

Deacon Talk

COUNCIL of DEACONS NEWSLETTER | ARCHDIOCESE of MILWAUKEE



DIACONATE FORMATION
Where love becomes service.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Director's Report 1
- President's Report 1
- Deacon Personnel
- Board..... 3
- Know Your Deacon..... 3
- Diaconate Formation:
- Formation as a Gift 4
- Just a Thought..... 4
- Rest in Peace 5
- Anniversary
- Celebration 6
- Dates to Remember 6
- Prayer Requests 6

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Deacon Mike Chmielewski

About six weeks ago 160 members of the Permanent Diaconate family gathered at the Archbishop Cousins Catholic Center to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the return of the Permanent Diaconate to the United

States. We gathered on December 26, the feast day of our patron, St. Stephen, and the 43rd anniversary of Milwaukee's first class of Permanent Deacons. We were honored to have Archbishop Listecki lead us in prayer, and most appreciative that he was joined at the altar by Bishops Sklba, Haines and Schuerman, as well as Vicar for Clergy, Fr. Herda. They were assisted at the altar by Dcn. Frank Pempers '75, and his son Dcn. Steve '16.

Archbishop Listecki expressed appreciation for "his" deacons. He reminded us that we are deacons of the Church and in the world. He offered a clear reminder that our ministry is

most importantly one that brings the Good News to those outside the walls of the parish. Six of the nine living members of the class of 1975 were able to join us for the celebration. Five of the six – Jack Champagne, Chuck Kustner, John Monday, Ed Blaze and Frank Pempers – continue to serve both their parish and the community in active diaconal service. The sixth, Sy Regan (despite vision and other health issues) continues to be deacon through prayer and his gift of writing.

After Mass, we gathered for lunch and fellowship. Classmates and wives gathered to renew friendships and exchange stories. There were lots of hugs, laughter and stories over a fine Italian lunch. The classes of 1981, 2009 and 2018 gathered to take photos. The diaconal bonds were very evident throughout the dining hall. I could see it in the hugs and smiles of the 1975 class reunion. It was evident in the look of contentment on the faces of the multiple widows who attended (including 2 from the 1975 class,

► See **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**
(continued on page 2)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I often listen to recorded books on my commute to and from work. At present, I am listening to *The Man on the Mountaintop*, a dramatization based on two books by Susan Trott. It begins with the account of a pilgrim who has traveled far to see the Holy Man in his mountaintop hermitage. The man walks several miles up the stony path, only to find a long line with hundreds, maybe thousands of pilgrims. Nevertheless, he stays and waits in line for days, camping out at night with the other pilgrims.

The day finally arrives; it is his turn to see the

Holy Man. He approaches the hermitage, and a little old monk in a wheat-colored robe swings open the door and says, "Yes?" The pilgrim declares, "I have come to see the Holy Man." "Ah, yes," the monk replies, and he leads him quickly through the house ... right to the back door. The monk opens the door and says, "Goodbye." The bewildered pilgrim steps through the doorway and stammers, "But, I have come to see the Holy Man!" The monk replies,

► See **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**
(continued on page 2)

► DIRECTOR'S REPORT

*(continued from page 1)*Pauline
Jens

and Iris Acosta) as they were warmly greeted by classmates. I could sense it in the wide-eyed looks from the class of 2018 who were ordained just three months ago. I imagined their thoughts were something like, "Not sure what God got me into, but it looks awesome!"

We closed the afternoon with a video presentation put together by Dcn. Sandy Sites '05. Sandy took the keynote address of Dcn. James Keating from the NADD celebration of the 50th (July 2018 in New Orleans) and did some rearrangement of the presentation for our viewing. The video, with interjections from our new Director of Formation, Dcn. Dale Nees '09, spoke of "The Diaconate: Yesterday, Today, and Forever." We received another clear message that, as deacons, we are ministers of Jesus Christ and the Gospel, not of the world, but in the world. Keating told us that our vocation, in all its complexities, is quite simple. We are called to feel and enter the pain of those around us. Our charism is to bring the message of the Gospel, whose heralds we are, to the world.

The anniversary celebration was a truly marvelous day. Thanks to all who helped make it special. In particular, thank you to Archbishop ListECKI and our bishops for their presence on December 26, but also for their on-going support and guidance. To Dcn. Larry Normann '84 and Kim Mandelkow, Director of the Office of Worship, thanks for putting together the Liturgy and leading us in song. Thanks to Dcns. Jim Leggett '83 and Mark Jansen '05 for serving as the Masters of Ceremony at the Mass and keeping the prayer moving smoothly. Thanks to Dcns. Sandy Sites and Dale Nees for their work on the video. To the father-son deacon team of Frank and Steve Pemper for their liturgical assistance. And to all of the archdiocesan staff who assisted in large or small ways to make the day special (Rose Ann, Charmaine, Manuel, Margaret, Derek, Terri and Jenni).

Most of all, thank you to the deacon family, for your presence as "Christ's Servant." Our vocation is complex, but our mission is simple: Spread the Good News that Jesus is our Savior!

Deacon Mike Chmielewski

► PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(continued from page 1)

"You have seen me!" And then he adds, "If you look on everyone you meet as a Holy Person, you will be happy."

As I reflect on this wisdom, it is clear that the most fulfilling times in my life are the moments when I see holiness in others. This is true whether at work, with family, or in ministry. Holiness might not seem to fit with business and commerce. Yet, the best results come when we treat customers, suppliers, employees and co-workers with respect, honesty, and dignity. Some of the greatest joys — and challenges — come when we pause to see family members as holy people and treat them as such. This can be especially challenging with those who are estranged, have gone astray, or who don't see things the way we do.

Looking on everyone you and I meet as Holy Persons is, I believe, at the heart of our diaconal ministry. It is in seeing holiness and acting on that holiness that we are most effective, most challenged, and most rewarded. Seeing everyone as holy takes us out of our comfort zone but also keeps us going.

Seeing holiness means setting aside our preconceived notions and prejudgments. It means looking beyond the easy, textbook answers that are all too often on the tips of our tongues. It means looking beyond the surface and realizing that the person in front of us or on the other end of social media is holy, made in the image and likeness of God. It requires a pause, a halting of our reactions, and prayer. Yes, lots of prayer, for we cannot and do not have to do this alone.

When we treat everyone we meet as Holy Persons, we reveal our own holiness. As followers of Christ, you and I are challenged to be holy as our heavenly Father is holy (1 Pt 1:15-16). In the beautiful document

from Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, the Church outlines the Universal Call to Holiness, inviting all the faithful of Christ "to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state." Indeed, we are *obligated* to strive for holiness (LG 42). In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, Jesus calls this being perfect as our Father is perfect (Mt 5:48). In Luke's version, Jesus calls us to be merciful (Lk 6:36). This is our baptismal and diaconal calling.

You and I are holy, perfect, and merciful when we see the inherent holiness in the poor, the sick, and the dying; in the imprisoned, the desperate, and the unborn; in the LGBT person, the addict, and the lost; in the Democrat and in the Republican. You and I are holy when we see holiness in those who scoff at their own holiness and do not act in holy ways: the sex trafficker, the violent and the abortion provider. Is it coincidence that Jesus' call to holiness, perfection, and mercy in the gospels goes hand-in-hand with the teaching on love of enemies?

You and I, as followers of Christ and as deacons, are challenged to look on everyone — everyone — as a Holy Person. In this way, we fulfill our baptismal and diaconal call to holiness. We do not have to — nor can we — do it alone. Take it to prayer, your spiritual director, your pastor, your spouse if you are so blessed, to the community of deacons. But, do it we must! Holiness calls us to action!

So, get out there, and be holy, perfect, and merciful as our heavenly Father is! Be Christ! Be diaconal!

I would love to hear your stories of the joys and challenges you have experienced from looking on people as Holy Persons. Please share your stories with me at swiese@outlook.com. God bless!

***In Christ the Servant,
Deacon Scott Wiese***

DEACON PERSONNEL BOARD

The Deacon Personnel Board met on January 26, 2019 at the Cousins Center. In attendance: Dcns. Gulig, Schneider, Stanula, Nosacek, Campbell, Chmielewski, and Fr. Herda.

The meeting opened with prayer and reflection led by Dcn. Nosacek. The minutes of the October 16, 2018 meeting were reviewed and approved. Deacon-specific issues were then discussed including: ten covenant renewals, two new assignments, one status change, and 17 late, pending, or in-progress covenants. There were no significant concerns noted.

Post Ordination plans for the two most recent classes were discussed. The third and final required session for the class of 2016 will take place on June 1, 2019, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., at Archbishop

Cousins Catholic Center (ACCC). Three deacons from the class of 1978 will lead the morning discussions and two deacons from the 2009 class will lead the afternoon sessions. The first required session for the class of 2018 will happen on June 15, 2019, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., also at ACCC. Dcn. Dan Kehrer will lead the morning discussion and Dcn. John Mezydlo and wife Rita will lead the afternoon session. All deacons are invited to attend all or part of these sessions.

We then continued our discussion about the future of diaconal assignments. There seems to be value to assigning deacons to multiple parishes in a cluster. The future will also likely include deacons being assigned to parishes with no deacons, especially if there are multiple deacons

in a neighboring parish. There was also discussion about the continuing need to strengthen priest/pastor awareness and understanding of diaconal presence and ministry.

There was general “word on the street” discussion of multiple topics, including: the 50th Anniversary Celebration, district happenings, adjustment of the 2018 guys, the new Director of Formation, and the possibility of assigned mentors for aspirants and candidates.

The meeting concluded with words of wisdom from Dcn. Gulig (Chair) and a closing prayer. The next Personnel Board meeting is set for May 11, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the ACCC.

Deacon Mike Chmielewski

KNOW YOUR DEACON

This week, I had the opportunity to visit with Dcn. Richard Hiller and his sister, Mary, at their home in Hartford. Richard was the only living member of the Class of 1975 (still residing in the archdiocese) who was unable to attend the Anniversary Celebration on December 26. After ordination, Richard was assigned to his home parish, St. Kilian's in Hartford. He served the parish for 19 years, retiring from covenanted ministry in 1994 because of health issues. He remains the only Permanent Deacon ever assigned to St. Kilian's.

Richard has been a member of St. Kilian's for most of his life. In his years there both before and after ordination, he has led or guided nearly every ministry at the parish. He reminisced about some of his classmates having difficulty with pastors accepting permanent deacons. When I asked him if he ever had issues with his pastors, he responded, “Never. They were stuck with me and I was stuck with them and



Dcn. Richard Hiller

we just worked together.” He recalled a conversation he had with one of the seven pastors he served with as deacon as they were standing on the front steps of the church after a Sunday Mass. He told his pastor, “That is where I serve,” pointing to the village of Hartford.

Richard spent his professional work life employed at the Hartford Care Center Nursing Home in various capacities. He also did much of his diaconate ministry with the residents and staff there. He was a certified chaplain and often led Word and Communion services. Richard is now 82, and is recovering from a mild stroke. He is generally house bound except for the taxi rides to medical appointments. He loves to read Deacon Talk, and get other communications from this office so he can keep up with the happenings of the deacon family. He is still deacon, one who prays for all in need out there!

Deacon Mike Chmielewski

DIACONATE FORMATION: FORMATION AS A GIFT

Greetings, Brother Deacons and Wives.

One of the most important things I try to impress on those in formation is that formation is *always* a gift. Whether one gets ordained or not, and no matter how long one's time in formation is, this period of discernment is sheer grace. I try to stress that no one receives such an encounter with God without being given some mission. The hardest part is whether one can remain open to a surprise mission that their time in formation has prepared them to carry out.

As an Order, how do we support a view of formation as a gift? I have several thoughts in my short tenure as Director of Diaconate Formation that I believe would be helpful.

- Allow aspirants and candidates the room and time they need for genuine discernment; try not to unwrap their gift too quickly, as formation takes four years.
- Be clear with others that you are just as excited about learning what God has in mind for the aspirant or candidate; do not somehow suggest you know what their gift is already. For example, avoid anything that suggests they inevitably will be ordained.
- Clarify with parish leadership, staff, and parishioners at large, when necessary, if they unintentionally put aspirants or candidates in awkward situations; this can take many forms, but often can be references to them as "our future deacon."
- When you become aware of any concerns, please inform the Office of Diaconate Formation.

Formation, by its very nature, can sometimes bring about wonder, anxiety, serenity and challenge. It takes a lot

of time, especially with careers and families. Therefore, we are incredibly grateful for their "yes" to formation and the sacrifices made not only by them, but also by their family and friends. Vocational discernment by the Church happens concurrently with our students as it did with all of us. Remember our motto, "Trust the process." So, I ask for your continued prayer and support for the entire formational community, which includes aspirants (20), candidates (4), all of their wives (22), pastors, formators, faculty, staff, mentors, spiritual directors, committee members, and the Archbishop.

Another way you can help is by promoting the upcoming Discernment Sessions listed below. We would love to welcome another large class of aspirants in 2020.

Region: Racine-Sturtevant

April 30; May 7, 14, 21, 28; June 4 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
St. Sebastian Church, 3100 95th St. Sturtevant, WI
Registration: Dcn. Eric Sewell
deaconerics@gmail.com or 262-886-6057

Region: Germantown – West 1

March 4, 11, 18, 25; April 1, 8 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
St. Boniface Church, W204 N11940 Goldendale Road, Germantown, WI (Seminary Room in main school building) Registration: Dcn. James Starke JStarke@metalsusa.com or 262-617-4151

Region: Oconomowoc – West 2

April 23, 30, May 7, 14, 21, 28 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
John and Rita's home at 276 Ridgeway Path, Oconomowoc, WI
Registration: Dcn. John Mezydlo
j.mezydlo@badgerchevroletbuick.com or 602-885-1642

Region: Milwaukee-Central

May 4, 18; June 1, 15, 29; July 13 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Archbishop Cousins Catholic Center, 3501 South Lake Drive, Saint Francis, WI
Registration: maldonadom@archmil.org or 414-758-2207

*With Fraternal Charity,
Deacon Dale Nees*

JUST A THOUGHT

I am not sure how many of you are working with support groups for separated and divorced Catholics, but that was one ministry I found to be quite helpful to those attending. The start of this was, for me, was another one of those times when the Holy Spirit was at work. I happened to meet a lady I had not seen for some time and asked about her and her husband. She sadly replied that they had divorced. And she also expressed her sense of loss within the Church. I told her I would get back to her with help. On the following Sunday, at an archdiocesan dinner, I happened to sit across the table from a religious sister,

and during conversation I mentioned what had occurred. Turned out that she was the archdiocesan head of the Office for Separated and Divorced, and she volunteered to come to Sheboygan to help me get a group started. We met mostly in homes; I think the Holy Spirit had something to do with that so we could enjoy cookies and coffee. That ministry lasted several years and was much appreciated by all, even a few non-Catholics who asked to join. This is, essentially, a grief or bereavement ministry. I could not recommend it more highly to my brother deacons.

Chaplain Deacon Sylvester Regan '75

REST IN PEACE

† **Deacon Gene D. Brah** died on November 3, 2018. Dcn. Gene was born on January 20, 1953, in Milwaukee. He graduated from West Allis Central High in 1971. He spent some time in college at UW-Milwaukee, but dropped out in his second year to get married and work full time. He eventually returned to college at Concordia University, where he earned a B.A. in Marketing and Communication. He served his country in the U.S. Army (1974-78) being honorably discharged as a 2nd Lieutenant Infantry. He was the CEO of “Partners in Pharmacy Cooperative,” serving the needs of independent pharmacies.

Gene married the love of his life, Karen, on January 13, 1973 at St. Aloysius, West Allis. They had two children: Eugene John (Becca) and Tracie Ann (Tim) Heyrman. He is also survived by four grandchildren: Alexander, Griffin, Amelia, and Huck. Additionally, he is survived by brothers, sisters, in-laws, and other relatives and friends.

Gene began his diaconate formation in 1990 at St. Francis Seminary. He was ordained a Deacon on June 11, 1994 by Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, O.S.B. at the Cousins Center. He was first covenanted at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, New Berlin, did one year in a parish in Indiana, returned to New Berlin for three years, moved to St. James in Mukwonago, and then spent the last 15 years at Mary Queen of Heaven Parish, West Allis (now Mother of Perpetual Help). Gene was a very active deacon in all areas of service. Gene regularly served at the altar,

was active in sacramental work with Baptisms and Marriages, ministered to the sick and aged, and led groups in the Deacon Formation program. One of his true passions was his recent certification as a police chaplain and his service to the West Allis Police Department.

Visitation for Deacon Gene took place on Saturday, November 10, 2018. Mass of Christian followed. All services took place at Mother of Perpetual Help Parish (former Mary Queen of Heaven), West Allis. Pastor Fr. Jeff Prasser was the presider with concelebrants Fr. Michael Merkt, Fr. Thomas Vathappallil, MCBS, Fr. Dick Robinson, and Fr. Jerry Herda. Dcns. John Ebel and Dave Zimprich assisted. Bishop Jeff Haines offered the final commendation. Fr. Merkt’s homily centered on the words faith, gratitude and intercession, as reflected in Dcn. Gene’s life of service.

† **Deacon John K. Libeck** died on November 14, 2018. He was born in Milwaukee on January 28, 1927. He attended Lincoln High School in Milwaukee but graduated from Oconto Falls High School in 1944 after a family move. He enlisted in the US Navy and served from November 1944 until being honorably discharged in January 1947 as a Petty Officer 3rd Class. John entered the work world as a mechanic and worked for 30 years with the Wisconsin Gas Co., retiring in 1988.

John married the love of his life, Eva, on September 15, 1951 at St. Mary, Pewaukee. They have six children: Susan (Bill) Martinson, Peter (Vicki), Jeanne (Blaine) Punzel, Anne (Dean) Smith, Lynne (Fred), Stavee, and Laura

(Jim) Hood. John is further survived by 12 grandchildren and eight great grandchildren, as well as other extended family and friends.

John began his diaconate formation in 1976 at St. Francis Seminary. He was ordained a Permanent Deacon on June 11, 1978 at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist by Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, O.S.B. John was first covenanted at St. Anthony on the Lake, Pewaukee (78-92) and then at St. Dominic, Brookfield (92-97). John regularly served at the altar, baptized, visited the sick, and worked with SVDP. His true passion was hospice work. He was a certified chaplain and was co-covenanted with Rogers Hospice for 10 years (82-92). He officially retired from covenanted ministry in September 1, 1997.

Funeral services for Deacon John took place on Tuesday November 20, 2018. Visitation and the Mass of Christian Burial took place at St. William Parish, Waukesha. Interment was at St. Joseph Cemetery, Waukesha.

Fr. Curt Frederick was the presider at the Mass of Christian Burial, with Dcns. Gary Stephani and Greg Diciaula assisting at the altar. Bishop Jim Schuerman offered the final commendation. Fr. Curt, a friend of the Libeck family, offered an image of John as a gentle servant who respected the dignity of all he served. Twenty-two deacons and wives prayed with the family.

Please keep Deacon John, Eva, and the family in your prayers. May he rest in peace!

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



Class of 1981 at the Anniversary Celebration. From Left: Dcn. Gerry / Lynn Ponec, Dcn. Don / Antoinette Borkowski, Dcn. Jose Gonzales, Dcn. Ricardo / Clotilde Munoz, Dcn. Buck / Andrea Buth



Deacons and wives from Class of 1975 gathered at the Anniversary Celebration with the Archbishop and Bishops. From left (vested) Dcn. Frank Pemper, Dcn. Jack Champagne/ Margherita, Dcn. John Monday / Judy, (widow) Pauline Jens, Dcn. Sy Regan, Dcn. Ed Blaze / Dorothy, Dcn. Chuck Kustner



DATES TO REMEMBER

April 5-7, 2019: Women of the Diaconate Retreat, Redemptorist, Carol Sullivan Director

April 6, 2019: Human Concerns Summit, 8 a.m. – Noon, ACCC

May 4, 2019: Deacon Day 2019, St. Martin of Tours, Franklin. District 14/15/16 planning.

Presentation by Anne Haines, Director of Urban Ministry.

June 1, 2019: Post Ordination Formation, Session 3, Class of 2016, ACCC

June 15, 2019: Post Ordination Formation, Session 1, Class of 2018, ACCC

September 14, 2019: Roman / Episcopal Gathering, Good Shepherd, Menomonee Falls

September 22-29, 2019: Seven Days of Service sponsored by the Archdiocese

October 27, 2018: Memorial Mass, planning by Districts 1/2/3; Fr. Jerry Herda presiding

November 1-3, 2019: Deacon Retreat, Redemptorist Retreat Center, Dcn. Dominic Cerrato Director

Prayer Requests

Deacon Roberto Fuentes '02 and wife Lorenz

Deacon Dick Govek '92 and wife Dorothy

Deacon Baleriano Gonzalez '84

Deacon Ron Schneider '96

Donna Hying, widow of Dcn. Joseph '84

Ginny Schimmels, widow of Dcn. Tom '84

Judy Francois, wife of Dcn. Jim '83

Deacon Leon Zalewski '83 and wife Joan

Phyllis Heideman, wife of Dcn. Willis '02

Karen Brah, wife of the late Dcn. Gene '94

Deacon Richard Hiller '75

Deacon John D'Alessio '98
Jeri Petro, wife of Dcn. Greg '12
Deacon Claude Kennedy '79

Deacon Dave Pollak '96
Eva Libeck, wife of the late Dcn. John '78

Joan Schopper, wife of Dcn. Gene '83
Deacon Paul Klingseisen '09

RECENTLY DECEASED AND THEIR FAMILIES:

Dcn. Gene Brah '94, (Nov. 3, 2018)
Dcn. John Libeck '78, (Nov. 14, 2018)

INDIGENT BURIALS:

Bruce Klein (Nov. 30, 2018)
David Christian (Dec. 11, 2018)
Frederick Zarse (Dec. 19, 2018)
Michael John Cisewski (Jan. 9, 2019)
Gregory Kromraj (Jan. 9, 2019)



ARCHDIOCESE
of MILWAUKEE

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

Many Hands. One Vision.



Catholic Stewardship Appeal

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

This ministry is funded by the
Catholic Stewardship Appeal.