



# Deacon News

Diocese of Davenport

Summer 2020

## From the Diaconate Office:

Hello Diaconate Community, and Candidates,

How quickly things can change. All of the upcoming events listed in the last newsletter were cancelled, or we could not attend: Chrism Mass, Spring Deacon and Wife Retreat, and Deacon and Priest Ordinations.

At that time, public Masses were still being held. And here we are 3 months later, just re-starting public Masses.

In recent phone calls with deacons, I have heard that the COVID experience was significantly different for each deacon. Many deacons participated in some live-streaming or broadcast Masses, devotional prayer and/or classes. Some felt overwhelmed with the amount of work and ministry they were performing at their parish; others reported that they hadn't been allowed to be a part of anything, and they had not stepped in the church building since the COVID restrictions started. Many felt that they were not the one making the decision about what they did or could not do. Some were being told; others were waiting to be told.

The deacon and ministry experience will surely be just as variable as public Masses re-start. Most of us will return to serving at liturgy in public Masses, but there may be some who decide for health and risk reasons that they should not participate in public Mass. The responsibility for making the decision about your involvement in ministry is yours, working with your pastor. That is the purpose of the ministry agreement; you should follow it until the situation changes, then you should discuss with your pastor and make a new agreement. The restrictions for no public Mass was temporary, but we will be living with some COVID restriction in our liturgy and ministry for a long time. If you haven't had these conversations recently with your Pastor, now is the time.

Deacon Michael Snyder, Director of the Diaconate



*Heavenly Father, since the time of the Apostles you have inspired the Church to commission certain members to assist in a special way in the pastoral mission of Christ. Bless the deacons and all other ordained and non-ordained ministers that they may be humble and faith-inspired in their service. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen*

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Save the Date

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Virtual Deacon Council Meeting - July 14, 2020 5:30 PM (call-in instructions to come separately)

Fall Convocation October 17-18, 2020; Put this date on your calendar now.

I've never been a fan of "distance learning" in formation; so much of formation – from developing practical ministerial skills to discerning more clearly one's vocation – requires "real life" interactions. I recall some of my best learning in graduate school took place at table and not in the classroom. This "ideal" became impossible this spring for Class VIII in our Deacon Formation Program. In a matter of a few short weeks, we went from in-person weekends to virtual classrooms.

Thankfully, we have the technology now... between Zoom, and Skype, and GoToMeeting... to be able to gather together. Our April and May formation weekends were hosted completely on-line. The candidates who were tasked with leading the Liturgy of the Hours and preaching on these weekends creatively set up a chapel in their homes (complete with makeshift ambo), vested in albs, and did a great job helping us pray together in these odd circumstances. Our year-end interviews with me and with the Admissions and Scrutinies Committee also took place across an electronic platform. We plan on continuing to gather virtually on formation weekends for the foreseeable future.

But formation is more than just spending one weekend a month together. Our candidates have continued to meet with their mentors and spiritual directors, using technology when they were not able to meet in person and now face-to-face (with appropriate safety measures) now that they can do so. Pastoral field placements pose a much greater challenge. This spring, our candidates had to rapidly pivot from in-person ministry to figuring out how to be present without being in the same place. For one candidate, ministry to the homebound became writing hundreds of cards to parishioners. Another's desire to learn more about and help with Eucharistic Adoration became a lesson in "virtual" liturgy. As we look forward to the fourth year in formation, they will be faced with the same challenges—ministering with one foot in the "virtual" world and one in the "physical."

On July 12, seven men will be instituted as Lectors in a liturgy stripped down to the essentials because of the current pandemic. What would usually be celebrated at one of the candidate's parish, a way to raise the public face of the diaconate in the diocese, will instead be an intimate gathering of the formation community with the Bishop at the Cathedral. Yet, even without all the "smells and bells," Christ will be present. And we will pray and give thanks for these men and their families who have generously offered themselves in service to our diocesan church—even in the midst of a pandemic.

Frank Agnoli, Director of Deacon Formation

Candidate	Wife's Name	Parish
Ryan Burchett	Monica	St. Paul the Apostle, Davenport
Kent Ferris	Lori	SS. Mary & Mathias, Muscatine
Andy Hardigan	Shannon	Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, Clinton
Ángel Hernández	Lourdes	St. Patrick, Iowa City
Gary Johnson	Theresa	Divine Mercy, Burlington/W. Burlington
Mike Linnenbrink	Liz	St. Boniface, Farmington
Andrew Reif	Tracy	St. Mary, Dodgeville

Plan to attend the 2020 Convocation 17-18 October 2020

Planning for the Fall Deacon Convocation has begun. Several deacons have asked to learn more about Spiritual Direction. We have all impromptu conversations with people who have a problem or issue they are dealing with. Your conversation with them is partly pastoral care, and partly spiritual direction. How do you best handle this conversation? How do you do spiritual direction, even in these ad hoc conversations? Do you ever second-guess afterward, and wonder if you handled it the best way?

The Fall Convocation will focus on Spiritual Direction, for our own spiritual development, and providing information for handling the conversations that come up. It will also help us know how to work with our own Spiritual Directors to optimize our spirituality.

Diocese and Deanery Deacon Population

Clinton Deanery: 4 active, 1 retired, 2 candidates

Davenport Deanery: 15 active, 6 retired, 1 candidate

Grinnell Deanery: 5 active, 0 retired, 0 candidates

Iowa City Deanery: 10 active, 3 retired, 2 candidates

Keokuk Deanery: 2 active, 1 retired, 3 candidates

Ottumwa Deanery: 3 active, 0 retired, 0 candidates

Total Deacons *in the Diocese*: 39 active, 11 retired, 7 candidates in Class 8

## COULD YOU BE A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR?

A while ago after my divorce I ran into one of my school mates and we started talking about our faith. He seemed sincere and we really hit it off.

We had dated a long time ago and I almost felt like we had unfinished business. He was going through a rough time in his marriage and the time I spent with him touched on feelings from the past. There was nothing ever physical but we did spend time together in secret. One night I had sent a text to him and his wife replied back. "This is his wife and I don't want you to be around him again" I have had so many bad thoughts going through my head ever since. I feel guilty and wonder what I should do.

Does this remind you of a story you have heard in your ministry as a deacon?

It is in these situations, when someone reveals their heart to me that I knew I wanted to be closer to Christ, so that I could listen and accompany anyone yearning for His love. It had been six years since our class ordination when I was feeling stagnant and ready to take another step in my walk of faith.

Ever since I joined the Catholic Church 25 years ago I have had a deep yearning to learn more about the Church and God with the ultimate goal of serving. The first of these two topics although seemingly finite has taken me on an unimaginable quest and yet I feel like I have only touched the tip of the iceberg.

Those are the feelings that led me to research Spiritual Direction Programs in the Midwest. I have recently completed the second of the three year program at the Franciscan Retreat Center in Lacrosse, WI.

One area of growth for me has been in prayer. I have been in the darkness and frustrated when I "seem to know nothing and to feel nothing except a naked intent toward God in the depths of my being." For how could a mind like mine even get a glimpse of God's purpose for me? Now I don't worry if I feel like I am in the darkness, for I am encouraged to "persevere until I feel joy in it." For if I have chosen to "praise, reverence and serve God, I find I can be comfortable in the darkness.

In the September 2019 issue of Deacon Digest it says "Spiritual direction is primarily about helping a person use his or her present experience to hear God's voice more clearly, experience his love more perfectly and respond to his will more perfectly." In the book *Spiritual Direction* by Richard J. Malloy, SJ it says "Spiritual Direction helps us live our faith in ways that make us happy, healthy, holy and free." In serving others through our ordination, we have that opportunity and what a great opportunity it is.

Deacon Bob Shaw

St. Paul the Apostle

Deacon Area Social Leader

Thank you to several deacons for stepping up to be Area Social Leaders. They are: Clinton: Jeff Schuetzle, Ottumwa: Jane and Ed Kamerick, Grinnell: Joe Dvorak, and Davenport: John Weber and Terry Starns.

The responsibilities of the Area Social Leader are to:

1. Plan and organize social events periodically within the regional (deanery) area
2. Check in with deacon families within the deanery periodically to monitor health and prayer needs, and communicate with the Deacon Director and Council, as well as the Outreach Committee.
3. Share best practices with other Area Reps within an Area Rep Committee.

Any member (wives or deacons) can be an Area Leader. Any Deanery could have Area Co-Leaders if it is desirable.

If you are interested in being an Area Social Leader in Keokuk or Iowa City, let a Council Officer or Director know (Chuck Metzger, Dan Freeman, Chris Kabat, Joe Welter or Mike Snyder).

Deacon Representative to Deanery Meetings

Thank you to Joe Rohret, Joe Dvorak, Bob Gengenbacher and Steve Barton for serving as a Deacon Representative at their respective Deanery Meetings.

The Deacon Representative at the Deanery Meetings will represent the view of deacons and coordinate communication between deacons and the Deanery Meeting. They should be contacting you to let you know of any discussion or topics at the Deanery Meetings which may affect you or would be beneficial for you to know.

If you have a question or a topic to bring up at your Deanery Meeting, contact your respective Deanery Representative.

Prayer and Help Requests

Please let us know if you have any needs; either for prayer or otherwise.

Call Mike Snyder at 563-726-5426, or send email to: [snyder@davenportdiocese.org](mailto:snyder@davenportdiocese.org)

**Save the Date!**

July Virtual Deacon Council Meeting

Saturday - Sunday, July 14, 2020

*For Deacons and Wives*

Call in to the Xoom Meeting at 5:30 PM

**Save the Date!**

Fall Deacon Convocation/Retreat on Spirituality and Spiritual Direction

Saturday - Sunday, October 17-18, 2020

*For Deacons and Wives*

This event will be held jointly with the Dubuque Archdiocese Diaconate

**Save the Date!**

Spring Deacon Retreat **April 24-25, 2021**

*For Deacons and Wives*

Held at the Benet Retreat House, Rock Island, IL