



THE FLAME

Volume 7 Number 6

www.Deacons.ArchChicago.org

December 2011 - January 2012

Diaconate community prepares for weekend convocation

By Deacon Dave Brencic

Deacons and their wives can get ready for an even bigger and better Diaconate Convocation this January.

The first overnight convocation, which was held in 2010, has been expanded to a two-night, three-day gathering for Chicago's Diaconate community.

"The Deacon: Icon of Jesus the Servant," will be the theme of the convocation held Friday to Sunday, Jan. 27-29, at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel.

"We live in an age when so many people are about filling their ego needs. They believe they are the center of the universe. The core identity of the Diaconate is in direct contrast to such ego-centeredness. We need to see how we can be

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An ecumenical prayer service was held with Christine and all who worked on her home.

about servanthood as Jesus was," said Father Michael Ahlstrom, vicar for the Diaconate, in his invitation.

Deacon Dennis Colgan, associate director, said the idea for the theme grew out of the example Jesus gave of service.

"The whole idea is that Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and that is what we are about - to be of service," Colgan said.

Francis Cardinal George will attend Saturday for a presentation and dialogue with the Diaconate community, be on hand for the awards presentation and banquet Saturday night and will conclude the convocation with Mass Sunday.

Matthew Kelly, internationally acclaimed speaker, writer and business consultant will be the convocation's keynote speaker.

Fr. Mike said a number of people have heard Kelly speak and "thought he was excellent. He was the keynote at the priests' convocation in June and was very well received. He is a very dynamic speaker. He wants to shake things up. No one will be going to sleep."

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Hope's on the Way completes service mission to Alabama

By Deacon Sal Lema

"Can you believe they have only been here five days?" said Christine to her neighbor as they stood in the front yard and watched the transformation of her home. Those Catholics from Chicago and the Christian men from Go-International had completed quite a lot of work in a short time.

There were 14 altogether, 12 would work on the home. Five workers were with Go-International, a dedicated service group from Kentucky and Michigan. Nine others, seven men and two women, were from Hope's on the Way, a volunteer service group consisting of deacons from the Archdiocese of Chicago and volunteers from their parishes.

Traveling to other states was not new to the Hope's on the Way group, which has completed 11 mission trips to Louisiana after hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the subsequent levee breaks in 2005 caused severe flooding damage to New Orleans and the surrounding parishes. After last April's violent tornadoes, the volunteers of Hope's on the Way responded to a call for assistance in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama.

On Oct. 15, with three vans loaded with tools, sleeping bags and supplies, the Hope's on the Way volunteers began their 720-mile trip, stopping about halfway in Louisville, Ky., at The Church of the Holy Spirit where overnight

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Do we have to wait?

Advent 2011 begins with Jesus telling us in Mark's Gospel: "You do not know when the time will come." Of course, he is referring to his second coming and it's a common refrain in the gospels proclaimed as the old liturgical year comes to a close and a new one begins.

Waiting is never an easy thing, especially when there is no definite deadline. Working at a newspaper, deadlines are my life - every hour of every workday there is some kind of deadline that has to be met so we're talking high pressure.

Henri Nouwen wrote a short guide called "The Path of Waiting," which I recently stumbled upon in my

crowded bookcase. Nouwen talks about passive waiting and active waiting. Being stuck waiting for a bus is passive. We are held captive because there is nothing we can do about it until the bus shows up.

Active waiting is found in Scripture. Nouwen says "the secret of waiting is the faith that the seed has been planted, that something has begun. Active waiting means to be patient fully to the moment, in the conviction that something is happening where you are and that you want to be present to it."

I could go on and on with Nouwen's insights and I strongly recommend his book. It's funny how God once again brought this guide to my attention because I am in the midst of waiting on things that

could have a real impact on my life and future. I'm not the most patient person in the world so this whole waiting business is a challenge for me.

So once again I turn to Nouwen for inspiration and guidance: "To wait open-endedly is an enormously radical attitude toward life. It is trusting that something will happen to us that is far beyond our own imaginings. It is giving up control over our future and letting God define our life. It is living with the conviction that God molds us according to God's love and not according to our fear."

Thank you Henri.

Keep the fire burning,
Deacon Dave Brencic, editor

The Flame

A newsletter for the Chicago Diaconate community published six times a year: February, April, June, August, October, December
Publisher: Fr. Michael Ahlstrom
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Deadline for submissions for the next issue is Jan. 15, 2012

Email:

DeaconNews@ArchChicago.org

The Flame is also viewable online at:

www.deacons.archchicago.org

Printed by the generosity of J. S. Paluch Company, Franklin Park, Illinois. Publisher of bulletins, vocation and stewardship calendars, and of World Library Publications' assortment of music and liturgy resources.

Tenemos que esperar?

El Adviento de este año comienza con Jesús diciéndonos en el Evangelio de Mark: "Ustedes no saben cuándo será el tiempo." Desde luego, se refiere a su segunda venida y estas son palabras comunes en los evangelios que se proclaman cuando la antigua liturgia se acaba y la nueva comienza.

Esperar no es nunca fácil, especialmente cuando no tenemos una fecha definitiva. Al trabajar en el periódico, las fechas definitivas son mi vida - cada hora de cada día de trabajo tengo alguna meta que alcanzar, así es que estamos hablando de mucha presión.

Henri Nouwen escribió una pequeña guía llamada "El Camino de la Espera", que yo encontré hace poco en mi estante lleno de libros. Nouwen habla de esperar pasivamente y esperar activamente. Estar esperando un bus, es pasivamente, nos sentimos amarrados porque no es nada que podamos hacer hasta que el bus llegue.

En las Escrituras encontramos una espera activa. Nouwen dice "El secreto de esperar es tener fe de que la semilla ha sido plantada, y

de que algo ha comenzado. Esperar activamente es estar lleno de paciencia para este momento, con la convicción de que algo está pasando donde estamos y es algo que tú quieres presenciar."

Puedo seguir y seguir con las ideas de Nouwen y definitivamente les recomiendo este libro. Es divertido como Dios una vez más me hizo encontrar este libro porque estoy en este momento esperando algunas cosas que tendrán un real impacto en mi vida y en mi futuro. Yo no soy la persona más paciente del mundo, así es que esto de esperar es un gran reto para mí.

Una vez más vuelvo a leer a Nouwen para tener inspiración y guía: "Esperar sin una meta definitiva es una actitud enormemente radical. Es tener la confianza de que algo nos sucederá más allá de nuestra propia imaginación. Es dejar de tener control sobre el futuro y dejar a Dios definir nuestra vida. Es vivir con la convicción de que Dios nos moldea de acuerdo a su amor y no de acuerdo a nuestro miedo."

Gracias, Henri.

Mantengan el fuego encendido,
Díacono Dave Brencic, editor

Views from the Vicar

This is the Year of Teens and Young Adults in our Archdiocesan Strategic Plan. It occurs to me that the Diaconate community should be a most valuable tool for the archdiocese. Some in our community still have children at home. Many others have children who are young adults or have children of their own. Who better to speak of what families and young people are experiencing than the couples of our community?

Besides the worry of how to protect our youth from negative influences, most of you wrestle with heart-wrenching concerns for your children living out their Catholic faith. Some of you have children who have left the Catholic Church and some find relief that they are at least in another Christian church. Many would observe that our

deacons and wives have exceptional faith and are good sensitive people. The expectation is that your children would have a strong active faith. Some of you do and we can rejoice in that blessing. But others feel frustration because their children seem to have wandered away from the fold. You can identify with the many Catholic parents who feel guilty or wonder if they have done something wrong by not passing on the faith. I cannot help but believe that there is a collective wisdom within our Diaconate community to help us better understand what is happening with our youth and perhaps some ideas as to what we might do.

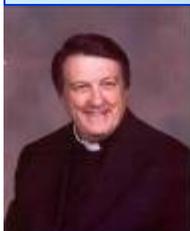
I would like to encourage deacons and wives to talk about this when you gather in smaller settings. If you are interested, I would like to set up an opportunity to gather for

dialogue. I also want to encourage you to write for your parish bulletin. Tell your story. I think you will inspire other parents who struggle with their concerns. Maybe you can sponsor a gathering of teens or young adults to address this question. These are some ways we can make a contribution to our archdiocesan effort.

By now you should have signed up for our Diaconate Convocation. If not, do so today! If you have financial difficulty help is available, just let us know. I am looking forward to what will be a highlight in our Diaconate Community history. An opportunity simply to be together as a community is itself worthwhile. The learning that will take place with the workshops, and the challenges I am sure both Matthew Kelly and Cardinal George will give us will be

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Reflexiones del Vicario



Este es el año del Plan Estratégico de los jóvenes adultos de la Arquidiócesis de Chicago. Se me ocurre que la Comunidad Diaconal debería ser una

herramienta muy valiosa para la arquidiócesis, pues algunos de nuestra comunidad todavía tienen hijos en casa. Muchos tienen hijos jóvenes que hasta ellos mismos tienen hijos. ¿Quiénes mejor para hablar de lo que estamos pasando, que las parejas de nuestra comunidad? Además de la preocupación de cómo proteger a nuestra juventud de malas influencias en general, la mayoría de nosotros se preocupa de corazón porque nuestros hijos vivan su fe católica. Algunos de ustedes tienen hijos que han dejado la Iglesia Católica y algunos por lo menos encuentran consuelo en que ellos por lo menos pertenezcan a alguna otra iglesia Cristiana. Muchos observan que nuestros diáconos y

sus esposas tienen una fe excepcional y son gente buena y sensitiva. Se espera de que nuestros hijos tengan una fe activa y fuerte. Algunos sí la tienen y nos regocijamos de esa bendición. Pero algunos tienen la frustración de ver que pareciera que sus hijos se separaron del rebaño. Ustedes se pueden identificar con muchos padres católicos que viven con la culpa de pensar que no han hecho lo suficiente para inculcar en sus hijos la fe. No puedo dejar de creer de que hay una sabiduría colectiva entre la Comunidad Diaconal que nos ayuda a comprender lo que está pasando con nuestra juventud y que esto sea el comienzo de encontrar las respuestas a lo que deberíamos hacer. Quisiera aconsejar a los diáconos y sus esposas a hablar sobre esto cuando tienen pequeñas reuniones. También les aconsejo que escriban en el boletín de su parroquia y cuenten su historia. Creo que sería una inspiración para otros padres que tienen las mismas preocupaciones. Tal vez podrían hacer una reunión de jóvenes para tratar estos problemas. Estas son

algunas de las sugerencias de cómo podemos contribuir a los esfuerzos de nuestra arquidiócesis.

Me imagino que ya todos se habrán registrado para la Convención Diaconal. Si no lo has hecho, hazlo hoy mismo! Hay ayuda para los que tengan problemas financieros, solo déjanos saber. Estoy ilusionado por esta reunión que será uno de los recuerdos especiales en la historia de nuestra Comunidad Diaconal. Una oportunidad para simplemente reunirse como comunidad, vale la pena. Eso sin contar con lo que aprenderemos en los talleres que se ofrecerán y el desafío que estoy seguro nos ofrecerán el Cardenal y Matthew Kelly.

Nuestro tan esperado Libro de Pólizas del Diaconado ya estará listo para la convocación. Y ya tenemos en la red del Diaconado (www.deacons.archdiocese.org) un borrador de este libro. Esperamos sus comentarios.

Ya hace tiempo que no tenemos algunas oportunidades de educación

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A death in the family

By Deacon Tom Westerkamp

It had been a very busy week with so much going on after work -- Ministry of Care training, work-related organizational meeting, a Christ Renews His Parish meeting, wedding couple prep. I was looking forward to finally being home one night -- a night to have dinner with the family, a night to catch up on some much-needed rest, some time to recharge the badly depleted spiritual batteries.

I had just finished eating when the phone rang. My cousin called crying, asking, no begging, if I could please come to the hospital, Ryan, her husband, had been admitted the night before and was now in Intensive Care. "Can you please come by and pray?" she asked.

I reassured my cousin, and quickly changed out of my comfortable sweatpants and slippers and got dressed, grabbing my small bottle of holy water and a pyx, and sped off to the hospital.

That's what we deacons do. We respond to the needs of others. We vowed on our ordination day to serve God by serving others. So on a cold night when all I wanted to do was put my feet up and veg out, I drove to the hospital, parked near the emergency room and hustled up to the Intensive Care Unit.

I walked into the room, and even though I thought I knew what to expect, I was taken aback by the technology keeping this 59-year-old man alive. Ryan was unconscious and there was no response. There was a ventilator to allow breathing, heart rate and blood pressure gauges beeping, and seven IV medications being pumped into him to keep him alive.

My cousin ran up to me and hugged and thanked me, and I quickly scrambled to adjust my thoughts as I knew this was going to be a long night. She told me that Ryan had not been feeling well, of how he collapsed at home and was

then rushed to the ER where they thought he was stable. But over 24 hours, he took a quick downward spiral after his heart stopped and the electrolytes in his blood were thrown out of control. He was very unstable, and he was going to die. The medical team knew it, I knew it, but my cousin was just beginning to comprehend the seriousness of his condition.

My cousin was finally able to reach their two children at college, and helped arranged to get them home the first thing in the morning. The kids were pushing back, "are you sure Mom, how sick can Dad be? We just saw him a few weeks ago and he was fine."

A lot of crying... raw emotions... cell phones ringing, and more crying. I stayed late that night, we prayed a little, but mostly we talked about times when we were growing up, favorite memories when we played as kids at each other's homes, special meals around the holidays. I tried to comfort her, and I shared a few stories about Ryan, but mostly I just listened.

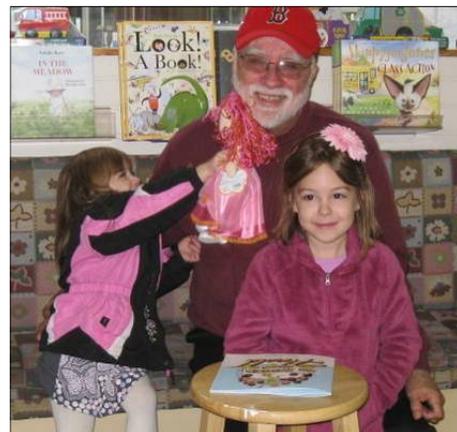
I led the family that had gathered late that night in a brief prayer, and asked God to bless this dying man. I finally left around midnight, and I promised to stop by the next day after work. I never got the chance. Ryan died the next day after their children made it home from college to say their goodbyes.

The next few days were a blur. I met with the family to help them pick out Scripture readings and prepare the funeral liturgy. I prepared personal homilies for the wake service and the funeral liturgy, and mentally prepared myself for the graveside committal service, which would be a very emotionally-draining and spiritually-challenging time.

All the things we as deacons normally do take on special meaning when the people we serve are our family members. But somehow between the training we received in formation, the experience we've gained as practicing deacons and

with the strength and support of the Holy Spirit, we get through these tough events. That's what we deacons were trained to do. That's what we deacons are called on by God to do.

It's not always easy. It's not always convenient. It's just what we do -- we serve God by serving others.



Deacon Bradford poses with a couple of his avid (and very cute) readers.

Deacon's Christmas story becomes a book

Two years ago, Deacon Bruce Bradford was inspired to write a short Christmas story, which he read to children from the parish on Christmas Eve.

The story is about an angel named Herald who was asked by God to do something special and becomes God's messenger both in heaven and on earth.

The story proved so popular with families that Bradford decided to have "An Angel Named Herald" published in August. The book, printed by AuthorHouse, sells for \$12.77 and can be found on Amazon and at Barnes & Noble.

Now retired, Bradford lives in Pekin, Ill., with Terry his wife of 47 years. He enjoys his job as a driver for the Miller Senior Center, volunteering with adults with disabilities and playing Scrabble with his 10 grandchildren.

In the book's description, Bradford writes: "Herald will inspire you to have faith in God and become his messenger as well."

Deacon Formation in need of financial support

By Deacon Bob Puhala

For deacon candidates, with the invaluable support of their wives, discerning the possibility of Holy Orders is a joy and privilege as well as a challenge. They understand that the Church's entrusting of families and souls to deacons through the grace of God demands that they be well-formed and well-educated ministers. And they learn very quickly that in an increasingly educated society the deacon must be a knowledgeable and reliable witness to the faith and a well-formed spokesman for the Church's authentic teaching.

As director of Deacon Formation, it is a grace and blessing to minister to candidates and wives. However, there also are many challenges. One of the greatest is the financial support necessary to continue providing this well-formed, "complete and serious," first-class education that the National Directory calls a "precious instrument" for both effective discernment and ministry. The archdiocese generously provides about one-half of the necessary nourishment of mind, body and soul through the annual seminary collection and the Cardinal's Appeal. The other half of financial support comes from tuition paid for by the parishes themselves.

Most pastors have stated their desire to have a diaconal presence on their parish staffs, with some calling ministry at a parish without a deacon "almost unimaginable." But these are difficult economic times and many parishes are feeling the economic crunch when it comes to all kinds of expenses - deacon formation tuition included.

Deacon Formation already has received four applications for financial aid and scholarships. Given the state of the economy, we anticipate more parishes will claim



DEACON FORMATION

an immediate and urgent need for financial assistance. And our very limited scholarship funds are dwindling. There is an unprecedented need to support candidates, wives and parishes struggling with current or projected formation costs.

It would be easy to simply say, "Get the archdiocese to give the program more money." The fact is that it has been, and continues to be, very generous and supportive of deacon formation. However, a need for greater funding is not unique to this archdiocesan program alone. Therefore, we ask that *you* consider various ways to support candidates and parishes in the formation program. In this time of thanksgiving and holiday celebrations, gifts from the heart can positively impact the ministry of a future deacon. Deacon Formation offers many opportunities for personal tax-deductible stewardship as well as ordination class, organization and parish giving.

The Holy Spirit has captured the hearts of 52 aspirants and candidates in this year's formation program, not to mention the hearts and souls of their wives and families. We all are stewards to the Archdiocese of Chicago and to the aspirants and candidates in formation that are in need of financial support. Prayer is the first step in this faithful stewardship process. It is followed by action. Please know that your assistance aids and supports pastors and parishes who support the Diaconate.

For more information about Deacon Formation's Appeal 2011, please contact me at bpuhala@usml.edu or (847) 837-4564. Thank you ahead of time for your generous support!

-- Deacon Bob Puhala is director of Deacon Formation for the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Women's retreat

By Chris Grable and Mary Lou Thompson

The next Diaconate Community Women's Retreat, April 20-22, will be facilitated by Dr. Kate Wiskus.

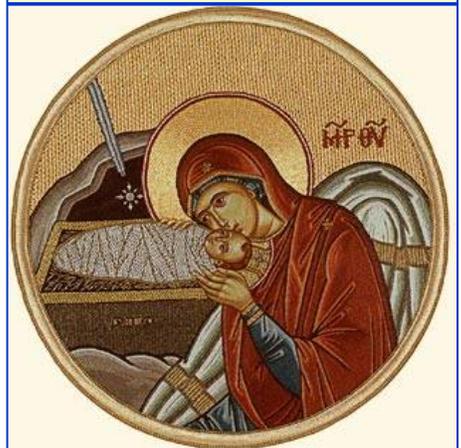
Kate brings a wealth of wisdom, spirit, warmth and service to the topic of this year's retreat entitled "Collaborators in Grace." Kate serves as associate dean of Formation, director of the office of Field Education and teaches primarily pastoral life courses at the University of St. Mary of the Lake. She is co-author of the book, "Pastoring Multiple Parishes: An Emerging Model of Pastoral Leadership."

Kate and her husband Ken will celebrate their 43rd wedding anniversary and they enjoy their time with their three children and six grandchildren.

The Saturday afternoon tea will again be held at this year's retreat. Bring your favorite cup and saucer.

You may phone in your reservation for the retreat to Eva at the Cardinal Stritch Retreat House, (847) 566-6060. Share the news with other women of the Diaconate community and plan on relaxing in a Spirit-filled weekend.

We wanted to remind you that sandwich fixings are available at the retreat center in case you haven't had dinner when you arrive.



In Memoriam

Deacon William Conway

Deacon William Conway, class of 1977, died Oct. 2. He was 82. He served at Our Lady of Lourdes in Chicago.

After ordination, Deacon Conway worked for Catholic Charities. During his ministry, he brought the Eucharist to patients at Bethany Methodist Hospital and Ravenswood Hospital each Sunday. He was involved with the RCIA program for many years. He also did baptismal preparation for the English-speaking community and assisted at weekend liturgies.

One of the activities that Deacon Conway enjoyed was playing the organ at Mass.

He was married to Anne and there were three children.

Deacon Jorge Gutierrez

Deacon Jorge Gutierrez, class of 1977, entered eternal life Nov. 9.

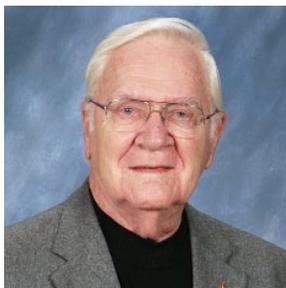
Deacon Gutierrez, 70, ministered at St. Mark Parish in Chicago. During his ministry, he was involved with the parish food pantry, performed his liturgical duties and helped out with the Diaconate Formation program. During his work life, he was employed as a CTA bus driver.

“He was a very nice person. He liked to make people laugh. He was very kind and he liked to help out,” said Deacon Antonio

Navarro who served at St. Mark’s with Deacon Gutierrez.

Deacon Gutierrez was preceded in death by his wife Eva. He is survived by four children, nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Deacon Everett “Bud” Helmer



A member of the first Diaconate class of the Chicago

Archdiocese ordained in 1972, Deacon Everett “Bud” Helmer died Oct. 10. Deacon Helmer, 90, ministered at St. Germaine Parish in Oak Lawn.

During his work life, Deacon Helmer was an office manager at Clearing Industrial for a number of years before getting involved with Catholic Charities where he was involved with managing senior housing on Chicago’s North Side.

Deacon Helmer began his ministry at Queen of the Universe Parish and later moved to St. Hilary for many years. After he retired, he moved to St. Germaine. He was very active in the Cursillo Movement during his time as a deacon.

David Helmer described his father as “the best person I’ve ever known. He was a gentle, caring man, very well-respected, very well-read. Even in his later years, his grandchildren had no

problem talking with him. He was just a super human being.”

Deacon Helmer was preceded in death by his wife, Yolanda. He is survived by five children and 11 grandchildren.

Deacon Jerome Kasimatis

A member of the class of 1982, Deacon Jerome Kasimatis died Nov. 17. He was 92.



Deacon Kasimatis ministered at Holy Cross Parish in Deerfield for more than 29 years. During his years of ministry, he was involved with marriage and baptismal preparation. “Those were his two main ministries,” said Deacon Paul Schmidt, who worked with Deacon Kasimatis at Holy Cross.

Schmidt described him as “a man with a wit about him and a great sense of humor. He was a storyteller.”

During his work life, he was a manufacturer’s representative in the auto industry. He also was a World War II Navy veteran. For hobbies, he enjoyed golf and going for walks.

Deacon Kasimatis is survived by Vera, his wife for more than 68 years, four children, 12 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

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Deacon Marion Omiatek



A member of the class of 1994, Deacon Marion Omiatek died Oct. 21. Deacon Omiatek, 83, who was

retired, served at Transfiguration Parish in Wauconda where he was a parishioner for 54 years.

During his work life, Deacon Omiatek made his way through the teaching ranks going from a teacher to principal to assistant superintendent at Palatine Elementary School District 15.

In ministry, Deacon Omiatek coordinated the lectors in the parish, started the parish's peace and justice ministry, was founder of the Knights of the Columbus Council at Transfiguration, was president of the Holy Name Society, worked with PADS, taught Religious Education, assisted with RCIA as a sponsor and speaker, and was instrumental in getting Eucharistic Adoration established once a week in the parish.

In retirement, he began raising canaries as a hobby and became a master breeder.

"He was interested in people. He liked to talk with everybody. He liked people and talked with everyone from the grandmas to the kids in school," said his wife, Marilyn.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by nine children and 17 grandchildren.

Deacon John Simmons

Deacon John Simmons, former national president of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, died Oct. 27. He was 84.



Deacon Simmons, class of '89, was a parishioner at Santa Maria Del Popolo Parish in Mundelein for 54 years and ministered there the last 22 years.

His wife of 52 years, Florence Simmons said John was "involved in everything in the parish. He helped in anything that was needed at the time."

Over the years, Deacon Simmons was involved at the vicariate level, was a Fourth Degree Knight of Columbus and was a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the parish before getting involved with the national organization.

During his work career, he was employed with Commonwealth Edison. He also was a member of the American Legion and the Marine Corps League.

Deacon Simmons wrote a book about his life, which his pastor ended up publishing and presenting to him and Florence on their 50th wedding anniversary.

"His faith always came first. It was the primary requisite in his life," Florence said. "He kept himself pretty busy, especially with the church. It was the always the number one thing on his calendar. He will be missed by many, but especially by me."

Deacon Simmons is survived by his wife, a daughter, Terri, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Deacon Edward Swiech

Deacon Edward Swiech, class of 1978, died Oct. 30. He was 85. Deacon



Swiech of Lake Zurich, served at St. Priscilla and St. Robert Bellarmine parishes in Chicago.

He worked as a civil service worker for the city of Chicago for many years. He served in the Navy and was a veteran of World War II.

Father Kenneth Anderson, who grew up knowing Deacon Swiech, said he was very involved with the sick and needy at St. Priscilla and St. Robert.

"He was a very well-read man. He tried to stay current, he had a great love for the liturgy and was very faithful to the Liturgy of the Hours," Fr. Anderson said. "He was a good example of what a deacon should be and can be in service to a parish."

Deacon Swiech is survived by his wife Sally, four children and eight grandchildren.

Diaconate community prepares for weekend convocation

(Continued from page 1)

Fr. Mike said the convocation was expanded because the first gathering was so well received and, typically, weekend conventions run three days.

“We decided to take advantage of a good thing,” he said.

Starting Friday afternoon, there will be two workshop sessions offering a total of 15 presentations, along with dinner, evening prayer and a reception.

Friday workshops will include presentations by Father Donald Senior, CP, on the Gospel of Mark, and Father Richard Fragomeni giving two different workshops on icons and what they say about the deacon, and the new missal and the singing parts of the Mass for deacons.

Other workshops will range from Deacon Bob Puhala speaking on the Diaconate today to Deacon Leroy Gill on how to stop violence in our communities to Deacon Glen Tylutki on grief ministry. There also will be several workshops offered in Spanish, focusing on the ministry of the Diaconate, evangelization and ministry to immigrants.

Saturday will be a full day of prayer, keynote addresses, presentations and workshops, followed by a banquet and social in the evening. Seventeen different workshops will be offered.

Presentations will include Sister Laurie Brink, OP, speaking on biblical foundations of the Diaconate; Father Dominic Grassi, on serving as “senior” ministers; Father Daniel Smilanic on annulments; Imam Ahmed Murad and Sister Joan McGuire on understanding Islam, and others.

Sunday will consist of morning



Cardinal George will address the Diaconate Convocation and join us for our banquet.

prayer, a panel discussion and community dialogue with the Executive Committee of the Diaconate Council, a meeting with Episcopal vicars and Mass with Cardinal George.

Fr. Mike said the idea for the longer convocation was to “expand the workshop opportunities, and people wanted more social time.”

The cost of the convocation is \$50 per person. There will be a \$25 late registration fee for those who do not register before Dec. 12. Also going toward the cost will be \$100 taken from each deacon’s ongoing formation account.

The cost of the hotel is separate. A special rate of \$89 per room per night is available, and reservations must be made with the hotel at (847) 303-4100.

Those facing financial difficulties can contact the Diaconate Office. Some members of the community have offered to assist in defraying the cost for those with financial hardships.

Fr. Mike is strongly encouraging all deacons and their wives to attend and notes that Cardinal George, in requesting that deacons be there, and has asked pastors not to schedule deacons for anything in the parish that weekend.

“I consider the convocation in 2010 the highlight of my time being vicar,” Fr. Mike said. “There was a wonderful spirit. I’m hoping to get that spirit again. When deacons gather together, it’s a great thing.”



Who is Matthew Kelly?

Matthew Kelly, the keynote speaker at the upcoming Diaconate Convocation in January, is an internationally acclaimed speaker, writer and business consultant.

More than 4 million people have attended Kelly’s seminars and presentations in more than 50 countries. Kelly, who was born in Sydney, Australia, has written 12 books, which have appeared on the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* bestseller lists including “Rediscovering Catholicism,” “The Rhythm of Life,” “The Seven Levels of Intimacy,” “The Dream Manager” and “Building Better Families.”

Kelly is a partner at Floyd Consulting, a Chicago-based management consulting company, with clients such as Pepsi, Procter and Gamble, General Electric, McDonalds, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Air Force and Navy, and others.

In 1995, the Matthew Kelly Foundation was established with the goal of helping young people discover their mission in life. Kelly also has founded the Dynamic Catholic Institute to research, according to his website, “why Catholics engage or disengage and explore what it will take to establish vibrant Catholic communities in the 21st century.”

Kelly’s core message is inviting people “to become the best version of themselves.”

Hope's on the Way completes service mission to Alabama

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accommodations were provided. Their final destination was Camp Coker, in Coker, Ala. The camp was a former Methodist youth facility turned bunk house with an attached outside shower facility and equipment warehouse.

The camp would be their home for the week. They shared this space with the members of Go-International. They came together, ready and willing to serve a need, to help God's community.

Bright and early on Monday morning, the group loaded up the vans and headed down Sand Road approximately 12 miles to Christine Johnson's house, in Fosters, Ala., which would be their work site.

After the tornadoes had hit Tuscaloosa, the city was full of volunteers and assistance, but few traveled to the outskirts where folks like Christine lived. Her home had been handed down from generation to generation. With the economy and her husband's job loss, it was difficult to maintain the home.

Extensive termite and wind damage prior to the tornado had ravaged the family's home. Then the tornado opened the roof sending water pouring through holes in every direction. The work of the 12 was simple... remove the despair and return hope to Christine and the Johnson family.

During the next five days, the two teams worked in unison. Termite-damaged timbers were replaced by new beams. A new window, insulated wall, electric outlets, vinyl siding and interior drywall replaced the damaged wall and unsafe fireplace. More siding around the home was removed and replaced.

Besides the 88-degree temperatures and elevated humidity, the men battled wasp nests, spiders as big as a hand, fire ants, scorpions and all sorts of other venomous creatures. But they persevered for the most important part of the house -- the roof had to be completed, if the Johnson home was to be saved. The old shingles were removed, uncovering a deteriorated framing that had to be completely replaced, prior to the installation of a new shingled roof. While one team completed the wall and vinyl siding, the other team prepared the roof completing the removal and new framing. Bundle after bundle of shingles were carried up a ladder on the men's shoulders, while waiting team members nailed them in place. The new shingled roof would give the Johnson family a stable leak-free house to call home for years to come.

Friday afternoon, the two work teams invited Christine to join them in an ecumenical prayer service. Catholics and Methodists, all



Applying new plywood prior to installing siding, the Hope crew worked inside and out.

dedicated faithful volunteers, came together to pray in thanksgiving for the opportunity to give it all for Christine and her family.

During the drive home, little moans and groans from aches and pains could softly be heard. They had honored their commitment. Deacons, faithful volunteers, Christians, all servants of God's people had given it all and laid all they had on the line to help others. They were bruised, bitten, sore and exhausted from the experience. Yet, they smiled through it all knowing they had received a priceless gift. It was truly a great day!

Views from the Vicar

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very worth our while.

Our long-awaited revised Diaconate Policy Book should be ready in time for our convocation. A draft is available on our website (deacons.archdiocese.org). Questions and comments are welcome.

We are long overdue to have some educational and formational opportunities besides our convocation. I am planning some events for late winter and spring. I am looking for topics of interest. So far some have asked for a practical session on baptisms, weddings and

funerals. Some also have indicated a need to learn how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours and do Benediction or reviewing what we do at Mass. Please call, email (mahlstrom@archchicago.org), or write with your suggestions.

Our Christmas Season is the shortest possible this year -- only 15 days with Holy Family and the Baptism of Our Lord being on weekdays instead of on Sundays. Be sure to steal some quiet time for yourself to reflect on the richness of this important season.

God bless your family this Christmas and through the New Year!

Father Michael Ahlstrom

Diaconate Council Notes November 12, 2011

Roll call of members: The following members were present: William Stearns, chairman; George Kashmar, vice-chairman; Sal Lema, secretary; Charles McFarland, treasurer; and Dave Egan, chair emeritus.

VDCs present: Ray Loman, Jose

Vazquez, Giulio Camerini, Joseph Truesdale and Dan Ragonese.

DDCs present: James Minor, Richard Hudzik, Dan Welter, Ubaldo Munoz, Edward O'Leary, William Pouncy, Rodrigo Silva, Chris Virruso, Sr, John Gaughan, Javier Pineda, John Schopp, James Deiters, and Thomas Knetl.

Others present: Vicente Haro and Pedro Sedano, representing the Hispanic Community and Peggy Virruso and Margaret Colgan representing the wives of the Diaconate community; Father Michael Ahlstrom, vicar; Dennis Colgan, associate director; and Dave Kalina, representing the Deacon Formation Program.

Absent were: P. Spalla, D. Wagner, S. Stecker, L. Rybicki; J. Lorbach, D. Robak, F. Beil, J. Gonzalez, A. Lopez, R. Tryjefaczka, I. Alvarez, T. Bartholomew, G. Bartos and J. Cook.

Treasurer's report, Charles McFarland: as of Oct. 31 the bank balance was \$52,681.17. Archdiocesan Bank CD values as of Oct. 31: \$35,346.25 in a 90-day CD at 1.00%, \$35,259.67 in a 180-day CD at 1.20%, \$35,253.79 in a 12-month CD at 1.70% interest and \$35,224.43 in a 12-month CD at 1.70% interest. St. Francis Day summary: \$40,279 total projected income, \$13,164 total projected expenses = \$27,164 total estimated St. Francis Day profit.

Bill Stearns, chair: Welcomed new DDC Deanery E, John Schopp. He was ordained in 2008 and was approved by Bishop John Manz. John and his family live in Western Springs.

Convocation report, Dan Welter: All is ready for the January convocation. The cardinal will be sending out a letter to encourage all deacons and their wives to come. We were asked to show the letter to our pastors. The theme for this convocation is "Deacon, Icon of Jesus the Servant." There are currently 40 workshops available. All the Episcopal bishops

will be in attendance to meet with deacons and concelebrate Mass with the cardinal. This year registration is online and can be easily accessed. Those in attendance will receive 12 hours of continuing education. All are anticipated to attend.

Memorial Card report, Secretary, Sal Lema: Lema had been asked to design a new memorial card. A suggestion was to use the St. Francis picture by artist, Sister Kay Francis Berger, OSF. Sal had the design and layout of the new card and sample copies available for the council to review. Charles McFarland requested that the new card be printed and given out to each deacon at the convocation. The cards will be printed based on the lowest price received.

Vicar's report, Fr. Mike Ahlstrom: Fr. Mike stated that the top priority of the council is to promote the upcoming convocation.

Vocations to the Diaconate are down. There are nine Latinos and nine Anglos who will be ordained this spring. We need to encourage vocations, especially among people of color.

The new translation of the Roman Missal goes into effect Nov. 26. Fr. Mike wanted the VDCs and DDCs to reach out to the deacons to see if they are ready. Information is available on the website: deacons.archchicago.org.

Father Mike is hoping to do some winter and spring workshops and is looking for suggestions for topics.

There are concerns about the archdiocesan e-mail system. Less than 10% of deacons open their archdiocesan email address. Fr. Mike and Richard Hudzik will contact the archdiocese's IT office in hopes that they can solve the forwarding e-mail problem, making it easier for deacons to receive their archdiocesan emails through their own email address.

Associate Director's report, Dennis Colgan: Dennis stated he has been placing most of his efforts into the upcoming convocation.

Report from DFP representative, Dave

Kalina: A report about the candidates and their classes was presented. Dave will look into how many women were involved with the program at learning venues other than the required sessions. Fr. Mike mentioned that he wishes to have a joint staff meeting of both the English and Spanish Formation Programs.

Reports of VDCs and DDCs:

Vicariate I, Ray Loman: Because of prior commitments, Bishop Rassa has delayed the vicariate meeting until after the new year.

Vicariate II, Paul Spalla, given by Dan Welter: Their meeting with Bishop Kane will be held Nov. 19 at St. Mary of the Lake. From the Presbyteral Council, Catholic school enrollment has grown in the city of Chicago the last two years and 53% of the Catholic schools in Lake and Cook counties are stable and growing. A survey summary indicated that 93.8% of parishes participate in the Parish Sharing Program.

Vicariate III, Jose Vazquez: The vicariate hopes to meet with their new bishop before the year's end. DDC of IIIA, Juan Gonzalez is stepping down. They are looking for a replacement.

Vicariate IV, Giulio Camerini: The vicariate met Sept. 17 with Bishop John Manz.

Vicariate V, Joseph Truesdale: The vicariate held its annual meeting Sept. 21 with Bishop Andrew Wypych. The vicariate held its annual November meeting.

Vicariate VI, Dan Ragonese: Annual meeting and dinner with Bishop Perry is scheduled for Nov. 21.

Report from Black Deacons, William Pouncy: Black Deacons are working with the Chicago Park District regarding the Aug. 27 Sunrise Prayer Services. They believe that the money paid for the permits will be refunded. William asked Dave Kalina how many black candidates applied for the Diaconate and how many were accepted. William stated he knows of

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Diaconate Council Notes

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six candidates who were rejected. Fr. Mike said that he attended a meeting with Bob Puhala of the DFP about this matter. One of the difficulties is that many black couples are not married within the Catholic Church. The requirement is that couples need to complete this requirement three years prior to Aspirancy. Pastors need to be aware of the candidates status prior to sending them for consideration.

Report from Hispanic Deacons, Vicente Haro and Pedro Sedano: Question of who was the Hispanic representative? Pedro Sedano stated that he is still the Diaconate representative for the Hispanic community. Vicente Haro represents the Hispanic deacons on the board for the Archdiocesan Spanish Ministry Office.

Women of the Diaconate, Marge Colgan: The Sept. 24 gathering with Father Chuck Dahm, OP, was a great success with more than 50 women attending. There will be another session on domestic violence next fall.

Old business: APC stills needs a new person to attend the meetings. The new policy manual is on track and the committee hopes to have it completed in December and be able to send it on for the cardinal's approval.

New business: The council brought up that Cardinal George will be celebrating his 75th birthday and that since he will be with us at the convocation, he should be acknowledged for his service.

To assist those who are unable to stay overnight at the convocation because of financial difficulties, the council agreed to create a pool with \$5,000 in scholarships. Of this, \$150 per household maximum could be applied to the cost of the hotel. This is above and beyond the money collected through the Diaconate charity donation.

Next meeting is Jan. 14.

Stritch Retreat House update

By Deacon Richard F. Hudzik

At the dawn of the Christmas season, our thoughts turn to the mystery of the Incarnation. What does it mean for us that God chose to become flesh? Perhaps this season will enliven our imaginations to see how we are lifted up by God's "coming down." If our earthly lives are lifted up, what we might call our ordinary lives are no longer very ordinary. As God has redeemed what he has assumed, our physical reality is itself graced and we propound a Manichaeism when we denigrate the body and uplift only the spiritual. In reality, we live as persons, inextricably intertwined soul and body. Thus, it is not accurate to say, "I have a body." It is better perhaps to say, "I am a body," such that we can acknowledge the spiritual and corporeal *unity* of our existence. It is this unified reality, our personhood, that Jesus' Incarnation, passion, death and resurrection redeemed. The Incarnation of Christmas is an essential milestone in God's saving work. God has indeed saved us – both body and soul – inextricably bound together.

By the time this issue of The Flame reaches you, the following retreats will remain on our calendar. Certainly, if you have not yet reserved your space, do so now to assure yourself of the desired dates. Casting all pretense of modesty aside, I think we have a marvelous lineup of retreats yet to come. Any one of them will be great (of course, for the deacons' retreat in April, it is likely that Deacon O'Leary will have to do yeoman's work to save that retreat). Note that the list below does not include any privately arranged class retreats.

Feb. 17-19, deacons and wives: Rev. Michael McGovern, the energetic and prayerful pastor of the Church of St. Mary's in Lake Forest, will be the retreat leader who will preach "Relying on the Power of God," a series of reflections on the power of God manifested in

Christ's miracles, the Paschal Mystery, the sacraments and prayer.

March 16-18, deacons and wives (in Spanish): Rev. Claudio Diaz, pastor of Mission Juan Diego, will be the retreat leader.

April 20-22, deacons' wives and widows: Dr. Kate Wiskus is the retreat leader for this gathering of deacons' wives and widows. Wiskus will preach on "Collaborators in Grace." Wiskus is associate director of formation at Mundelein Seminary and author of "Pastoring Multiple Parishes" and numerous articles. Wiskus will focus on how women are called to be co-workers in the kingdom and for full participation in growing the kingdom.

April 27-29, deacons: Deacons Chick O'Leary and Richard Hudzik are the leaders for this retreat. They will preach on "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants." The retreat will be a prayerful exploration of how deacons today have been gifted by the great teachers of the past, whether from the Patristic Era, the Middle Ages or from modern days, including other deacons, our families and other laity and clergy who inspire and encourage us today.

May 4-6, deacons and wives: The Sisters of the Apostles of the Interior Life are the leaders of this retreat for deacons and wives. This exciting offering is presented by a community of women religious whose origins are in Italy, but who today serve in the United States as spiritual directors and evangelizers of students and faculty at the University of Kansas and at Texas A&M University. Sister Debbie Li and Sister Loredana Mazzei will reflect on "Our Call to Holiness in Today's Distracted World." You can view their biographies by choosing the "Vocation Stories" tab on the sisters' website at www.apostolevitainteriore.it. This is a new offering for Stritch.

May 18-20, deacons and wives (in Spanish): Chicago's Deacon Jesus Blanco will be the retreat leader.

-- Deacon Richard F. Hudzik, D.Min., is director of Cardinal Stritch Retreat House.

Community news

Your prayers are asked for those who have recently gone to the Lord: Deacon Jerome Kasimatis, '82; Deacon Jorge Gutierrez, '77; Deacon William Conway, '77; Deacon Marion Omiatek, '94; Deacon Edward Swiech, '78; Deacon John Simmons, '89; Elizabeth "Betty" Konar, wife of the late Deacon Al Konar, '98; Arlene Ward, wife of the late Deacon Raymond Ward, '76, and mother of Deacon Ray Ward, '89; Rolando Amato, son-in-law of Deacon Jorge Cabrera, '90; and Cypriano Duran, brother of Juanita and Deacon Pablo Perez, '08.

Among the sick, we commend to your prayers: Jim Kenney, José Vazquez, Pete Morrissey, Bill Reinhart, Tom Coffey, Steven and Millie Moore, Diane Leo, Richard Stojak, Florence Szady, Daniel and Maria Patiño, John Wilkenson, Ida Bohannon, Robert DeFiore, Alfia and Robert Sassetti, Linda O'Donnell, Susan Winblad, Janet Studer, wife of the late Deacon Marvin Studer, '85, Frank DeVita, Rosa Dominguez, Gilberto and Maria Cintron, Antonio and Ernestina Ponce, Nubia Roza, Teresa Ochoa, José Uroza, Jose Marrero, Laura Deters, daughter of Frank and Carolyn Beil, Cheryl Ann Gaca, daughter of Ron and Linda Morowczynski, Cheryl Becker and Robert Brueggemann.

To add names to the sick and deceased list, contact the Diaconate Office at (708) 386-8900.

Reflexiones del Vicario

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continúa además de nuestra convocación. Estoy planeando algunos eventos para el invierno y la primavera. Quisiera que me manden algunos tópicos interesantes. Ya tenemos el pedido de algunos, de prácticas en cómo hacer mejoras en bautizos, bodas y funerales. También algunos han indicado la necesidad de aprender cómo hacer la Liturgia de las Horas y Bendición, o de revisar lo que debe hacerse en la Misa. Por favor llámenme, escribanme o mándenme un e-mail con sus sugerencias (mahlstrom@archchicago.org).

Nuestra temporada de Navidad este año será muy corta, solo 15 días, contando con que la Sagrada Familia y el Bautizo de nuestro Seños caen durante la semana en vez de en domingo. Asegúrense de guardar un tiempo de reflexión para ustedes, acerca de la riqueza de esta temporada tan importante. Que Dios bendiga a toda tu familia en esta Navidad y durante todo el Año Nuevo!

Padre Michael Ahlstrom

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Mass Memorial Cards

Mass Memorial Cards are available and help support the works of the Diaconate Community.

To request cards, please email or call Deacon Chuck McFarland at ctm728@aol.com or call (815) 464-4760.



St. Francis Dinner Committee members

This year's St. Francis Dinner Committee consisted of: Chairman Andy Beierwaltes; Co-Chair Kevin Hill; printing Sal Lema; cash raffle Bill and Anne Stearns; ad book layout John Rex; ad book printing Luis Trevino; basket raffles/auctions Ron Morowczynski; treasurer Chuck McFarland; banquet seating Mary Beth Kalina and Maggie Beierwaltes; and photography Dan Dietsch. The committee also received support from Fr. Mike Ahlstrom, vicar; Dennis Colgan, associate director, and Julia Aguirre.