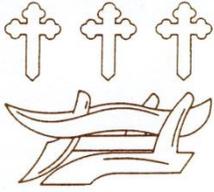


Archdiocese of Cincinnati

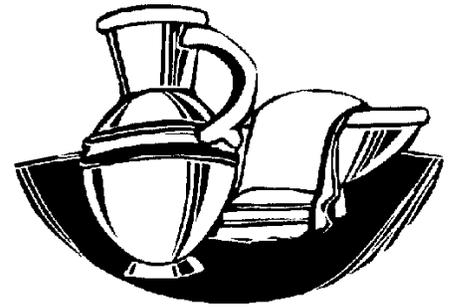


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# MEMO

To: Deacon Community  
From: Deacon Mark Machuga  
Subject: Monthly Newsletter  
Date: March, 2020

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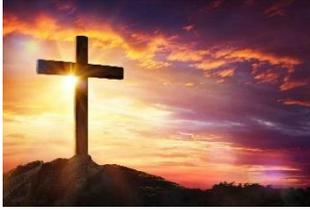


## Unprecedented Times



The coronavirus pandemic has forced us into an existence like we have never experienced before. None of us reading this newsletter have ever known a time in which we could not attend a public celebration of the Mass and when Holy Week, the most sacred time in our liturgical calendar, would be limited to participation via video streaming. Many other aspects of “life as usual” have also been disrupted, changed or eliminated. I recently asked our deacon community how these unprecedented times have affected your ministry. One of the best responses I received was an insightful reflection on how this all relates to Holy Week which will be upon us in a few days: “I feel like maybe I am experiencing in a small way the loneliness, disappointment and abandonment that Jesus felt during his passion. The good news is there is a resurrection!”

I received many, many responses to my request for input. Thank you to everyone who contributed. I have summarized your comments at the end of this newsletter. Please take some time to review the responses from your brother deacons.



We cannot forget that even under these unusual circumstances, WE WILL celebrate Easter! So I would like to wish all of you and your families a blessed, happy and healthy Easter!

## **Update on Deacon Ordination**

Last month, I reported in the Deacon Newsletter the ordination of seven seminarians to the Transitional Diaconate and one man, Jim Niswonger, to the Permanent Diaconate. That ordination was scheduled to take place on April 25 at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains, with Bishop Binzer presiding.



As of the publication of this newsletter, the decision has not yet been made about whether the ordination will take place or if it will be postponed. If it does go on, it will be a non-public event. As soon as I am informed of the decision, I will pass that news along to you.

In any event, please continue to pray for these men who will be ordained to the diaconate at some time in the relatively near future!

## **Informational Evenings for the Diaconate**

I have planned a series of Informational Evenings for the Diaconate to be held throughout the Archdiocese in May. You will see this information in the upcoming *Clergy Communications*.

However, given the uncertainty of the current stay-at-home orders and restrictions on public gatherings, I'm not sure if the meetings will proceed or not. But for your information, the proposed dates and locations for the meetings are:

- May 20 - St. Michael Church, Fort Loramie
- May 26 - St. Mathias the Apostle Church, Forest Park
- May 27 - Church of the Ascension, Kettering

These meetings are intended for men who may be considering a possible call to the Permanent Diaconate, and their wives.

I will keep you posted as to whether they will be postponed or not.



## St. Lawrence Feast Day Celebration

Our annual St. Lawrence Feast Day Mass and Dinner will take place on Saturday, August 8 at Ascension Parish in Kettering. Ascension Parish was chosen because it is a central location to make it possible for all deacons to attend. Our Mass will be at 5 pm with dinner following.

I will be sending out RSVP's as we get closer. I just wanted to allow you to get his on your calendar.

## New Website is On the Way

The Communications Department of the Archdiocese is preparing to launch an enhanced and updated website, to be released in the early summer. As a part of that overall redesign, I am working with a website consultant to make our Diaconate Page more user friendly, more attractive and more informative.

In that regard, **I'd like to solicit your input.** As you view the current Diaconate Page, what would you like to see added, enhanced, deleted or changed? Can't guarantee that all suggestions can be implemented, but I would like some input. Think of the way you use the webpage as a deacon, but also how the general public might use it to gather information. Thanks!

## Update on Clerical Attire

Thank you for your input on exploring the possibility of clerical attire for deacons in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Wow!! There are some definite opinions about this topic!!



Just to recap - I approached the Archbishop to explore a request that has been brought to my attention several times in the course of my term as Director. This was initiated by a group of deacons who put together a very specific and detailed petition to the Archbishop to ask if the policy prohibiting deacons in Cincinnati from wearing the Roman collar could be reconsidered.

I was permitted to present the petition to the Presbyteral Council and the Deans. At both gatherings, the idea was well received. I was instructed to produce a draft policy that they could review. I have solicited input from the National Association of Diaconate Directors, of which I am a member, since many other dioceses do

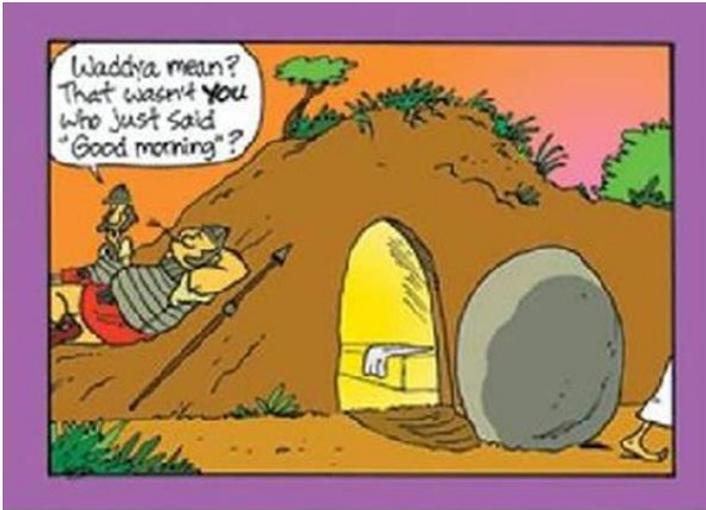
permit deacons to wear clerical attire for ministerial purposes. I am crafting a draft policy and will present it first to the Archbishop for review.

For your information, the results of the survey of the deacon community are that 77% are in favor of permitting deacons to wear a collar, while 23% were opposed to the idea.

### **Necrology - April**

April 3, 1985	Deacon Harvey Baur	Ordained 7/3/82
April 5, 2019	Elisa Mascorro	
April 7, 2001	Deacon Paul Weitzel	Ordained 7/28/79
April 13, 1996	Deacon Robert Arbogast	Ordained 6/25/83
April 15, 2005	Eulita Bensman	
April 19, 1991	Deacon Francis Laengle	Ordained 9/25/76
April 29, 2018	Deacon John Parker	Ordained 6/22/85
April 29, 1999	Clara Wabler	

### **This Month's Humor ...**



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## Responses to the Coronavirus Survey

- Most common impacts: Masses now being streamed online; no invitation for the sign of peace; celebrants often raising the chalice themselves instead of having the deacon do it; live-streaming the rosary and Liturgy of the Hours;
- Deacons are called to three primary ministries: liturgy, word and charity. With the first two being taken away for the most part, I decided to concentrate on the third – charity. So I picked up the parish directory and started making phone calls to random parishioners. I avoided the “easy” calls – those to people I knew well and saw often at church. I concentrated on those who I did not know, those who I knew to be high-risk, those who had children and would likely need some contact from the outside world. I asked them what they needed. If they didn’t need anything, then I just took time to talk with them and attempt to shine some hope and light into their day. I have continued to do this daily. I find that people are praying for others. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. People are so glad to “hear from the church.” And I’ve received blessings myself.
- Many deacons have repeated this same idea – that they are calling parishioners, especially older and at-risk ones, to check in on them, offer prayer and encouragement.
- Many deacons are conducting essential meetings – such as pre-cana preparation meetings – via some streaming service (Zoom, FaceTime, Google Duo, etc.)
- The mandate on social distancing and the “stay at home” order had an impact on prison ministry. State prisons were quick to eliminate volunteers. This limited programs which rely upon volunteers in the prison and caused some shuffling of event times and durations, such as men’s ministry meetings and Mass. Since one of our deacons is considered a “contractor” at the prison, not a volunteer, he was able to keep this rearranged schedule with the men. He states: “What is remarkable in this time of suspended, cancelled and rescheduled liturgies, is that the only parishioners I can interact with in real time are our incarcerated men at Warren Correctional Institution. And for this I am thankful.”
- Since everything I do is people specific, my role has been dramatically changed. As pastoral associate here at my parish, I direct the adult faith program and I spend much time visiting the homebound, and visit those in nursing homes, hospitals and hospice. Most of my work is person to person – which, of course, can no longer happen unless a person is determined to be within their last 24 hours at which time I am able to visit at hospice or some of the hospitals. I find myself calling or texting my homebound and e-mailing more than ever. The parish has set up a Facebook account for me just to keep in contact with these parishioners.

- My wife and I are now 71 years old, I'm pre-diabetic, I have a history of asthma and I have a compromised immune system. For those reasons, I cannot leave our house. We've been ordering our groceries online and getting them delivered. So, I've not been able to exercise my diaconal ministry.
- The current situation has had a profound effect on the ministries that I normally have a leadership role in. The most striking of course is that there are no community liturgies. Everything that I am involved in is either online or remote from people. It has given me the opportunity to gain knowledge of utilizing various online platforms and applications. For example, tonight I have a Zoom meeting schedule for youth ministry.
- We are distributing blessed palms on Palm Sunday in a very guarded fashion in the church parking lot. Masks and gloves will be involved and people have been directed to drive up in their cars with getting out.
- At one regional parish, the pastor closed one of the parishes temporarily.
- When a private Mass is being said, the invitation "Let us offer to each other the sign of peace" has been eliminated, or it is replaced with a simple non-contact gesture.
- Eucharistic Adoration has been continued in places where it can be done in a large space where social distancing isn't a problem.
- The silver lining in this is that I have talked with many friends I have not talked with for some time. I'm reading and writing more which is refreshing.
- No Masses, no visits to nursing homes and in private homes, no marriage prep, baptism prep, no RCIA classes (not sure when or how the elect will enter the Church), no homily prep, no weekly Stations of the Cross, no monthly leading of holy hour, no leading of prayer service after Mass on First Friday, no leading of rosary on the first Saturday of the month, no socializing at weekly fish-fries. But there is more prayer at home and phone calls to shut ins.
- Weddings having to be moved
- Many have said that the newly available time to be spent with families has been a blessing.
- Bringing communion to the home-bound has ceased. Nursing home visitations for communion have also stopped.
- Many have expressed their sadness at not being able to meet and greet the parishioners and others who they used to interact with on a regular basis.
- "I feel like maybe I am experiencing in a small way the loneliness, disappointment and abandonment that Jesus felt during his passion. The good news is there is a resurrection!
- I have been writing an article each day for our web page and Facebook. I have also been able to give a Blessing to those who wish to drive by at church by request.

- We are now asking parishioners to display a white flag at homes and cars to signify our surrender to God in prayer to end this pandemic and for social spacing efforts. Hopefully more people will join us.
- This is an excellent resource for movies, documentaries all kinds of faith-based materials ..... and it is free for 40 days. <https://watch.formed.org/browse>
- I continue to make mosaic crosses which we give out at baptisms, Vacation Bible School and for those who make the Christ Renews His Parish program. I am currently working on my second batch of 500!
- I had such an active ministry with the Otterbein Senior living Community prior to these shut downs. I compare my loss of their interaction to sending a child off to college. I can't see their smiles or receive their hugs, but in my mind I can still hear their laughter and see their faces. I know that they are safe and protected so there is some assurance that we will see each other again. We just don't know when. I have done a graveside service already and seemed really strange to not have a funeral mass first. I do report to the parish everyday and attend a private Mass with the pastor. I handle the operation of the buildings and 2 cemeteries as part of my daily routine and believe or not grave sales are up this month. I still have parishioners drop by the parish for Adoration and it is not uncommon for them to stop and visit if they see me working outside on the grounds. I'm not living in a bubble by any means and the blessing of a small rural community is a huge blessing today.