

Deacon Talk

COUNCIL of DEACONS NEWSLETTER | ARCHDIOCESE of MILWAUKEE



DIACONATE FORMATION
Where love becomes service.

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

On June 2, 2017, Fr. Tim Kitzke, Director of Urban Ministry, as well representatives of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Holy Cross Cemetery, Peace of Mind Mortuary, and a few others gathered at an open grave site

to commend the body and soul of Timothy Decker into the hands of our Creator. A sister and a cousin of Timothy's traveled from Iowa and joined us in prayer that afternoon. This was the first indigent burial following an agreement between the archdiocese, Holy Cross, and Milwaukee County government to provide dignified and solemn burial for the abandoned poor of Milwaukee County.

Following the burial of Timothy Decker, Fr. Kitzke handed off the prayer leadership of this work of mercy to the Permanent Deacons of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. I gladly

accepted the responsibility of being the point of contact for all future burials and arranging for a deacon to preside and lead prayer.

Over the last year, we have buried 18 poor, abandoned, and seemingly lost persons. We generally know little about the deceased beyond their name. Of the 18 burials, only three had any family present. What has remained consistent is the presence of the deacons and the Holy Cross staff. Sixteen different deacons and three wives have been present to pray for our deceased brothers and sisters. We have had as many as seven, and as few as one, for individual burials. Overall, we have had 55 total deacon appearances for the 18 burials, including an Episcopal Deacon and a Baptist Deacon.

I continue to be amazed at the commitment and service of our deacons. Nine of the 16 deacons have come more than three times, some driving from Racine, Mequon, and

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DEACON SENATE

The Deacon Senate met on March 21, 2018 at the Cousins Center. Deacons present: Nees, Jansen, Wiese, Bowen, C. Schneider, Maack, Petro, Paczkowski, and Chmielewski. Deacons excused: Ebel, Copson, Campbell. Opening prayer led by Mike Bowen. Formal welcome of Greg Petro as the new rep for Districts 1, 2, 3.

Our guest presenter for the evening was Randy Nohl from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's Synod Implementation Office. Randy offered us a preview of the "Amazing Parish Conference," scheduled for October 17-19, 2018 at the

Wisconsin Center downtown. The gathering will be the largest done by Amazing Parish. Archbishop Jerome Listeki is hoping for 100% attendance by our Pastors / Parish Directors. Each parish will be invited to bring along a team of 5 people for the conference. Watch for regular reminders and updates. This is "not a moment, but a movement."

Discussion items during the meeting included:

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Mukwonago. Some come challenging themselves in the elements and the uneven terrain of the cemetery. All this for a 10-minute prayer for one of God's children whom we have never met. The wonder of the diaconal call could be summarized in a comment made to me by a deacon at one of the more recent burials: "I had A-B-C to do this morning, D-E-F- to do this afternoon, and G-H-I to do tonight, but this is the most important thing I will do all day!"

More invitations will come for our service. The Cemetery Office is looking to organize and plan for consistent and dignified committals at Catholic cemeteries. New opportunities are being discussed for Crisis Urban Ministry and Airport Ministry. And of course, we will continue to bury the lost and the lonely at Holy Cross. These are our brothers and sisters, created by the same loving God, with a life story that in many ways parallels our own story. May our moments of prayer help lift them to eternal peace!

Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Dcn. Dale Nees

It is mindboggling to me that two years have already passed, and this is my last President's Report. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as President-Elect and President of the Deacon Senate, and

look forward to the next phase as Post-President. For those who may not know, a key accountability of the Post-President is to secure nominations for the next in line for President-Elect. So please prayerfully consider serving the Diaconal Community in this capacity. The Senate members are incredibly supportive and make it a great experience.

Having just returned from a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, it seems natural to spotlight some highlights of this incredible journey. Long before I boarded the plane, my classmate, Deacon Mike Chmielewski, recommended a wonderful book, *Jesus: A Pilgrimage* by Fr. James Martin. He found it a great resource to read and reflect on prior to his trip to the Holy Land and I was grateful for his recommendation, as the book surely enhanced my experience, too. It provided a great foundation so that I was

able to be more present in the places that were all part of our itinerary.

I felt exceptionally blessed that Fr. Yamid Blanco (Administrator at St. Paul the Apostle- Racine and Pilgrim Leader) encouraged me to preach while there. So, I readily did in Cana, Jericho, Bethlehem, Dominus Flevit (the Lord wept), and near the Pool of Bethesda (meaning house of mercy or grace). These opportunities not only had a profound impact on me at the time, but it has continued since returning home.

It was also providential to have had a very knowledgeable and competent guide who was a Palestinian Christian with degrees both in Business and from the Hebrew Biblical Institute. Rahmi had a fantastic sense of humor, as well as a gentle manner in raising up the difficulty of being a Palestinian and/or a Christian in Israel today: the reality of a wall dividing Palestinian and Israeli Settlements; that water availability for Palestinians is only every 9 days, requiring special reserve tanks on their roof tops, while Israeli Settlements have 24/7 service; and that the number of Christians in the Holy Land has been

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DEACON WIVES RETREAT

The Deacon Wives retreat was a wonderful experience, thanks to Carol Sullivan. For me, it was another weekend filled with laughter and love.

The topic this year, "Praying with the Four Elements," began with Brother Wind. We prayed for direction, from the flow of the Spirit, present in the wind. Our next element, Mother Earth, had us thinking about walking with mindfulness of our surroundings, and wondering why something special caught our attention. On to Brother Fire, who amazes us with

the immensity of the universe. This happened for me when I watched the total eclipse of the sun. Our meditation was to be aware of what was blazing in our hearts. Finally, we prayed with Sister Water, whose tides remind us of the sacred flow of life, God's gift of living water, and tears that flow with sorrow, and joy.

Carol was impressed with the way we blended, shared our reflections, and welcomed new wives into the group. She asked Jane if she could lead another

retreat for us. This was not a first. There is something special about a group of Deacon Wives. We hope you can join us next year at the Redemptorist Retreat House.

We also got some great advice from a snowman: be a jolly, happy soul; spend time outdoors; stay cool; it's OK to be a little bottom heavy; avoid meltdowns; be well-rounded; live well – life is short! (By Ilan Shamir)

Meriel Christensen

► **PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

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rapidly diminishing since 1960. His extensive understanding of the entire history of who controlled the land during what period, and the impact it had on the shrines and places of worship, was invaluable. I learned that in several cases, authenticity of a site was established by the fact that early Christians kept coming back to them, even when it was still an illegal sect.

Finally, beyond the palpability and being personally present where Jesus ministered,

died and was resurrected, I was excited to see firsthand the number of shrines that are maintained by the Franciscans. Some of you may know that I have been a Secular Franciscan since 1990. So, I was aware that St. Francis of Assisi, a deacon saint, cultivated a mutual respect during his encounter with the sultan during one of the crusades. After an initial attempt by Francis and the sultan to convert the other, both quickly realized that the other already knew and loved God. Francis remained for as many as 20 days, discussing prayer and the mystical life. When Francis left, the sultan gave him an

ivory trumpet, which is still preserved in the crypt of the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi. This encounter is a paradigm for interfaith dialog in our time. Despite differences in religion, people of prayer can find common ground in their experiences of God.

Dialog demands that we truly listen to the other. But, before we can listen, we must see the other as a precious human being, loved by God. There is no other path to peace.

*With Fraternal Charity,
Deacon Dale Nees*

► **DEACON SENATE**

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Formation Report: 8 Candidates in class of 2018, 8 in class of 2020, and 22 applicants being screened for class of 2022.

Financial Report: Current balance \$13,964.85

Deacon Day: Plans set for April 14 at St. James Parish, Menomonee Falls. Deacon Bill Hampton of Catholic Relief Services will be our presenter and Bishop Schuerman will preside at the Liturgy.

Retreat Leadership: Deacons John Mezydlo and Dennis Petrie are now coordinating the annual November Deacon Retreat.

Retention Policy: Mike Bowen drew up a Retention Policy Statement for the Deacon

Senate. This was a request made at the November meeting directed specifically on the retention of financial records. Mike’s document is broader in scope and was given to the Senate reps for their review. The “In house counsel” of the Arch will also review the policy. Action will be taken at the May meeting.

President Elect Nomination: Mark Jansen nominated Mike Bowen as the next President Elect (start 7/1/18). Mike accepted the nomination and the full Senate was in complete agreement.

Memorial Mass / Deacon Day: The annual gatherings of the Deacons were placed on the agenda for future discussion. Questions include: Holding the events at a central site (Cousins Center?). Some districts have limited personnel for

planning, especially Deacon Day, so how to proceed?

50th Anniversary of Permanent Diaconate 1968-2018: On the agenda for May. Do we want to plan something?

Table at Cathedral Dinner: The Senate unanimously approved buying a 10 person table at the annual Cathedral fund raising dinner. This year’s event is scheduled for August 12, 2018 at the Pfister Hotel, with a cost of \$1,000 per table. As the Mother Church of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, we felt it important to support the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist.

Meeting closed at 7:40 p.m. with prayer. Next meeting 5/16/18, 6 PM at Cousins Center.

Dcn. Mike Chmielewski



DATES TO REMEMBER

POST ORDINATION FORMATION FOR CLASS OF 2016 (second session), 6/2/2018, Cousins Center

DEACON APPRECIATION /

RETIREMENT GALA FOR JOHN EBEL, June 30, 2018, 4 PM, Cousins Center

ORDINATION, Class of 2018, September 8, 2018, Cathedral

AMAZING PARISH CONFERENCE: October 17-19, 2018, Downtown Milwaukee

MEMORIAL MASS 2018: October 28, 2018, Bishop Jeff Haines presider, Lumen Christi Parish, Mequon, District 6/10/13 planning

DEACON RETREAT: November 1-4, 2018, Redemptorist Retreat Center, Director, Bishop Jim Schuerman.

DEACON DAY 2018

On a blustery winter like Saturday morning, April 14, 2018, more than 100 deacons, wives, and widows gathered for their annual Deacon Day at St. James Parish in Menomonee Falls. The gathering was planned by Districts 4, 5 and 12, and hosted under the direction of Dcn. Mike Rooney, St. James Deacon, and Dcn. Sandy Sites, Parish Director of St. James.

Our guest presenter for the morning reflection was Deacon Bill Hampton of Atlanta, who is a global fellow for Catholic Relief Services (CRS). His presentation was focused primarily on the call to global service. Some of the topics Dcn. Bill presented included CRS Global Fellowship Program, CRS Ambassador Corps, CRS Rice Bowl, Catholic Social Teaching information, ethical trade information, and CRS emergency response updates. Dcn. Bill was supported in his presentation by Theresa Dunbar, the CRS relationship manager for the Midwest. In addition to their presentation, Dcn. Bill and Theresa shared visuals, reading materials, posters, and pamphlets with those gathered. They also brought along a 14-station prayer walk display, set up around the main gathering room, to help create an atmosphere of prayer and global solidarity.

We opened the day with Morning Prayer at 8:15 a.m. and at 11 a.m. celebrated



Left to right: Kathy & Jim Zdeb '93, Tom Losiniecki '78, Walt Henry '78, Bill Banach '83, Terry Maack '88, Jim Leggett '83, John & Antoinette D'Alessio '98, Chet Moczydlowski '78, Stan Lowe '98, Andy Meuler '98, Chuck Kustner '75.



Jim and Kathy Zdeb ('93) celebrating their 25th Wedding Anniversary, which is honored with an anniversary stole.

Mass in the beautiful prayer space of St. James. A special thank you to Dcn. Larry Normann for planning the day's prayer, putting together the worship guide, leading Morning Prayer, and helping center our gathering on Jesus, our Savior. A thank you also to Bishop James Schuerman who presided at Mass and offered great support to the Deacon family through his prayer, homily, and presence. Also thanks to Fr. Jerry Herda and Fr. Dave Reith for their presence at the gathering, for their concelebration of the

Mass, and their support of the Permanent Diaconate. A big thanks to the music and liturgical ministers of St. James who helped beautifully enhance our prayer.

Of course, no gathering of the deacon family goes without refreshments. Thanks to the crew who provided coffee, juice, donuts, soda, and bagels. Also thanks to Dcn. Jim Goetter for making the connections with Emmerich's catering for the great lunch spread.

As folks darted out into the parking lot on that blustery afternoon, all seemed to leave with a positive experience of prayer, fellowship, and solidarity. The day offered us another opportunity to reflect on our vocational calling as disciples of Jesus and Deacons of the Church. In a clear way, the day reminded us that our call is a global one, as well as local.

Dcn. Mike Chmielewski



KNOW YOUR DEACON

St. Vincent of Agen was a deacon in Gaul (now France) around the year 300. Legend has it that Vincent interrupted a pagan festival in which a flaming wheel was rolled down a hill into the river as part of the ceremony. Through Vincent's interference, the wheel rolled down the hill and then spun about before

rolling into the river. The wheel burned the impression of a cross into the hillside which incensed the pagans. They staked Vincent to the ground, scourged him, and eventually beheaded him. Vincent's biographer wrote, "there was no slowing down, letting go, holding on, or going back for Vincent."

THE PROCESS OF GRIEVING: UPDATE AND RESOURCES

The annual gathering with our Episcopal deacon friends was held at St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church in Pewaukee on Saturday, May 12. Fifteen Catholics and 8 Episcopalians shared fellowship, prayer and gained insights on dealing with those facing grief, including ourselves. Our Catholic presence included deacons, a seminarian, and several members from the Ministry of Care.

Since the gathering was held in an Episcopal church, as has been our tradition, a Catholic deacon, Jim Starke, led us in morning prayer. In keeping with the topic of the day, Jim did a wonderful job of drawing us into listening. Jim quoted from Mark Kipfmuller's "Pastoral Counseling Handbook." He also shared his own experience of learning to listen more attentively.

After our shared prayer, Tom Binder, a certified grief counselor, led us through 12 considerations in meeting with someone who is grieving. These included things to say, and especially, not to say. The role of facial and body language. Tom also encouraged that we be open to grief counselling for ourselves, and face the reality that our own grief can get in the way of our ministry, and can also be a great lesson for ministry, too. But only if it is processed well, and time is allowed for healing. Tom's 12-week grief counselling process is provided through St. Mary's Visitation Church, Elm Grove.

Tom suggested some books, including:



Roman and Episcopal deacons and their spouses engaging in conversation.

- "Who Dies" by Stephen Levine
- "The Devine Art of Dying" by Karen Speerstra & Herbert Anderson
- "The Grace of Dying" by Kathleen Dowling Singh
- "The Five Invitations, Discovering What Death Can Teach Us About Living Fully" by Frank Ostaseski
- "A Long-Shadowed Grief, Suicide and Its Aftermath" by Harold Ivan Smith

Next year we will gather at a Catholic church, so, if you'd like to offer your parish as a host site, let Mike or me know. Also, if you have a suggestion for a focus topic, let either of us know.

Dcn. Jim Banach

"ANSWERING THE CALL" IN AFRICA

I have come to recognize (rather than understand) the call of our Heavenly Father. Throughout my life, I believe that God has been "training me up" from the day I was born. Everything I ever needed to survive has been offered up by Him. The very act of being born into this world was His first step in teaching me to get out of my comfort zone. Everything I have done – from learning how to crawl, walk, talk, run, or even ride a bicycle as a child, up to answering the call to be a deacon, were calls to draw me forward. All I have accomplished during my 70 years of life has been laid out for me. Thus, it was that He continued to challenge me to "answer his call" as He prepared me for my journey to Africa.

In December 2016, I met with Rev. Doctor Christopher Ozodi, a fellow Chaplain at Wheaton Franciscan Hospital's Spring Street Campus. He invited me to travel with him and his wife, Paulina, to Nigeria for a 30-day pilgrimage. Our plan was to fly into Lagos and then travel to the geographical center of Nigeria to the Diocese of Auka (Anambra State). He felt it was the perfect way to see what God could teach me about the Catholic faith through my cultural interactions with the different tribal peoples of the outlying border parishes. During that time, I would set aside a few hours each

Our journey began at Mitchell Airport in early May 2017. We departed Milwaukee at 4:30 in the afternoon with a long layover in

Atlanta. Our Atlanta flight to Lagos departed just before midnight and we arrived in Africa mid-afternoon the next day (May 12).

After a night of rest, we hired a driver to take us inland. We left Lagos very early for the 8-hour drive (over many rutted dirt roads) to Umunya Village where we spent our first two days with a family friend of Chris and Paulina. I visited the compounds of both their families on a visit to Awkuzu Village, and I met both their mothers (the fathers had passed) whom I grew close to. I was also introduced to many family members and friends. Afterwards, Fr. Chris said he was very pleasantly surprised by how easily I integrated with the culture.

Once we reached Awka (in central Nigeria), I proceeded to St. Patrick's Cathedral (the Awka Diocese Headquarters) where arrangements were made for me to stay when I wasn't assigned to a parish by the Bishop. Initially I met with Fr. Matthew Attanse, my point of contact and guide while there. That evening he invited me to "tag along" to a meeting, which turned out to be a visit to the private home of a baptismal family. It was a very nice introduction and it gave me the opportunity again to interact with a large local family on a very personal level.

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► **ANSWERING THE CALL** *(continued from page 5)*

We returned to the Cathedral where I was housed with all the other priests. There was limited electricity in Nigeria and our residence ran off a private generator, which allowed for occasional charging of laptops, phones, running a fan in my bedroom, etc. Generators only ran from late afternoon to well before midnight. Then you had to wait until the next evening for power again. There was only lukewarm water for showers, unless you were out in the communities/villages where showers were cold water only and almost no generators or cell signals. The women of the community provided cleaning services, laundry and meal preparation, which was a very pleasant plus to staying with the priests. However, I was told to NEVER leave the confines of any church property without wearing my clerical clothes with Roman collar.

My meetings with both the Chancellor (Fr. Francis Chidume) and the Bishop (Most Rev. Paulinus Chukwuemeke Ezeokafor) were very pleasant. At the meeting, I was asked to explain my role in the Chicago and the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. When done, the Bishop asked me, “Why would you want to come to Nigeria

to do ministry?” I told him that I felt it was a call to minister outside my comfort zone and wanted to find out why God called me there. They seemed dually impressed and decided to have me stay on at St. Patrick’s for the first week and a half to personally serve the Bishop. I thanked the Bishop, and explained that, while I was honored to be at his disposal, that only left me the last two weekends for any potential travel to the outlying parishes (mid-week, I went with Fr. Chris and Paulina). I was sure their desire was to observe me in action first, BUT my heart wanted to get into the real Nigerian communities.

During my stay at St. Patrick’s, I served my first Mass with Fr. Matthew, then one with the Chancellor (where I preached), and finally went on to serve four different Masses with the Bishop. Masses are said in the local dialect, Latin, and English). In my 15 years as a Deacon in both Chicago and Milwaukee, I have only been chosen to serve at Mass maybe four times with my bishops. Here I traveled over 3,000 miles to serve as the Bishop’s Deacon for over a week and a half. It was amazing!

Dcn. Bob Starr

Prayer Requests

Deacon Tony Martino `84
and wife Carole Ann
Deacon Francisco Blas `02
and wife Florencia
Deacon Roberto Fuentes `02
and wife Lorenz
Deacon Jay Wittak `05
and wife Susan
Deacon Dick Govek `92
and wife Dorothy
Deacon Baleriano Gonzalez `84
Deacon Ron Schneider `96
Deacon Ken Miller `77
Donna Hying,
widow of Dcn. Joseph `84
Ginny Schimmels,
widow of Dcn. Tom `84
Deacon Jim Smallhoover `02
Judy Francois, wife of Dc. Jim `83
Deacon John Mezydlo `14
Deacon John Stodola `02
Deacon Leon Zalewski `83
and wife Joan
Deacon Troy Major `02
Deacon Rich Stanula `12
Deacon Carl Mahnke `96

**RECENTLY DECEASED
AND THEIR FAMILIES:**

Theresa Mensah, wife of the late
Dc. Anthony `83, 2/15/18
Andre Hoynacki, mother of
Monica Goetter `12, 3/10/18
Maria Perez, wife of the late
Dc. Gerardo `78, 3/24/18
Vivian Gust, wife of the late
Dc. Peter `78, 4/18/18
Maria Dadlez, wife of Dc. Mark `79,
4/18/18
Dale Burmeister, brother of
Dc. Dale `02, 4/24/18
Henry Toperzer, father of
Ann Grambow `14, 5/2/18
Michael LaFond, brother of
Dc. Larry `83, 5/4/18
Bob Walzer, brother of Mary Ann
Ebel `96, 4/20/18
Brother of Dc. Tony Martino `84,
April 2018

INDIGENT BURIALS:

Steven Rush 2/14/18
Bonny Johnson 2/20/18
Karen Ann Busateri 3/29/18
Sharon Murdoch 3/29/18
Mary Balcerzak 5/8/18



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