

THE *Belleville Deacon*

OFFICE OF VOCATIONS | DIACONATE FORMATION | DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE



(Above) Prospective aspirants and their wives gathered at the Cathedral of St. Peter on Saturday, January 28, 2023, to begin the application process for the Permanent Diaconate. (Left) Deacon Ron Pirau, Director of Permanent Diaconate Formation, St. Meinrad School of Theology; Reverend Michaelsami Arockiam, Assistant Director of Permanent Deacon Formation; and Associate Director of Deacon Formation, Mrs. Patricia Warner, are pictured preparing for the application process presentation.

APPLICATION PROCESS FOR THE DEACON ORDINATION CLASS OF 2028 HAS BEGUN

Twenty-five men and their wives, representing parishes from throughout the Diocese, gathered for the formal application process to be considered as aspirants for the Deacon Ordination Class of 2028. This diverse group was comprised of men in their late twenties through their sixties. Potential aspirants and their wives listened to presentations about what to expect during their five year formation and post formation, when they will serve as deacons and deacon wives. Deacon Ron Pirau, from St. Meinrad School of Theology, who provides the academic formation, answered questions about the program. He also shared information about the Masters in Theology Degree that both the aspirants and wives can pursue. Applications were distributed and they need to be returned to the Diocesan Vocation Office no later than March 4, 2023.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Reverend Steven M. Pautler

"Beginning already in the early days of the Apostles, the Catholic Church has held in great veneration the sacred order of the diaconate, as the Apostle of the Gentiles himself bears witness. He expressly sends his greeting to the deacons together with the bishops and instructs Timothy which virtues and qualities are to be sought in them in order that they may be regarded as worthy of their ministry." —Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem Pope Paul VI June 18, 1967.

The first deacon for the Diocese was ordained in 1970, and since that time, men have been called to serve God and the Church in various ways and ministries. Presently forty-four men serve as Permanent Deacons. Since the first ordination in 1970, the formation process for our diocese has evolved. In the initial years, formation was conducted by qualified priests and individuals from the diocese. Since 2003, the Belleville Diocese, partnering with Springfield-Cape Diocese have been forming deacons through the academic program offered by St. Meinrad School of Theology, St. Meinrad, IN.

With joy, we begin the process of selecting men to serve as permanent deacons for our diocese. Many of them have already begun their journey during this pro-paedeutic stage, seeking out spiritual direction, meeting with their pastor and talking with family members.

The application process is a comprehensive collection of information that will help the Formation/Selection committee make prayerful recommendations to our Bishop for

consideration. In addition they are asked to select twenty-five individuals as personal references, letters of support from their wife, pastor and pastoral council. In addition, they must complete a complete medical physical and psychological evaluation. Please continue your prayers for an increase of vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.

MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR OF DEACONS

Deacon Thomas J. Helfrich



Here we are in the early weeks of Ordinary Time and before you know it it'll be Ash Wednesday, Lent, Triduum, and Easter Sunday. But it is no ordinary time for those men who are discerning a vocation to the diaconate and applying to enter Deacon Formation. Something that I always tell people discerning a vocation or ministry in our Church is 1. Remember that God does not call the equipped, he equips the called; and, 2. As a print that my wife Dawn gave me that hangs in my office says - The will of God will never leave you where the grace of God will not protect you. To the men discerning and applying, we were all there at one point, feeling humbled, feeling unworthy, and perhaps even feeling like we were considering a daunting task, but here we are 5, 10, 15, 20 or more years after ordination and still discerning our role in our vocation to the diaconate and still serving God and His church; you too can do this. Let me know if I can be of any assistance as you move forward with you discernment and application.

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Important Dates

Deacon Formation for the Class of 2023

Weekend Session

February 10th - February 12th
Cathedral of St. Peter (Undercroft)

Weekend Session

March 10th - March 12th
St. Meinrad School of Theology, St. Meinrad, IN

Weekend Session

April 14th - April 16th
Cathedral of St. Peter (Undercroft)

Canonical Retreat, before Ordination

Monday, April 24th - Friday, April 28th
Toddhall Retreat Center - Columbia Illinois

Final Weekend Session

May 12th - May 14th
Cathedral of St. Peter (Undercroft)

Ordination of Deacons Cathedral of St. Peter - Belleville

Friday, June 2, 2023

Cathedral of St. Peter - Rehearsal - 4:00 p.m.
Holy Hour for Vocations/ with Vespers - 5:00 p.m.
Pre-Ordination Reception/Dinner - 6:15 p.m.

Saturday, June 3, 2023

Bl. Sacrament Chapel - Reconciliation - 8:00 a.m.
Bl. Sacrament Chapel Morning Prayer - 9:00 a.m.
Undercroft - Vesting in Alb - 9:30 a.m.
Cathedral Nave - Line-up - 9:50 a.m.
Ordination of Deacons - 10:00 a.m.
McCormick Center - Reception following Ordination

Important Information for All Permanent Deacons & Candidates

Deacon Family Outing

For all deacons, candidates and families
Rend Lake - Shagbark Group Area
Friday, April 28th - Sunday April 30th

Meeting with Bishop McGovern

Mandatory Quarterly Meeting (Deacons & Wives)
Sunday, April 23, 2023 - 1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.
Sunday, October 8, 2023 - 1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.

Annual Deacon Retreat

Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows

Deacons & Spouses
September 8th - 10th

Suggested Reading List

Diocese of Belleville, Office of Vocations

Deacon Formation Program, 2023 Revision

<https://www.diobelle.org/canonical-affairs/deacon-formation>

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

MESSAGE FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR



Reverend Michael Arockiam

Last Saturday, January 28th, I was pleased to be among the group of potential candidates to become permanent deacons to serve the Diocese of Belleville. They had come from different part of the Diocese and from different walks of life; they all referred to the experience they brought with them for the ministry. Almost all of them were young. Many of them came with their wives. As they introduced themselves they also introduced their wives to the group and almost all of them said how inspirational their wives were in their choosing to hear God's call for this Diaconal ministry. They were not worried about the five year long period of formation and evaluations they are to go through. They determined to answer the Call with the support of their wives. What I observed most importantly is that the candidates and their wives did not have fear how the grace of God is going to change them! Though they all have their own "meaningful career" in life, they gave me the impression that they have now discovered the vocation that was there in the depth of their heart all along." I wish the candidates all the best and I look forward to learn and work with them. God bless.

MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



Mrs. Patti Warner

What a joy it was on Saturday as we met a wonderful group of folks stepping up to discern possible lives as deacons and deacon wives. I felt lots of faith, love and willingness to serve among you and that positivity lit up the entire Undercroft of the Cathedral of St. Peter! It's an exciting time. I look forward to getting better acquainted with you in the coming months. If you have any questions, concerns, or just want to talk you can reach me at 618.722.5043 or email pwarn@diobelle.org.

My heart is focused not only on the new class, but on our present class as well. We have endured some major sorrows in just a one month period of time. Because each class becomes a unique "family," we are facing these tragedies as families do . . . with love and respect and a longing to help in whatever way possible. We promise to be there for one another, not just in the short term, but for the long haul as well. Peace my friends.



ETERNAL REST DEACON CANDIDATE BRANDEN SCHRADER

Reflection of Life

By: Deacon Steve Eischens
St. Mary Parish, Mt. Vernon

As we have been promoting the next cohort of diaconate candidates, the question is often asked, "What kind of person should consider being a deacon?" As we struggle with the shock and grief of the news of the death of our brother Branden Schrader the answer to that question is clear.

Branden was a man of his family. He was proud of his sons and in his humble way, gave credit to his wife Beth for all that is good in them. He loved Beth and spoke proudly of her and was quick to give her credit for leading him to the Church and the richness in his faith which he found there. Branden was a man of work. He saw the value of work and was actively pursuing a new career that would share his faith with others.

Most of all, Branden was a man of faith. He chose to enter the diaconate program because he wanted to serve God by serving His people through the Church. He trusted his faith and he trusted the family he had found in his parish, and he relied on the family that grew around him in his diaconate class. He was never shy about calling upon his faith-family to support him just as he would do for any who he knew were in need. If it be God's will, Branden will fulfill his journey of service through his faith in the next world as he will be our advocate and friend in the presence of the heavenly kingdom.

So, if like Branden you are grounded in this world with family, friends, and work and if you want to serve others through giving yourself to the Church, and if your faith reaches out to others both to accept the support of others and to support those in need, then you should be praying about the diaconate.



SUITABILITY OF THOSE CALLED TO THE ORDER OF PERMANENT DEACON

The following men, all members of the Deacon Formation Class of 2023, have been recommended to Bishop Michael McGovern, Bishop of Belleville, for Ordination to the Permanent Diaconate on June 3, 2023. A permanent deacon must be a man of humility, prayer, and service. The lay faithful serve a vital part in the selection, calling, and ordination of deacons, who must be faithful to the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church. Therefore, Bishop McGovern invites the faithful to submit any comments concerning the worthiness and suitability of any candidate listed below directly to him. These comments should be submitted in writing to arrive by **Tuesday, February 28, 2023.**

Mr. Jay Fowler - St. Anthony, Beckemeyer
Mr. Brad Haar - St. George, New Baden
Mr. James Keepes - St. Mary, Mt. Carmel
Mr. Anthony Kellerman - Sacred Heart, DuQuoin
Mr. Daniel Kimutis - St. Clare, O'Fallon
Mr. Daniel Laquet - St. Mary, Centralia
Mr. Douglas Lugge - Cathedral of St. Peter
Mr. David Mills - St. Edward, Fairfield
Mr. David Miskell - SS Peter and Paul, Waterloo
Mr. William Mueller - St. James, Millstadt
Mr. Leonard Ratajczyk - St. Clare, O'Fallon
Mr. Thomas Ritzheimer - St. Mary, Trenton
Mr. Fred Sterns - St. Ann, Nashville
Mr. Justin Wolfsau - St. George, New Baden

Please send your letter or email to:

The Most Reverend Michael G. McGovern
Bishop of Belleville, 222 S. Third Street
Belleville, IL 62220

Email: bmcgovern@diobelle.org

Application process
open until February 10, 2023.

The Office of Permanent Deacon Formation will accept enquiries from men considering becoming deacons until February 10, 2023. If you or someone you know missed the applicant process meeting, it is vital that they contact the Vocation Office ASAP. One of the team members will contact you to review the application process. Applications will still be due on March 4, 2023.