

THE *Belleville Deacon*

OFFICE OF VOCATIONS | DIACONATE FORMATION | DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE



Deacon candidates from Belleville and Springfield-Cape Girardeau Diocese gather on the steps of St. Meinrad Archabbey Church during homiletics week. Candidates for ordination spend a comprehensive seven days practicing preaching skills. They prepare four homilies that they present to the formation staff and deacon candidate peers.

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Reverend Steven M. Pautler



Thank you for the wonderful responses to the first issue of *The Belleville Deacon.* Many of you have found it helpful in your own ministry and discernment. Please know we are always open to suggestions to improve our communications.

This is a busy time for the Ordination Class of 2023. They have just completed a comprehensive week-long Homiletics Workshop at St. Meinrad Seminary. I had the opportunity to join them and prayerfully listen to them preach on selective Sacred Scripture. Preaching is just one aspect of being called to serve God's Church as a Deacon.

Many of us are touched by the many different ways in which deacons, along with the priests, religious and many lay persons, are ministering to the people of the Diocese of Belleville. Deep in your heart you may feel a tug, a small whisper suggesting that maybe you are called to do the same. Talk to your pastor and attend one of the, "Come and See," informational sessions.

One of the major developments of the Second Vatican Council was to restore the diaconate to a permanent order within the church. In its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the fathers of Second Vatican Council called for the restoration of the diaconate as a permanent order of ordained ministry in the Catholic Church. One document important to Permanent Deacons is *Lumen Gentium*. Visit the Vatican Website for more information and reading: *Vatican.va*.

Come and See...

Potential applicants should review the schedule below for the locations and dates of these events to take advantage of the opportunity to attend and learn more about the permanent diaconate and the formation program. No pre-registration is required.

Prospective Candidates may attend:

St. Francis Xavier Parish

Tuesday, September 13, 2022
7:00 p.m. (Church)
303 S. Poplar Street
Carbondale, IL 62901

Cathedral of St. Peter

Saturday, October 15, 2022
10:00 a.m. (Undercroft)
200 W. Harrison Street
Belleville, IL 62220

St. Mary Parish

Wednesday, November 16, 2022
7:00 p.m. (Church)
1550 Main Street
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864

Is God calling me?

The Permanent Diaconate is an ancient and sacred ministry of service dating back to the time of the apostles. Deacons are ministers of charity, the Word and the altar. The Church needs good and faithful men to step up today and ask themselves if they are being called by Almighty God to serve the Church through this commitment to holy orders.

Important Dates

Deacon Formation for the Class of 2023

September 9th - September 11th
Diocesan Pastoral Center, Building #6

Deacon Aspirants, *Come and See*

Tuesday, September 13th
St. Francis Xavier - Carbondale, IL
7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Serra Club Dinner with Deacons & spouses

Thursday, September 22, 2022
St. Luke Parish Center - Belleville

Retreat for Deacons & spouses

October 2nd - October 4th St. Meinrad Archabbey

Deacon Formation for the Class of 2023

October 14th - October 16th
Diocesan Pastoral Center, Building #6

Deacon Aspirants, *Come and See*

Saturday, October 15th - Cathedral,
Belleville, IL 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Deacons meet with Bishop McGovern Continuing Education/Formation

October 23, 2022
Cathedral of St. Peter - Undercroft

Deacon Formation for the Class of 2023

November 11th - 13th
Diocesan Pastoral Center, Building #6

Ministry of Acolyte, Class of 2023

Saturday, November 12th
Cathedral of St. Peter - 10:00 a.m.

Deacon Aspirants, *Come and See*

Wednesday, November 16th
St. Mary, Mt. Vernon, IL 7:00 p.m.

Deacon Formation for the Class of 2023

December 9th - 11th
Diocesan Pastoral Center, Building #6

Deacon Family Community Christmas Gathering and Open Reception

Sunday, December 11, 2022
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Diocesan Pastoral Center, Building #6

Canonical Deacon Candidates Retreat

Monday, April 24 – Friday, April 28, 2023
The Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows

Ordination to the Sacred Order of Deacons

Saturday, June 3, 2023
Cathedral of St. Peter, Belleville, IL 10:30 a.m.

Suggested Reading List

Our Life of Service: The Handbook for Catholic Deacons - Paperback – December 3, 2021
by Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

Encountering Christ the Servant: A Spirituality of the Diaconate - Paperback – October 23, 2020
by Deacon Dominic Cerrato Ph.D.

The Heart of the Diaconate: Communion with the Servant Mysteries of Christ
Paperback – September 1, 2015, by James Keating.

Understanding the Diaconate: Historical, Theological, and Sociological Foundations -
Paperback – July 13, 2018, by W. Shawn McKnight

CANDIDATE'S REFLECTION: PREACHING A HOMILY

David Michael Mills, Deacon Candidate, Class of 2023
St. Edward Parish, Fairfield, IL



Tucked away in the hills and vails of southern Indiana Saint Meinrad Archabbey rises like a “shining city on the hill.” This was the idyllic canvass my brethren in the Diocese of Belleville – Cape Girardeau used to paint the picture of the Gospel during Homiletics Week, from August 7 to August 13. After four years of both in-person and on-line graduate theology course work as the “COVID-19 Class,” the time had come for our cohort to bridge the gap between theory and practice by standing and delivering our own homilies.

Our week at St. Meinrad was an intensive working environment split between daily large class sessions, individual research/writing, and small group presentations; with periods for Mass, Vespers, and meals wedged in between. Most of us worked 14 to 16 hour days to reach our potential as homilists, but it was time well spent.

We ended the week with a funeral homily for a deceased individual we did not know, but were expected to honor and dignify at the ambo. As the pressure to perform increased throughout the week the confidence in my classmates rose to the occasion, too. We entered Homiletics Week as a class of 17 individual deacon candidates and left a band of brothers ready for ordination in June 2023. 85 homilies later (five per Deacon Candidate), I can attest the future of the Church is in good hands as I spent a week surrounded by humble men of charity, brilliance, and discipline.

PERSPECTIVE FROM A DEACON CANDIDATE'S WIFE

Sonia Keepes, wife of Deacon Candidate Jim Keepes,
Class of 2023. St. Mary Parish, Mt. Carmel



Jim and I, along with sixteen other couples, entered the diaconate program in the fall of 2018. Our nervous energy soon disappeared as we got to know each other and began to settle into the routine of meeting monthly. At our first class, we were introduced to the Liturgy of the Hours. The Liturgy of the Hours forms the official set of prayers that mark the hours of each day and sanctify the day with prayer. These prayers are an obligation undertaken by priests and deacons intending to become priests, while deacons intending to remain deacons are obliged to recite morning and evening prayers.

When Jim and I began to pray them together at home, they were at first awkward and clunky and didn't seem much like prayer at all. But as we persisted, these prayers not only became the “bookends” to our day but drew us closer as a couple as we fell into the rhythm of reciting them.

Likewise, on our diaconate weekends, we pray the morning and evening prayers of the Liturgy. It's through this time of celebrating each other's joys and sharing each other's concerns, that our class has formed a lasting bond and grown spiritually together.

MESSAGE FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Reverend Michaelsami Arockiam



I am looking forward to meeting the potential candidates who discern God's calling to serve His Church as permanent Deacons. I will be participating in the “Come and See” program at Carbondale, the Cathedral and Mt. Veron. It is good to see how enthusiastic they are during the informal “Come and See” before learning how the Lord, during the five years of formation, purifies and transforms their initial enthusiasm into their personal commitment to serve Him in His Church, and also to offer the Church's services to the world. Since this is the first batch of candidates with whom I am going to work closely I am looking forward to meeting them at the very beginning of their journey. I wish the candidates of “come and see” hear Jesus' calling “come with me.”

MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR OF DEACONS

Deacon Thomas J. Helfrich



In our August issue, I failed to mention that, in addition to the 31 active permanent deacons, we have 11 retired deacons in our diocese ranging in age from ~75 to 91, and that most of them are still involved in active ministry (including our 91 year old). Here are some demographics of the Diaconate in the US:

- It is estimated that there were as many as 20,888 permanent deacons (retired and active ministry) and 14,586 deacons active in ministry.
- In 2021, 458 new permanent deacons were ordained and 512 deacons retired from active ministry and another 393 deacons died. As is the case with priests in the US, there are not enough new permanent deacons being ordained to make up for the numbers who are retiring from active ministry and dying each year.
- 95% of active permanent deacons are at least 50 years old, 20% are in their 50s, 41% are in their 60s, and 36% are 70 or older.
- 93% of active permanent deacons are currently married, 4% are widowers, and 2% have never been married.

This US information comes from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations study - A Portrait of the Permanent Diaconate: A Study for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Mrs. Patti Warner



It is a busy time in our office as a new school year begins. The candidates have just completed their annual retreat at King's House, followed immediately by their Homiletics Week at St. Meinrad, and now their final year of classes will begin the week-end of September 9-11. They will start this school year with Moral Theology. Each candidate and his wife will soon be meeting with Bishop McGovern and on November 12, the men will be instituted as Acolytes for the Church. All these important steps are leading them to Ordination in less than a year.

It is my unique privilege to walk alongside the candidates and their wives through all the stages of their 5-year journey to the diaconate. I watch them evolve from a group of strangers scattered throughout the diocese to a cohesive family of ordained ministers with servant hearts and a singular purpose to serve God's people.