

THE Deacon Servant

OFFICES OF DEACON SERVICES | DIACONATE FORMATION | ARCHDIOCESE of MILWAUKEE



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IN THIS ISSUE:

- Director's Report..... 1
- A Synodal Approach to
Diaconate Formation 2
- Deacon Personnel Board 2
- A "Twist" to the Future 3
- Mentoring in the Formation
Program 4
- Deacon Day 2022 5
- Deacon Senate 5
- Know your Deacon 6
- New Deacon Couple 6
- Prayer Requests..... 7
- Dates to Remember 7

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



*Dcn. Mike
Chmielewski*

This week I met with a pastor and his newly assigned deacon to discuss and review the Diaconal Covenant. The pastor told me that July was his favorite month for parish life – the spring and early summer activities are wrapped

up, the fall planning has yet to begin, and many are on vacation.

July offers him a chance to envision, breathe and just enjoy God's gifts.

July has been somewhat busier here, but a very exciting busy. The projected ordination class of 2022, 16 men and their wives, are about to complete their formation classes. After four years of classes every Tuesday and alternating Saturdays (in their trimester schedule), they are done with Saturdays and have their final Tuesday class on July 19.

I have been meeting with the men and some of the wives over the last few weeks to discuss and plan for their parish ministry post-ordination, specifically planning their first Diaconal Covenant. The amazement and the excitement of the candidates is obvious. They are reflecting on their formation journey, and most are in awe of how they have been transformed. Some expressed that they were not totally convinced that they would get to ordination. They were all challenged, with many struggling at some point in the journey. But now that the formal

training is nearly over, they all feel blessed by the formation experience.

The group has engaged in many new learning opportunities, been exposed to many new thoughts and ideas, and have made many new relationships along the way. Some of those important new relationships on their journey have been with current deacons and wives. Repeatedly, the candidates and wives expressed their deep appreciation for the support and guidance of the deacons and

wives. All the candidates from parishes with active deacons gave a "shout out" to them. There were also references of appreciation to retired deacons, deacon widows, and even deacons who are since deceased.

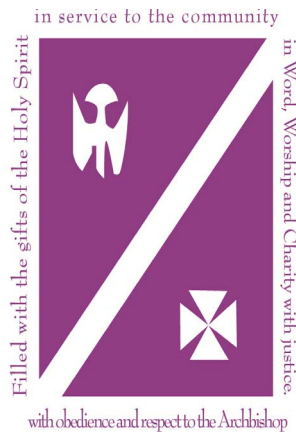
As I listen to the stories and help them envision their future ministries, I am in wonder at the work of the Holy Spirit. I see it in the eyes and hear it in

the voices of the candidates as they reflect on their formation journey. I also see the beautiful influence of the Holy Spirit as many continue to build the deacon family and proclaim the Good News of salvation.

This year, we will have the largest ordination class (16 new deacons!) since 16 were ordained in 1998. Looking back, 16 new deacons is only one fewer than our last four ordination classes combined (2016, 2018, 2020 and 2021). Sixteen new deacons and wives, a true gift of the Holy Spirit to God's Church and the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

For all this, we give thanks!

Dcn. Michael Chmielewski



A SYNODAL APPROACH TO DIACONATE FORMATION



Dcn. Dale Nees

The Second Edition of “The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States” took effect June 9, 2022, the feast of St. Ephrem, Deacon & Doctor of the Church. A simplistic approach to evaluating where any diaconal formation program is in relationship to what has been newly promulgated would be to do a side-by-side

comparison. That makes sense and is an essential first step in the process, yet we are called to go deeper and take a more reflective approach. If we wade rather than swim in a sea of change, we are at risk for merely doing cosmetic adjustments that may miss the core wisdom behind those changes.

As I was pondering how best to proceed, I read the introduction to “Synodality: A New Way of Proceeding in the Church” by Rafael Luciani. On page two, Pope Francis was quoted as saying, “A synodal Church is a Church that listens, with the understanding that listening ‘is more than hearing.’ It is reciprocal listening in which everyone has something to learn.” That assertion instantly resonated with me, so I went on to read the entire book.

I discovered a treasure trove of other citations also from Synodality that will be critically essential as we envision future formation. The following are just a few that are paramount for our journey of renewal:

- “Synodality is a constitutive ... dimension of the life and mission of the Church.”



- It “supposes relationships steeped in respect and charity, humility and poverty. This is the ‘synodal’ spirit.”
- It recognizes that—“Discernment is not only done in the Church; it makes the Church, to the extent that it happens within the whole diversity of vocations, charisms, and ministries whereby the baptized hear the Word of God, examine the signs of the times, and participate in history under the action of the Holy Spirit.”
- It requires “... a disposition to listen and learn, the basis of every form of synodal action.”

Together as we approach the work of implementing this new edition of “The National Directory”, we must recognize that mere adaptation is not enough. Rather, it requires a new way of thinking ... a new direction.

Dcn. Dale Nees

DEACON PERSONNEL BOARD

The Deacon Personnel Board met via Zoom on May 17, 2022. The entire Board was present: Dcns. Gulig, Campbell, Nosacek, Stanula, Schneider and Chmielewski, as well as Fr. Jerry Herda.

After prayer and approval of the February meeting minutes, we launched into a lengthy presentation and discussion of specific deacon issues. Included in the discussion were 11 covenant renewals (since Feb.1, 2022), 4 potential new assignments, and a new deacon moving into Racine from New York. We further reviewed the potential for 16 new deacons scheduled for ordination in September. There were other individual deacon issues discussed as well.

Fr. Herda reported that most of the spring priest assignments were now public and will happen in mid-June. There are, however, still some moving parts to be finalized. The Catholic

Herald will soon publish all the assignments. Fr. Herda has been assigned the new pastor at St. Matthias Parish, Milwaukee, but the exact timing of his leaving the Vicar role and beginning at St. Matthias is pending the final appointment of a new Vicar by Archbishop ListECKI.

Dcn. Gulig reminded the Board of the significant importance of the “seasoned” deacon role in guiding and supporting new deacons. Gulig has been a regular participant in the required post-ordination formation of our newly ordained deacons, and he reflected on the importance of the continued encouragement of our new deacons.

The next Board meeting will take place in late August or early September.

Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

A “TWIST” TO THE FUTURE



*Dcn. Manuel
Maldonado-
Villalobos*

From June 12-17, 2022, the National Association of Deacon Directors hosted a **National Directory Institute**. Maritza Espino, associate director for pastoral formation, and myself participated in this intense week of training and learning.

The NDI “helps diaconate directors and formation staff understand and integrate the spirit and norms of the “National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons” in the

United States into their diocesan formation programs ... NDI is the comprehensive training program developed and offered by NADD to help deacon formation directors and staff members better understand and effectively implement the normative elements of the National Directory while offering assurance to ordinaries that formation in their dioceses is correct and effective. NDI is offered in consultation with the USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. It is oriented to the practical needs of diaconate formation staff – experienced or new—as they help candidates discern vocations and guide them into ministry.” (<https://www.nadd.org/ndi.html>)

During this intense week, we were introduced to the new edition of the National Directory promulgated on June 9, 2022. Directors, associates and coordinators gathered in an environment of collaboration to learn more about the directory and its implementation. During the institute, we learned about the changes, formation and implementations of the norms and resources. Some of the changes are:

- Stable marriage in the Catholic Church at least 5 years;
- Widower at least 3 years;
- Convert (Neophyte) at least 5 years;
- Aspirancy (propaedeutic) path 2 years; and
- Post-ordination formation extended to 5 years.

Other areas presented at NDI were discernment, scrutiny, formation (four dimensions), family, spiritual direction, mentoring, implementation and more. As I said before, it was a very intense institute, and hard to summarize here. However, I would like to present some important points for consideration.

• **Discernment:** This vocation is explored/discerned at a personal level, and at the same time requires the discernment of the man’s spouse (if married) and family, and the Church. There is no change in this understanding. What is new is the “art of accompaniment” and the consideration to rare cases where the man is in a mixed marriage or disparity of cult marriage. These considerations were happening before, but now are mentioned in

the directory. (Cfrt. #s 177-181 NDFMLPD)

• **Scrutiny:** For the majority of programs around the United States, there needs to be stronger scrutiny. Some norms that are new or have a new understanding are the psychological consultation for both man and wife (if married), ministerial competencies/experiences, marriage indicator/inventory and separate interviews with his wife (if married) and the entire family. (Cfrt. Np. 183-185, National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons)

• **Formation and Family:** The formation is a lifelong process. Two years of an Aspirancy path is required. A foundation in religious studies is encouraged—since we cannot be assured of the man’s Catholic foundation and college level “study skills.” It also strongly recommends family involvement of not only the wife of a married deacon but also their immediate family; it also applies to a single man. The first sacrament and ministry is the family, and if the man cannot minister or serve to his first sacrament, we need to be attentive to that first.

• **Spiritual Direction:** It is highly recommended to have a spiritual director from the moment of inquiring to the diaconate to help in this vocational discernment. The directory states that spiritual directors need to be priests. It is up to the Ordinary to accept/approve permanent deacons who are “trained” as spiritual directors for this ministry. Spiritual direction is for both man and wife (if married), and the formation program needs to provide a list of approved spiritual directors. The spiritual director cannot be the pastor, parish staff, mentor or teacher of the mentee, because of the “internal forum” nature of this relationship.

• **Mentoring:** This was one of the most discussed topics during the institute. The mentors work with the director to provide support and encouragement to those in formation. They can help as tutors, “coaches,” theological reflection facilitators, companions, etc. Mentors collaborate with the formation team. They give reports to the director on their mentee’s journey to help the program guide them. There is not an “internal forum” in the mentoring process (as it is in Spiritual Direction) because one of the roles of the mentor is to present a “judgement of suitability” to the director, including issues. The goal is to help the mentee in his formation and the Church in her discerning. (Cfrt. No. 293 National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons)

Finally, another important statement that was presented to us was

► See A “TWIST” TO THE FUTURE
(continued on page 4)

MENTORING IN THE FORMATION PROGRAM



Maritza Espino

I was given the opportunity to attend the National Directory Institute which took place in Columbus, Ohio from June 12-17, 2022. The workshops were intense and provided a considerable amount of information and complexity as they shared the revisions on the second edition of the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons

(NDFMLPD) which went into effect on June 9, 2022.

“A wife is an equal partner in the Sacrament of Matrimony and is an individual person with her own gifts, talents, and call from God. A man’s diaconal formation can be a unique and challenging situation and opportunity for his wife. She should be involved in the program in appropriate ways—remembering, however, that it is the husband who is responding to a call to the diaconate.” No. 148 (*National Directory for the Formation, ministry, and life of Permanent Deacons in the United States of America*).

The emphasis at the Institute was for the need to have a structured program for the wives’ and their families who are supporting their husbands and/or dad as they go through formation. For me, this was an affirmation of our Wives’ and Family Program since I discovered that not all the Dioceses or Archdioceses offer formal formation for the wives and their families. Yet, the second edition of the Directory recognizes the need to offer formal formation to the wives and their families (No. 151-152) in which, along with their husbands, continue their discernment on their vocation to become a Deacon couple and/or Deacon family. The formation for the wives, as well as the family, is essential since they need to make well- informed decisions and have understanding when it

comes to supporting their husbands and/or dad in his vocation to the Diaconate. The wives’ formation must include spiritual direction along with mentoring.

“The mentor is equivalent to the “tutor” described in the *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*, paragraph 22. The mentor is charged with following the formation of those committed to his care, offering support and encouragement. Depending upon the size of the formation community, a mentor will be responsible for one aspirant or candidate... mentors receive their orientation and supervision from the director of formation. They also help the director for pastoral formation to facilitate theological reflection among those aspirants or candidates assigned to them. Mentors are members of the formation team and are invited “to collaborate with the director of formation in the programming of the different formational activities and in the preparation of the judgement and suitability.” No. 293, (*The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons*).

Last month we offered a Mentor Training for already-trained mentors, as well as new mentors which was well attended. As we plan for a five-year Diaconate Formation Program, our goal is to offer well-trained mentors that will continue to support our aspirants, candidates, and their families in their ongoing formation. We will excel in finding and learning about their needs and ways to offer formation that will integrate all the four dimensions of formation.

Our endless gratitude goes out to all the Deacons and wives’ mentors for all the ongoing support and generosity with their time and talents that they shared unconditionally with us.

Maritza Espino

► A “TWIST” TO THE FUTURE (*continued from page 3*)

people responsible for the formation of future servants for the Church. The institute talked about the Formation Team as “gate keepers.” We are here to accompany in the discernment of these men’s vocations, but we are also responsible to serve and protect the Church (her discernment). We are responsible for forming and look at every aspect of the man’s persona and life, not only at his desire. This is hard to understand for many people, but the Church (and their bishop) entrusted us with this responsibility, and the National Directory gives us guidance, process and norms to better serve our Church and the people of God. We are here to

accompany men and their families to discern their call to serve the people of God as deacons or as lay people.

In the end, we as a formation program must trust the work of the Holy Spirit upon our bishops and the new edition of the directory. Implementation of the whole directory does not need to happen all at once; this process takes time. Some norms will take place this year and a new curriculum will be in place by the year 2024. Your prayers and continuous support are greatly appreciated.

Dcn. Manuel Maldonado-Villalobos

DEACON DAY 2022

Deacon Day 2022 took place May 7, 2022 at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Waterford. Stephanie Delmore, victim assistance and employee support coordinator for the archdiocese, was the event presenter. Stephanie's two presentations were entitled, "Affirming Diaconal Ministry: Service to those affected by Suicide and Mental Illness." The presentations were very informative and offered much for us to ponder and reflect upon. There were many questions and comments from the group and the overall response was quite positive.

The community at St. Thomas Aquinas was a most gracious host. Pastor Fr. Ed Tlucek, O.F.M., offered not only a special welcome but donated all the day's food, including some delicious hot breakfast items as well as a great lunch. The ladies of St. Thomas prepared, served and took care of all the cleanup. The liturgical team at St. Thomas assisted in beautiful prayer for both our Morning Prayer and the Mass with music and slides.

Fr. Jerry Herda, Vicar for Clergy, was the presider for Mass assisted by the St. Thomas deacons, Jim Nickel and Mike Hoffman. Fr. Herda led beautiful prayer and expressed his appreciation for all the diaconal service in the archdiocese.

Nearly 70 deacons, wives and widows attended the event and all seemed most appreciative of the opportunity to celebrate,



learn and gather as community. Because of Fr. Tlucek's generous donation of the day's food, the financial cost to the Deacon Council was small. With the cost of the deductions from deacon continuing formation accounts noted on the invitation (\$30 per couple/\$25 single), we made a \$300 donation to the St. Thomas Aquinas Food Pantry and basically broke even financially.

A special thank you to the District 1/2/3 group who planned and coordinated the day. Please note that discussion has already started in Waukesha for Deacon Day 2023.

DEACON SENATE

The Deacon Senate met Wednesday, May 18 via Zoom. Dcn. Scott Campbell presented the financial report as the 2021/2022 fiscal year comes to an end. The year ended with the account in a strong position. With only a couple of minor expenditures remaining, the balance of the account is in good shape going into 2022/2023. Dcn. Campbell will propose the new budget at the July meeting. Thank you, Scott, for all your hard work.

Dcn. Dale Nees indicated that it has been a busy time in his formation report. The timeline for establishing the next aspirant class was accelerated so that the next class would be in place before the five-year formation program takes effect. In addition, an intentional plan to catechize the archdiocese on the ministry of the permanent diaconate is being developed. Dcn. Nees is also working on developing the steps that the Director of Diaconate Formation will use to handle immigration on a case-by-case basis for the Permanent Diaconate in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. We look forward to the ordination of the next class in September. Dcn. Nees is looking for help with presenters at the ordination retreat.

Five of the six district clusters met the previous month. Districts 1, 2 and 3 reviewed the lessons learned from the successful 2022 Deacon Day. Districts 14, 15 and 16 are busy planning the Oct. 23

Memorial Mass at St. Roman. Districts 7, 8 and 9 have established Oct. 22, 2023, at St. Katherine Drexel in Beaver Dam as the date and time for the 2023 Memorial Mass. Districts 4, 5 and 12 are working on the details for the 2023 Deacon Day.

Deacon Day 2022 was thought to be a great success there were lots of good comments, lots of good conversation between deacons and wives, and lots of good conversation with Stephanie Delmore. Congratulations and thank you to all involved for your hard work. Due to lower costs of day from the parish providing the food, Senate discussion led to the decision that the diaconate will donate \$300 to the St. Thomas Parish Food Pantry in Waterford.

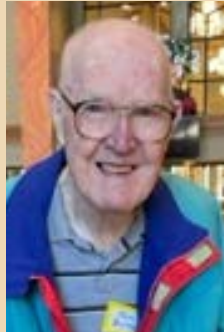
Dcn. Jim Matthias reiterated his request that anyone currently participating or interested in jail or prison ministry to reach out to him. More facilities are opening up to ministers and the need is great. Dcn. Matthias is also inviting deacons to participate in the Rosary for Life on the first Saturday of each month. Please reach out to Dcn. Matthias if interested. At the time of the meeting, there was a need for a site in August and September.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 20. It has yet to be determined if it will be in person or by Zoom.

Dcn. Jim Starke

KNOW OUR DEACON

Dcn. John Burns was born and raised in Cudahy, graduating from Holy Family Grade School and then St. John Cathedral High School. He entered a Steamfitter Certification program at MATC and then went on to Purdue University to become a certified instructor. He worked as a steamfitter his entire working career, retiring after more than 20 years with the Milwaukee Metro Sewerage District. He married the love of his life, Joanne, in 1952, and they had four children. Joanne died December 23, 2017.



Dcn. John Burns

Dcn. Burns was ordained in 1988 and assigned to his home parish of St. Veronica in Milwaukee. In 2002, he was assigned to St. Mary Parish in Hales Corners, where he continues to have a presence today. In addition to the usual

liturgical and sacramental ministries, Dcn. Burns has a passion for care and service to the elderly. His covenant often reflected an excess of 30 hours of nursing home service each month. Dcn. Burns is also on “speed dial” with many of the funeral homes in the southwest corner of Milwaukee County, offering services to the grieving.

You cannot miss Deacon John at our deacon gatherings. He is a regular attendee of Deacon Day, Memorial Mass and deacon funerals. He is the tallest one in the group, and all you need to say is “hello” to begin an extended conversation. Thank you, John, for all your ministry to God’s people.

Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

KNOW OUR DEACON

Dcn. Ricardo Munoz was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. Shortly after high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, where he served from 1961-67. He then moved to Fond du Lac and began a lengthy employment at Mercury Marine. In 1968, he married the love of his life, Cleo, and had five children.



Dcn. Ricardo Munoz

Dcn. Munoz was ordained in 1981 and assigned to his home parish of St. Louis in Fond du Lac. He served his entire diaconate in Fond du Lac parishes, eventually covenanting with Holy Family Parish in 1999 when all the “Fondy” parishes merged into one. He retired from covenanted service in 2020.

Dcn. Munoz was active in all the usual liturgical and sacramental

services at Holy Family. He was, however, very passionate about Hispanic ministry in Fond du Lac. Before his ordination, there were few specific ministries for the Hispanic community. Dcn. Munoz was instrumental in developing ministry and service to the Hispanic community in their native language. Dcn. Munoz also served as the Fond du Lac district representative to the Deacon Council for a number of years, and in that role, he continued to raise up the need for Hispanic men to answer the call to the diaconate.

Thank you, Ricardo, for all you have done for God’s people and his Church.

Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

NEW DEACON COUPLE

Dcn. Edward Benvenga and his wife Barbara moved into the Archdiocese of Milwaukee in February of 2022. They relocated to Racine from Yorktown Heights, New York, moving here to be closer to two adult sons who reside in Racine. Dcn. Benvenga is a retired special education teacher. He was ordained a deacon June 15, 2019, for the Archdiocese of New York at St. Patrick’s Cathedral. He was assigned to his home parish, St. Patrick in Yorktown Heights, where he served in the usual sacramental and liturgical



Dcn. Edward Benvenga and his wife Barbara

roles. Upon arrival into Racine, he made a quick connection with Sacred Heart Parish where he has been warmly welcomed. He was officially assigned to serve at Sacred Heart Parish by Archbishop ListECKI in June. Dcn. Benvenga has already made himself visible by attending this past May’s Deacon Day, while Barbara attended the March Wives Day of Reflection. A BIG welcome to Edward and Barbara.

Dcn. Mike Chmielewski

Prayer Requests

Kathy Marx, wife of Dcn. Keith '07
 Dcn. Troy Major '02
 Antoinette D'Alessio, wife of Dcn. John '98
 Dcn. Tom Filipiak '94
 Dcn. Al Foeckler '07
 Dcn. Roberto Fuentes '02 and wife Lorenza
 Dcn. Bill Banach '83
 Dcn. Larry Normann '84
 Carol McManus, widow of Dcn. Arthur '94
 Dcn. John Ebel '96 and wife Maryann

Dcn. Jim Smallhoover '02
 Joan Zalewski, widow of Dcn. Leon '83
 Dcn. Dick Winkowski '02

RECENTLY DECEASED AND THEIR FAMILIES

Sandra Monday, widow of Dcn. Tom '90, 4/22/2022
 Marlene Benzschawel, mother of Dcn. Todd '13, 6/15/2022
 Judy Francois, wife of Dcn. Jim '83, 6/30/2022



DATES TO REMEMBER

September 10, 2022

Diaconate Ordination, 9:30 a.m.
 Christ King Parish, Wauwatosa

October 23, 2022

Memorial Mass 2022, 2 p.m., Archbishop ListECKi, St. Roman Parish, Milwaukee

November 3-6, 2022

Deacon Retreat / Redemptorist, Fr. Rob Kroll, S.J.

April 22, 2023

Deacon Day 2023, Bishop Richard Sklba and Fr. Tom Suriano, St. Dominic, Brookfield

October 22, 2023

Memorial Mass 2023, 2 p.m., Bishop Jim Schuerman, St. Katharine Drexel, Beaver Dam



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