

Diaconate Council Notes
Feb. 9, 2013

The following Executive members were present: George Kashmar, chairman; Chuck McFarland, vice-chairman; John Gaughan, secretary; Father Michael Ahlstrom, vicar; Richard Hudzik, co-vicar; and Dennis Colgan, associate director.

VDCs present were: Raymond Loman, Paul Spalla, Giulio Camerini and Dan Ragonese.

DDCs present were: James Minor, William Warmouth, Ubaldo Munoz, David Keene, Paul Stanton, Efrain Lopez, William Pouncy, Rodrigo Silva, Christopher Virruso, Joseph Walsh, Ignatio Alvarez, Richard Tryjefaczka, James Dieters, James Janicek, William Schultz.

Also present was: Msgr. Richard Hynes, director of the Archdiocese's Department of Parish Life and Formation.

Msgr. Richard Hynes: The director of the archdiocese's Department of Parish Life and Formation, spoke about the Strategic Pastoral Plan. The focus of the plan for 2014 is "parent formation." During the Year of Strong Catholic Parents, Cardinal George wants parishes to look at ways to improve catechetical formation and appreciation of sacraments where children are involved -- baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. Msgr. Hynes sees deacons as a valuable resource in improving baptism preparation programs in particular.

He is asking for our cooperation in bringing forth "best practices," examples of how and where baptism preparation is done well. In each vicariate, he plans to provide workshops on baptism preparation programs to train new lay people and deacons. Msgr. Hynes also intends to compile a data base of parents' contact information for use in formation followup. The hope is to be able to use email, texting and cell phones to reach young parents.

Chuck McFarland: McFarland related a request from Deacon Rich Voytas for reimbursement of expenses made for the St. Blase Soup Kitchen, a monthly ministry of deacons in Vicariate V. While it was acknowledged that this was a very worthwhile ministry, there were questions about providing funding for any and all ministries run by deacons. Because Rich wasn't present, George Kashmar suggested that the measure be tabled until the next meeting.

2013 Convocation March 9 -- Dennis Colgan: Registration information has been mailed for 2013 Convocation scheduled for Saturday, March 9, at Concordia University in River Forest. James Healy, of the Joliet diocese Office of Marriage and Family Life, will be our presenter on the topic of Marriage and Marriage Preparation. Registration is \$35 for each deacon and \$10 for wives. To defray the cost of the day, the council voted to pick up the cost of breakfast and lunch, estimated at \$4,200.

The overnight retreat for all members of the Diaconate Council is planned for Thursday, April 18, and Friday, April 19, at the Cardinal Stritch Retreat House. Cardinal George has agreed to visit with us. The April meeting will be held during the retreat.

VDCs Reports:

Ray Loman has contacted Bishop Rassas about scheduling a meeting with Vicariate I deacons. Dave Tiemeier, DDC for Deanery C, provided the office with an Excel spreadsheet with contact information and status of all Deanery C deacons.

Vicariate II, Paul Spalla: Vicariate II deacons and wives who have been hospitalized are being visited. He also distributed his report on the Jan. 15 meeting of the Presbyteral Council.

Vicariate III, Jose Vazquez: VDC: Vazquez, recently had surgery and was not able to attend. Efrain Lopez reported that other deacons who were sick have been visited by Vicariate III deacons.

Vicariate IV, Giulio Camerini: Jose Cisneros has been enlisted to serve as DDC for Deanery C. Giulio asked the office to provide each of his DDCs with a list of deacons in their respective deaneries.

Vicariate V, Joseph Truesdale: Truesdale was unable to make the meeting. Dick Hudzik mentioned that Joe had sent out the schedule of meeting dates for the Critical Conversations program in his vicariate and had added an additional meeting at St. Linus.

Vicariate VI, Dan Ragonese: Vicariate VI deacons have a meeting with Bishop Perry scheduled for the fall. Dan is contacting deacons about the Critical Conversations program.

Black deacons, William Pouncy: Black deacons have been meeting with pastors to see how they can be of help in the parishes. They are also planning to repeat their non-violence campaigns at the end of the school year and later, during the summer. Pouncy will provide the schedule of dates.

Hispanic deacons, Pedro Sedano: Ignacio Alvarez gave the report for Pedro Sedano. The Hispanic deacons have been meeting monthly. Ignacio says they had a wonderful Christmas party and have welcomed many new members.

Women of the Diaconate, Susan Szarek: Szarek was out of town. Chris Grable had asked whether the council could sponsor the mailing to Women of the Diaconate regarding the October retreat. Fr. Mike Ahlstrom responded that the information could be included with the mailing of The Flame scheduled to go out in about 10 days.

The annual night at U. S. Cellular Field will be Friday, July 26, a fireworks night. Tickets will be sold for upper and lower deck box seats and \$5 from each ticket will be returned to the council.

Vicar's report: Father Michael Ahlstrom stressed the importance of the April retreat for council members. At the retreat, he wants to review the role of deacon coordinators, as well as council members; to set a few realistic goals for the coming three years; and to spiritually renew and reinvigorate ourselves for our task.

Kashmar urged us to confirm our attendance at the retreat as soon as possible. Fr. Mike asked us to encourage all deacons and wives to attend the convocation. He also said the Critical Conversations program is mandatory for all deacons. Fr. Mike has tentatively reserved St. Barbara as the site for the St. Lawrence Day celebration Aug. 4. He is also planning his transition/retirement celebration at St. Barbara on Sunday, June 30. Mass at 2:30 p.m. will be followed by a reception.

Co-Vicar's report: Richard Hudzik expressed his gratitude for Fr. Mike's support and Dennis Colgan's assistance since his arrival as co-vicar. An email with dates and locations of the Critical Conversations program has been sent to all. Additional dates as well as some materials in Spanish will be forthcoming. Presentations are not a class, but include a DVD and conversation. Dick asked for prayers for vocations to the Diaconate. IDS is putting together evenings of Inquiry. March 26 is the Chrism Mass at Holy Name. Deacons are invited and asked to sit as a body vested in alb and white stole. Mass will be at 2:30 p.m. Dick also mentioned that he plans a weekly email blast from the office to all deacons.

Associated director, Dennis Colgan: A mailing has gone out with information about the annual Lenten appeal and with registration information for the convocation.

Committees are being formed for next year's convocation. Please let Dennis know how you would like to participate. Fr. Robert Barron has been asked to be our keynote speaker, but has not yet accepted. Cardinal George and the auxiliary bishops have been invited.

Old business: In Dan Welter's absence, Dick addressed the question of ratifying the proposed amendments to the Diaconate Community Council Constitution. He asked whether the issue should be tabled or voted on at this meeting. The Council voted in favor of accepting the proposed changes.