



Called To Serve

The Journey to Diaconal Ordination

A Newsletter by the
Permanent Deacon
Formation Class
of 2011
Volume 1

June 2007

The Road to Formation

By: Edwin Christmann, Ph.D.

In accordance with Bishop Donald Wuerl's June 9, 2005 call for a class of deacons to be ordained in January 2011, informational meetings were held for inquirers the following July, and pastors nominated applicants from September through December to the Office for the Diaconate. Upon completion of the nominations, Rev. James Wehner, Director, Office for the Diaconate, sent application materials to those nominated for completion by December 31, 2005. This comprehensive application process required:

- Sacramental/Canonical, including a church certificate of Baptism, Confirmation, and Marriage, if relevant
- Education, including high school and post secondary transcripts
- Medical Background with a complete physical
- Family and personal background, including recent photographs of applicant
- Wife Questionnaire Form
- Three letters of recommendation from home parish
- Pastor's Recommendation Form
- Letter of recommendation from applicant's

employer

- Birth Certificate
- Proof of legal residency
- Criminal background check
- Financial information disclosure
- Personal handwritten statement from wife of married applicant indicating her initial consent for his application and entrance into aspirant formation
- Consent form regarding psychological consultation, and confidentiality of consultative reports
- Detailed Spiritual Autobiography.

Between January and March 2006, applicants were selected for interviews by Diocesan officials. Once completed, names of recommended applicants were submitted to the Diocesan Bishop for acceptance into the Propaedeutic Period, a thirty-week discernment program beginning in May 2006 which involved aspirants and their wives in workshops, spiritual direction, formation advising, and theological reflection.

From August-November 2006, aspirants underwent psychological testing and family evaluations. From the hundreds of applicants, 48 men were accepted into the Candidacy Path of Diaconal Formation.

As of May 2007, the candidates will complete three courses; Introduction to the Old Testament, Introduction to the New Testament, and Spiritual Theology. During the summer 2007, these men will be placed in a pastoral assignments and participate in a summer retreat. On August 5, 2007, aspirants will officially be recognized as candidates in the liturgical Rite of Admission to Candidacy, to be celebrated by the Diocesan Bishop.

Over the next four years, candidates will continue their coursework, be placed in pastoral assignments, and receive the ministries of Lector and Acolyte. God willing, these 48 men will be Ordained Deacons in January 2011.

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A Note from the Director The Formation of a Diaconal Vocation

By: Rev. James A. Wehner, S.T.D. Director, Diaconate Program

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Since January, forty-eight men are now formally in preparation for ordination to the diaconate. The formation program follows closely the directives of the conference of bishops and the Holy See. These directives assure both the aspirants and the Church that a well qualified program is in place to adequately prepare men to shoulder the pastoral responsibilities of ordained ministry.

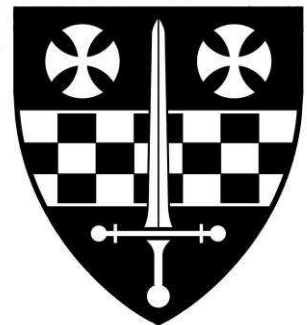
We see in the pages of the New Testament how vocations to ministry in the early life of the Church flourished as a response to pastoral need. The same Holy Spirit has blessed the Diocese of Pittsburgh with nu-

merable charisms and gifts. How we use those gifts to manifest the kingdom requires from each believer a proper formation. Otherwise, the gift can be used incorrectly or even ineffectively.

Each of our deacon aspirants has an incredible contribution to make in the name of pastoral leadership. It is the responsibility of the Church to form these gifts accordingly so that when the newly ordained deacon receives his assignment from the Bishop, he will be ready to move into the vineyard where the task of evangelization is carried out.

To the deacon aspirants and their families – we once

again extend our gratitude to you for the time commitment involved in receiving a good formation. May the Lord bless you with the virtues of patience and endurance. God bless!



Fr. William Fay Kicks Off Intellectual Formation

By: William G. Batz, Ph.D.

Intellectual formation for the diaconal class of 2011 began in January, 2007 with introductory classes in the Old and New Testaments, given by Father William Fay, local and respected Scripture scholar who has taught many priests currently serving in the Pittsburgh Diocese and across the country.

Father Fay launched the winter-spring term with ten evenings of instruction on the background, development, theology and exegesis of the Torah, Prophetic and Wisdom literature of the Tanak, or Old Testament, followed by careful examination of the New Testament, especially parallels among the Synoptic Gospels.

To facilitate his students' further study, Fr. Fay introduced a series of scholarly works that would form a basic library for aspirants in their eventual ministry.

Father Fay's major Old Testament themes became the focus for a Saturday afternoon homiletics exercise at Saint Paul Seminary on February 17th. Covenant and Kingdom, Sin and Prophecy were among the topics randomly assigned to aspirants for a brief, extemporaneous homily in front of classmates. "You can expect to be drilled in preaching," Father Wehner had told the group. "Well in that case," sighed one participant with a smile, "I was just happy not to get Father

Fay's famous 'tribal amphityony' as my first homily assignment." Dr. Robert Jancart, M.D., chairman of

the pathology department at Grove City Medical Center and a diaconal aspirant, expressed the sentiments of many of Father Fay's listeners. "I have been a student of Scripture all my life," said Dr. Jancart.

(continued on page 3)



Fr. William Fay Kicks Off Intellectual Formation *(continued from page 2)*

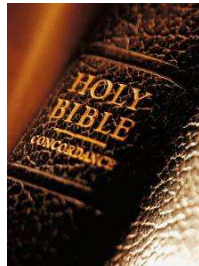
"However, presentations by Father Fay break open the Word within a deep cultural and historical context, and penetrate their richer meaning with some jaw-dropping exegetical insights."

Speaking on his own behalf, Father Fay noted: "I have been greatly impressed by the eagerness of these men to devote themselves to hours of class each week after a long day at work.

Their questions show a deep interest and dedication to Scripture in their forma-

tion." The diaconal class has asked for more Scriptural instruction by Father Fay beyond what is already scheduled in the curriculum.

Father Fay added: "These men make me optimistic about the future of our diocesan Church."



A Word from a Current Deacon

By: Deacon Richard Cessar

When I consider where the Lord has led me in life, then like most men, I think of the most important events that have happened to me. Without a doubt my marriage to Sandra and the birth of our daughter Lauryn were the two greatest gifts of God in my 56 years. The third was my ordination to the Diaconate. These past eight years of Diaconal ministry have touched me and my family in ways that have enhanced the beautiful gift of life that my parents first gave to me.

The Diaconate was never about me or any individual deacon, but in my ministry I exercise Diaconal faculties to do God's work, and not only when I am "officially on duty." Being a Deacon is a 24/7 experience. I realized in a dramatic way at my workplace on 9/11 when 300 of my Marsh, Inc. colleagues

died in the World Trade Center.

I sensed it at home during the death of a close friend and neighbor. I feel it when I share a physically demanding run with my sister and brother -- one who believes and the other who does not -- or at the grocery store when the lines are long and patience is short. I feel it too when a parishioner speaks disparagingly about one of our priests. It is in all these places of life that the Deacon finds his calling and the need for his diaconal touch. As a member of the Catholic clergy, the everyday workplace of the Deacon lies in every place and circumstance that we find ourselves in the world. This is where we are called to serve.

I am one of the "gray beards" in my firm, both literally and figuratively. There is the expectation

among my colleagues that in the next several years, I will retire from the firm where I perform my "real job." The truth of the matter is, however, that as a Permanent Deacon in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, I am doing my "real job" as a Deacon in service to God's people.

Deacon Rick Cessar is Vice President of Marsh, Inc., an international insurance brokerage firm. He was ordained a deacon eight years ago and is assigned to parish ministry at Saint Sebastian parish in Ross Township. He and his wife Sandra are longtime members of St. Bonaventure parish in Glenshaw. Deacon Rick is serving as a mentor to two members of the deacon class of 2011.



Calendar of Events:

- May 2007 – Aug 2007 Pastoral Experience / Integrative Assignment
- Jun 22 – 24, 2007 Aspirant Retreat Saint Paul Monastery: *Proclaiming Christ in Word and Sacrament*
- Aug 5, 2007 (3:00 p.m.) Rite of Candidacy Mass: *Saint Mary of the Assumption Parish, Glenshaw*
- Aug 16 - Sep 13, 2007 Fundamental Theology Class: *St. Paul Seminary*
- Every Thursday (6:30 p.m.) Liturgy of the Hours: *6:30 pm St Paul Seminary 2nd Floor*
When Class is in session



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