care of our deacon family. Currently, more than 30 deacons and wives are involved in service to the deacon family. Opportunities exist to serve

on the Deacon Senate (8), Deacon Personnel Board (5), Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (2), Clergy Formation Board (5), Retreat Planning (2), and the Bereavement Committee (Ministers of Care) (8). Then, add in the need for service in Diaconate Formation including leading parish information sessions, discernment sessions, COAS, FIG, mentoring, retreats, class instruction, and more.

Many of the deacons ordained before 2010 have been heavily involved in all of these important service opportunities. To those of you who have served and are serving, Thank You! To the deacons and wives of the post-2010 classes, I ask you to open yourselves to the importance of serving your deacon family. Needs will always arise and at times you may receive a tap on the shoulder to serve your family. Know that serving your deacon family is a critical and important ministry.

May 2020 be a year of many blessings for you and your families. I pray with great confidence that your baptismal call to discipleship and your vocational call to service may guide all you do this year and always!

— *Deacon Mike Chmielewski*

DIACONATE FORMATION REPORT



Deacon Dale Nees

In November, I shared some data with the Deacon Senate related to diaconal growth based on the last ten years. Unfortunately, the data reveals that if trends do not change, then we will continue to experience a net decline at a rate

of about two deacons every other year. The

good news is that if we all adopt a practice of intentionally promoting diaconal vocations, then things could turn around and look quite different. Bear in mind that it requires nine men to be ordained every other year just to maintain the current reality, provided our death rate remains constant. But, suppose we were able to ordain fifteen men, all other things being equal, we would then experience a net increase of six deacons every other year. If we

► See **DIACONATE FORMATION**
(continued on page 2)

► **DIACONATE FORMATION**

(continued from page 1)

could double that, every parish could have a deacon in ten years.

At first blush, that may sound unrealistic, however, did you know that only 30% of parishes in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee have vetted an aspirant in the last ten years? That suggests to me that there are 136 parishes that we, as deacons, could encourage to host information sessions about diaconal ministry. Consider for a moment what the result might look like if each of those parishes were to inspire at least one vocation. I would love to be compelled to solve how the Office of Diaconate Formation would operationalize starting a new class every year. That is a challenge worth taking on.

For your information, 71% of those who contact us come in for an Intake Interview. Fifty-one percent go on

to receive a certificate of completion for attending regional Discernment Sessions. In this most recent round of Discernment Sessions, we issued 39 certificates. Of those, 27 men determined that it was the proper time for them to apply, so they attended our first Canonical Evening on Impediments and Irregularities for Holy Orders to the Permanent Diaconate. Once this step is fully completed, and if there are no impediments, they can be endorsed by their respective pastors/parish directors. Therefore, we are optimistic that we will again start a larger aspirant group come September.

Know that concerted efforts are being made to raise everyone's awareness that diaconal formation can begin as early as 31 years of age, versus the prevailing assumption that formation should be delayed until one is anticipating retirement or that children are now on

their own. The reality is that discerning when to begin formation varies with each family according to their situation. In the New Year, two other promotional tools will be released. One is a poster of the men and their wives currently in formation. The other is a new video on diaconal ministry in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Please keep all of those who are pursuing an application for admission to the Aspirant Path in your prayers. We also ask for prayers for the first-year candidates as they look forward to celebrating the Rite of Institution to the Ministry of Reader, with the Archbishop's approval, on Saturday, February 22. Lastly, we appreciate your continued prayers for the third-year candidates and the entire formational community.

— *Deacon Dale Nees*

RESPONDING TO THE CALL: ADMISSIONS AND SELECTION FOR DIACONATE FORMATION



**Manuel
Maldonado-
Villalobos**

In our Archdiocese of Milwaukee, our program runs every other year. For example, a new Aspirant class will be starting formation and another group will be ordained in September 2020.

As we enter into a new year, we are getting ready for our admission process for a group of men and their wives (if married) who have gone through inquiry, discernment, and prayer to respond to the call to the vocation of the Permanent Deacon.

To better understand the importance of this process, I would like to take you through it “step by step.”

Discernment of the Call: “The first stirrings of a vocation to the diaconate

are often explored at a personal level and usually begin with seeking information about the diaconate and formation.” *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of the Permanent Deacon in the United States* (ND, 169). The man discerning this call inquires about the vocation of the Permanent Deacon. The family, the community, and the parish community are essential in this discernment process as this call is not only personal but also communal. Family, friends, and parishioners can express their ideas and support to the man seeking this vocation.

The man and his wife contact our office and go through an “Intake Interview,” where we have a conversation to clarify general questions and give materials and support to help in the discernment process. The man

or couple participates in a six-session “Discernment Program” where our Discernment Team of great deacons and wives provide more information and orientation about the Permanent Diaconate and its ministry of Word, Liturgy, and Charity.

Canonical Impediment/Irregularities

Interview: The First step in the application process is to check for “Canonical Impediment/Irregularities”. After finishing the discernment program, the inquirers attend an evening of orientation and interviews on these “impediments” (Canon Law #s 1041-1042). Thank you to our Chancellor and Tribunal Staff who lead this process. After the interview, they review, and if there is no impediment,

► See **RESPONDING TO THE CALL**
(continued on page 3)

► RESPONDING TO THE CALL

(continued from page 2)

the man is clear for endorsement. We send a notification out asking the inquirer to seek his pastor's/parish director's endorsement. If there is an impediment, we notify the inquirer of his impossibility to continue.

Endorsement: "The inquirer who seeks consideration for ordination to the diaconate needs to enter into dialogue with his parish community. It is the pastor who initially presents him for consideration into diaconal formation through a letter that confirms he is a practicing Catholic of good repute and in good standing" (ND, 174). The inquirer now contacts his pastor/parish director, asking for endorsement. Once our office is contacted, we send out the "Endorsement Packet." He/she meets with the inquirer and his wife, and after

this conversation, completes the form, recommending this inquirer by giving testimony of this his involvement and fidelity to the Church. With this endorsement, he/she commits to supporting the man/couple in their formation.

Application: After the pastor/parish director endorses the inquirer, the application form is sent out. The inquirer, now an applicant, has to present all the requirements needed for the Admissions and Selection process. Personal information, reference letters from the parish and friends, transcripts, work history, background check, and health history are part of these requirements. A handwritten letter by the applicant asking to enter into the Aspirancy path is needed and, if married, another one from the wife expressing her support. The applicant will go through a series of assessments

and interviews required for the final selection by the Archbishop.

Selection: The National Directory requires that each diocese establish a Diocesan Committee on Admission and Scrutinies (Cfr. ND, 175), that will present their recommendation to the Archbishop for his consideration in the selection of the new Aspirant class. If the Archbishop selects the applicant, he becomes an Aspirant and will start his formation process in September 2020.

Responding to this call is a discernment process from the beginning to the end. We need to have these applicants and their wives in our prayers, together with the ones that are currently in formation so they can find guidance and wisdom on this journey of continuous response to a vocation of service.

Manuel Maldonado-Villalobos

DEACON PERSONNEL BOARD

The Deacon Personnel Board met on October 12, 2019, at the MMCPC. Deacons in attendance: Gulig, Nosacek, Schneider, Stanula and Chmielewski. Excused: Dcn. Campbell and Fr. Herda.

The meeting opened with prayer and reflection led by Dcn. Schneider. The May meeting minutes were reviewed and approved. Discussion of deacon-specific issues included: 23 covenant renewals, four retirements, one personal leave, and two departures from the archdiocese. Overdue covenants were also discussed, with four being of some concern.

The discussion then moved into the continued review and planning for deacon assignments. A complete list of parishes without a covenanted deacon was reviewed. The list showed 64 individual or clustered parishes without an assigned deacon. Some parishes were identified as having a higher need for diaconal presence based on size and/or location. We will ask Fr. Herda to review the list and look, not only at need but also the receptiveness of the pastor/parish director to a deacon assignment. We are trying to be pro-active based on the 22 men currently in formation, many of whom are from parishes with a deacon or they come from the same parish. The need to make parish assignments other than to the "home" parish

(after first covenant) will be an issue as early as September of 2020.

The Board then discussed additional topics including:

- Successful completion of second covenant signings for Class of 2018
- Formation update of 22 men in formation and applications for next class beginning in January 2020
- Recent deacon gatherings, Roman /Episcopal 9/14 and Deacon Listening 9/21
- Review of the "new" Deacon Servant Newsletter
- Sacramental issues, new baptismal Rite (2020), the new archdiocesan policy of Weddings Outside of Church (2020), and the ever-concerning issue of anointing the dying.

Chair Gulig reminded the Board of the importance of confidentiality and also invited us to reflect on some important parts of the National Directory at future meetings. The meeting closed with prayer with the next Board session set for January 18, 2020, 9-11 a.m. at the MMCPC.

— *Deacon Mike Chmielewski*

DEACON / WIVES LISTENING SESSION

On September 21, 2019, more than 35 deacons and wives gathered at Holy Apostles Parish in New Berlin. They were treated to an informative and inspirational morning reflecting on the clergy sexual abuse crisis in our Church. After Morning Prayer, Deacon Larry Normann ('84) shared his experience as a survivor of clergy sexual abuse. Larry described his victimization while a student at St. Lawrence Seminary, but his true focus was his long road of healing. Larry's presentation was truly inspirational and an invitation for all of us to reflect, whether on our own personal healing

or as the Church's ministers of healing. Larry spoke of nine obstacles that our Lord mentions in the Gospels that inhibit our ability to be faithful disciples: power, prestige, control, authority, image, ego, reputation and slavery to the letter of the law. These attachments, Larry contends, often indicate inordinate worship of the Church instead of for God, for whom the Church exists.

After a short break, Deacon Steve Kramer ('94) led a discussion about addressing the clergy sexual abuse crisis pastorally and/or from the pulpit. Steve stressed the importance of empathy, listening

and avoiding judgments. Steve clearly recommended addressing the issue in our homilies, but only while listening closely to the weekend Scripture and the local community, and not forcing the issue just for the sake of addressing it. Barbara Anne Cusack, Chancellor of the Archdiocese, was also present to offer her insights and thoughts about the abuse, past and current, from the viewpoint of the archdiocese.

The morning ended with a delicious lunch, set up by Bev's Catering, and extended dialogue.

— *Deacon Mike Chmielewski*

ROMAN/EPISCOPAL GATHERING

On Saturday, September 14, the annual gathering of the Roman and Episcopal deacons took place at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Menomonee Falls. Twenty Catholic deacons and wives, six Episcopal deacons, and seven Muslim leaders from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community gathered in prayer and fellowship. We began the morning with prayer led by the Episcopal deacons and a reflection by Episcopal Deacon Regs Scheeler.

After prayer, we gathered for a presentation by Hassiem Babatu, Director of Outreach from the Milwaukee Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, entitled "Love for All-Hatred for None." During the course of Hassiem's presentation, he called upon multiple members of his community to share their own knowledge and experiences. The presentation was very informative and enlightening as the Muslim leaders shared their faith, and in particular the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya sect. They highlighted some of their core beliefs as well as their service to the local community.

The morning ended with table discussion as all three groups gathered to share and ask questions. In a very real sense, the entire morning could be summed up by the t-shirt worn by both Hassiem and Deacon Kevin Stewart (E): "MeetaMuslim." The gathering concluded with a brief prayer by Dcn. Jim Banach (RC) who encouraged all of us to share our contact information with at least one other person so as to continue the dialogue.

It was a great morning and special thanks go out to all who helped put it together, to Dcn. Sandy Sites and the Good Shepherd community for hosting, and to all who attended.

— *Deacon Mike Chmielewski*



VATICAN II AWARD

Deacon Don Borkowski received the Vatican II Award for Service to the Diaconate on October 8, 2019, at the Archbishop's Annual Vatican II Awards ceremony. Deacon Don was ordained in 1981 and has served at three parishes, and he continues to serve at St. Jude, Wauwatosa. His diaconal service also includes serving as a certified chaplain at St. Luke's Hospital, Milwaukee since 1983, serving as the first executive director of the Food Share Program in 1985 (retired), and serving as the former director of Fr. Gene's Help Center (retired). Don and his wife Antoinette have been married for 62 years and have four adult children.

DEACON RETREAT 2019

The 2019 deacon retreat was special in that it was taught by one of our own, Deacon Dominic Cerrato, Ph.D. with great enthusiasm and humor. His primary goal over the three days that he spent with us was leading us to Greater intimacy with Christ the Servant. He focused on the three fundamental elements of grasping and understanding the true nature of what diakonia is all about. He demonstrated for us how our relationship to someone leads to our identity with them which defines our mission. This evolving process was called R.I.M. Dynamic: Relationship, Identity, and Mission.

We discovered that our relationship with Christ the Servant defines our role as deacons. We are to bear witness to Christ the Servant in the world which uniquely marks the deacon's role in God's plan for salvation. Without the deacon's presence, Christ's presence as a servant leader is greatly diminished. Therefore, we must take the time and energy to develop that "singleheartedness" of intimate union with God in everything. We accomplish this by living in God's presence and conversing with him at all times – leading to a deeper prayer life. This is the source of our life in Christ. Only then can we go out into the world and encounter Christ in those we meet. This is crucial to our role as deacon, for our ministry flows directly and proportionately from our interior life with Christ.

Ultimately, our goal of deeper union with Christ allows us to give ourselves completely to others with love. As Deacon Dominic stated, we become ambassadors of God's love. Maybe it's time to change that stale and worn out calling card (maybe our hearts also) to Ambassadors of God's love. That is the challenge that lies before us as humble servants of Christ's love. Our ability to love is essential to our ministry, without it we are a "noisy gong" as St. Paul writes. We are



Dcns. Ralph Kornburger and Ron Lesjak on Deacon Retreat. They are the only two living members of the Class of 1979, celebrating their 40th anniversary.

called to empty ourselves out for others as Christ emptied himself for us. What a gift the Liturgy of the Hours is because it reminds us of this daily.

The deacon becomes the ambassador of God's love: A salvific gift of self that wills the good of the other, for the sake of the other. These words echo the deacon's prayer at ordination: May they remain strong and steadfast in Christ, giving to the world the witness of a pure conscience. May they in this life imitate your Son, who came not to be served but to serve, and one day reign with him in heaven.

Deacon Bob Derks

DEACON SENATE

The Deacon Senate met on September 18, 2019, at the MMCPC. Deacons in attendance: Wiese, Nees, Bowen, Copson, Schneider, Starke, Campbell, Paczkowski, Chmielewski, Petro, and Jansen (guest). Opening prayer led by Chmielewski. Minutes of the May 15 meeting approved.

Randy Nohl (MMCPC/Synod Office) and Dcn. Jansen were the guest presenters, offering updates and

information from the archdiocesan offices. Scott Campbell presented the Treasurer's Report, noting an account balance of \$5,678.81. Scott is putting together a budget and expense review of the last couple of years with the hope of offering a clearer vision of annual activity. There are currently no budget concerns. Dale Nees provided a detailed Formation Report including an update on distance learning efforts, a new deacon recruitment

video in process, and an update on 21 candidates (4 third year and 17 first year) who are beginning classes for the fall trimester.

District reports were limited due to few summer meetings. Districts 1/2/3 are working on plans for the Memorial Mass, scheduled for October 27. Districts 6/10/13 are

► See **DEACON SENATE**
(continued on page 6)

KNOW OUR DEACON II

Deacon Virgilio Rodriguez was ordained with Milwaukee's first class of Permanent Deacons in 1975. He was assigned to his home parish, St. Patrick, Milwaukee, where he served from 1975 until 1989. After a short time away from Milwaukee visiting family in Puerto Rico, Virgilio returned to fulltime diaconal ministry in Milwaukee in 1991, assigned to St. Rose of Lima Parish, Milwaukee. In 1993, Virgilio and some of his family (he and his wife Concepcion have 9 children) moved back to Puerto Rico permanently.

Deacon Virgilio makes occasional visits to Milwaukee to visit family, and when he comes to Milwaukee, he tries to stay connected with the Milwaukee diocese. He appeared in my office in July 2016 and we had a wonderful visit. He told me stories of his family and his time serving as a deacon in Milwaukee and Puerto Rico. He also expressed appreciation about receiving



Deacon Virgilio Rodriguez

the Deacon Talk Newsletter and other mailings which keeps him connected.

In November 2017, Virgilio's address changed and my mailings returned to

me as "undeliverable." I attempted to make contact with his family still in Milwaukee without success. He was filed away as a "lost" deacon.

On July 10, 2019, Virgilio again appeared at my office while on one of his Milwaukee family visits. We had the opportunity to reconnect and spent a good deal of time talking about our 12/26/18 anniversary celebration here – celebrating both 50 years of the diaconate as well as the 43rd anniversary of Milwaukee's first deacon class, which is Virgilio's class. He enjoyed the pictures of his classmates.

I got all the correct contact information and now will be able to keep him updated with regular mailings. He returned to Puerto Rico later in July where he remains active in some diaconal ministry. He plans to be back this fall for an anniversary celebration at St. Patrick Parish.

— *Deacon Mike Chmielewski*

► DEACON SENATE

(continued from page 5)

working on Deacon Day 2020, which is on the calendar for April 25, 2020, at St. Eugene Parish. Tom Thibodeau will present on Servant Leadership. Scott Wiese reported that there are plans for a deacon-only immersion experience to the Dominican Republic, with tentative dates of either September 15-22 or October 13-20. This would be for 10-12 deacons. There was also a discussion about the policy for "Weddings Outside of the Parish Church," and about the new "Deacon Servant" newsletter.

The Senate met again on November 20, 2019, at MMCP with only Dcn. Campbell excused. President Wiese led the opening prayer. A written financial report from Dcn. Campbell reported a balance of \$7,322.73 and a generally positive financial standing. He also provided a comparative financial history of the last two years for the Senate's review.

Dcn. Nees reported with positive and detailed updates on formation and preparation for the start of the application

process for the next class. Dcn. Petro reported that his district did a review of the Memorial Mass from this past October and had many positive comments. Dcn. Starke reported that districts 6/10/13 were well into planning Deacon Day 2020, set for April 25, 2020, at St. Eugene Parish. Dcn. Copson reported that districts 4/5/12 are beginning to plan Memorial Mass 2020, tentatively set for October 18, 2020, at Good Shepherd, Menomonee Falls, with Bishop Schuerman presiding. Dcn. Wiese offered details on the Deacon immersion trip to the Dominican Republic scheduled for September 15-22, 2020. Dcn. Starke has accepted the nomination as Senate President-Elect, which would begin in July 2020. Nominations are still open to any deacon interested in serving in this position but nominations will close on March 1, 2020, and the Senate will name the new President-Elect at our March meeting set for March 18, 2020.

— *Deacon Mike Chmielewski*

Prayer Requests

Deacon Roberto Fuentes `02
and wife Lorenz

Deacon Baleriano Gonzalez `84
Donna Hying, widow of Dcn.
Joseph `84

Ginny Schimmels, widow of Dcn.
Tom `84

Deacon Leon Zalewski `83 and wife
Joan

Phyllis Heideman, wife of Dcn.
Willis `02

Deacon Richard Hiller `75

Jeri Petro, wife of Dcn. Greg `12

Deacon Dave Pollak `96

Deacon Dan Zozakiewicz `94

Deacon Dick Govek `92 and wife
Dorothy

Deacon Don Lydolph `81 and wife
Jane

Deacon Sy Regan `75

Deacon Ron Lesjak `79

Deacon Steve Hayes `04

Zachary Savin, grandson of Dcn.
Wenzler `94

Deacon Gary Nosacek `14 and
family

Michael Francois, son of Dcn. Jim
and wife Judy

Pam Normann, wife of Dcn. Larry
`84

RECENTLY DECEASED AND THEIR FAMILIES

Jo Ann Buyck, wife of Dcn. Gerald
`96, Oct. 31, 2019

Gerry Koehler, mother of Linda
Diciaula (Dcn. Greg `09) Nov. 11,
2019

James Haines, father of Bishop Jeff,
Dec. 11, 2019

Donald Banach, father of Dcn. Jim
`05, Dec. 27, 2019

Jean Beaugez, mother in law of
Dcn. Kramer `94, Jan. 3, 2020

DIGNITY BURIALS

Marcus Blackmon, Sept. 24, 2019

Ralph Dale, Sept. 24, 2019

Luis Barreto, Sept. 24, 2019

Uta Rycvek, Dec. 23, 2019

Earnes Anderson, Dec. 23, 2019

Roberto Gonzalez Morales, Dec.
23, 2019

Rory Gravelle, Dec. 27, 2019

Karen Jorgensen, Dec. 27, 2019

Floyd Lenard Buckley, Dec. 27,
2019



DATES TO REMEMBER

April 2 - 4, 2020, Women of the Diaconate
Retreat, Siena Center, Racine
Topic: "Women in the Bible"
Presenter: Sr. Diane Bergant
(Note this is a Thursday – Saturday, Palm
Sunday weekend)

April 25, 2020, 8 a.m. through lunch at
St. Eugene, Fox Point
Presenter: Tom Thibodeau, Professor at
Viterbo University, on Servant Leadership

May 30, 2020, Synod Anniversary
Celebration, MMCPCC

June 6, 2020, Post-Ordination Formation,
Session 2, MMCPCC, Class of 2018

September 5, 2020, Ordination Rehearsal
Luncheon, 11:30 a.m. in the Cathedral
Atrium

September 12, 2020, Ordination of Class of
2020, 10 a.m. at the Cathedral

October 18, 2020, Memorial Mass, 2 p.m.
at Good Shepherd, Menomonee Falls
Celebrant: Bishop Schuerman

November 6-8, 2020, Deacon Retreat
Redemptorist Retreat Center
Presenter: Bishop Haines



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Catholic Stewardship Appeal

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

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