

# THE *Belleville Deacon*

OFFICE OF VOCATIONS | DIACONATE FORMATION | DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE



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Practicing the Rite of Christian Baptism is Deacon Candidate Len Ratajczyk. He is assisted by Beth Schrader, wife of Branden Schrader.

## DEACON CANDIDATES PRACTICE SACRAMENTAL RITES

A Deacon Blog by Deacon Candidate Len Ratajczk  
<https://deacondiscoveries.com/>

For January, the focus of formation was on learning to minister in the role of deacon at baptisms, weddings, and funerals. In the Christian life, these are some of the most memorable moments in our lives. To help us perform these correctly, we had a classroom portion on the established Catholic Rite for baptisms, weddings and funerals. After that, we did our best with some hands-on practice. In the picture to the left, it's my turn to practice baptism on our baby infant doll.

We learned about the role of deacon in funeral services with a special emphasis on the importance of compassion and accompaniment of family members during this time of sorrow. The recent funeral of Pope Benedict XVI was televised globally and served as a reminder to the world that all of us have limited time here on Earth.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Reverend Steven M. Pautler



*Reflection... "Saint Lawrence, may your example inspire all clergy, and especially deacons, to remain close to both their bishops and their people, providing faithful witness to the truths of our faith, which are worth living and dying for."*

As of March 1, 2023 the Vocation Office has received sixteen applications from men seeking to join the Aspirancy Class for Permanent Deacon Formation, beginning September 2023. Applications must be completed and returned by Saturday, March 4, 2023. Application means, the written application along with required statements and essays. There has been a number of applications picked up after the February 12, 2023 deadline. It is vital that the written application be returned to the Vocation Office no later than March 4, 2023.

Beginning the week of March 5, 2023 the Deacon Formation Team will begin initial evaluations of the applications received. The evaluation is the first step in assuring that all documents are returned. Beginning the second week of March, possible aspirants will be notified of the date and time of their psychological evaluation. The evaluations will be conducted at the Rigali Center, in mid-town St. Louis. In some instances, the psychologist conducting evaluations will consider a zoom meeting, but arrangements must be made with the Diocesan Vocation office.

Thank you to all the team members, pastors, priests, deacons and parishioners for helping to get the word out about the new formation class starting. I have been Director of Deacon formation for less than one year and it has been such a joy meeting so many people who have a deep love of God, Church and Ordained Ministry. Soon the Class of 2023 will be ordained permanent deacons and a new class of aspirants will begin their journey. Blessings as we travel forward!

## SPIRITUAL DIRECTION: WHAT IS IT? WHO NEEDS IT, AND WHY?

By: Reverend Steven M. Pautler

One important aspect of discerning a vocation is spiritual direction. Throughout the process of presenting the "Come and See," information meetings I emphasized the importance of seeking spiritual direction. A religious vocation is not complete without regular spiritual direction. During my spirituality class at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology, the instructor shared some powerful advice. *"The first to go, when a vocation fails, is prayer."* Prayer provides the catalyst that mixes everything together. Most of us benefited nicely from scripture reading, bible study and parish communal prayer. When an individual seriously explores the possibility of a church vocation, especially consecrated or ordained, regular direction is vital to the individual.

During the Aspirancy year, aspirants will be introduced to spiritual direction. "The importance and dynamics of spiritual direction will be stressed, along with skills for hearing the voice of God in various ways. The aspirant will be given assistance in choosing a spiritual director." (St. Meinrad Deacon Formation Program 2023)

I encourage all deacons, candidates and future aspirants to seriously seek out a qualified spiritual director. In a future issue of, "The Belleville Deacon," a listing of certified spiritual directors will be made available. Deacons are obliged to give priority to the spiritual life and to live their diaconal life with generosity. Those Ordained have a special obligation to seek holiness in their lives because they are consecrated to God by a new title in the reception of orders.

*"Deacons share in Christ's mission and grace in a special way, themselves to the various ministries of charity." (ccc 1570) "This sacrament configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ's instrument for his Church." (ccc 1581)*

# Important Dates

## Deacon Formation for the Class of 2023

### Weekend Session

March 10th - March 12th

St. Meinrad School of Theology, St. Meinrad, IN

### Weekend Session

April 14th - April 16th

Cathedral of St. Peter (Undercroft)

### Canonical Retreat, before Ordination

Monday, April 24th - Friday, April 28th

Toddhall Retreat Center - Columbia Illinois

### Final Weekend Session

May 12th - May 14th

Cathedral of St. Peter (Undercroft)

### Ordination of Deacons

#### Cathedral of St. Peter - Belleville

Friday, June 2, 2023

Cathedral of St. Peter - Rehearsal - 4:00 p.m.

Holy Hour for Vocations/ with Vespers - 5:00 p.m.

Pre-Ordination Reception/Dinner - 6:15 p.m.

Saturday, June 3, 2023

Bl. Sacrament Chapel - Reconciliation - 8:00 a.m.

Bl. Sacrament Chapel Morning Prayer - 9:00 a.m.

Undercroft - Vesting in Alb - 9:30 a.m.

Cathedral Nave - Line-up - 9:50 a.m.

Ordination of Deacons - 10:00 a.m.

McCormick Center - Reception following Ordination

### Important Information for

#### All Permanent Deacons & Candidates

##### Deacon Family Outing

For all deacons, candidates and families

Rend Lake - Shagbark Group Area

Friday, April 28th - Sunday April 30th

##### Meeting with Bishop McGovern

Mandatory Quarterly Meeting (Deacons Only)

Sunday, April 23, 2023 - 1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 8, 2023 - 1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.

##### Annual Deacon Retreat

##### Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows

Deacons & Spouses

September 8th - 10th



Covenant Network  
Catholic Radio

Please tune into Covenant Network, Catholic Radio 92.7 FM - on Thursday, March 30 at 5:00 p.m. Three of our Deacon Candidates will be interviewed.

## Suggested Reading List

### Diocese of Belleville, Office of Vocations

Deacon Formation Program, 2023 Revision

<https://www.diobelle.org/canonical-affairs/deacon-formation>

### Our Life of Service: The Handbook for

Catholic Deacons - Paperback - December 3, 2021

by Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

### Encountering Christ the Servant: A Spirituality

of the Diaconate - Paperback - October 23, 2020

by Deacon Dominic Cerrato Ph.D.

### The Heart of the Diaconate: Communion

with the Servant Mysteries of Christ

Paperback - September 1, 2015, by James Keating.

### Understanding the Diaconate: Historical, Theological, and Sociological Foundations -

Paperback - July 13, 2018, by W. Shawn McKnight

## MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Mrs. Patti Warner



Our mailbox has been quite full here at the diocese, with dozens and dozens of references coming in on a regular basis, interspersed with an occasional college transcript or sacramental record. I can tell you are working hard. Keep up the good work!

Things will continue to move quickly in these next few months. If you are selected to move forward, one of the next requirements will be to have a psychological evaluation. I wanted to talk about that process a little bit this month.

Our evaluations are conducted by Michael Polard, LCSW. On his behalf, we will send you two documents via email before your appointment. One is short and sweet - a Release of Information form allowing him to share the results of your assessment with the deacon formation team. The other is more involved—a series of questions looking at family of origin history, your marriage history, your sense of self and your habits, your education, and your spirituality. Once that is completed, we will schedule an appointment.

Appointments will take place at The Cardinal Rigali Center in St. Louis. While an in-person interview is much preferred, if it causes an undue hardship or scheduling dilemma, an assessment can take place via Zoom if need be. Wishing you many Lenten blessings during this holy season.

## MESSAGE FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Reverend Michaelamsi Arockiam



I am happy to write these few lines as we have just begun the holy season of Lent 2023. I was at the Cathedral of St. Peter for the Rite of Election 2023, celebrated on Sunday, February 26. More than a hundred candidates with their Sponsors, both Catechumens and those to be received in full communion with the Catholic Church. They were from almost every Parish of the Diocese. There were many Deacons too. The gathering and the simple but solemn service at the Cathedral reminded me how the Holy Spirit is using the services of the existing Deacons and the would-be Deacons to give the church at Belleville a new "Spring" (Lent). Congratulations to all the Deacons participating in the OCIA (formerly RCIA) programs in the Parishes all over the Diocese. The Good Shepherd will reward you.

This season teaches us the love and worship we owe God. Let us hasten to the sacrament of reconciliation that brings us a new "Spring" in our Christian living. Again, this season teaches us to care for our neighbor in need: not only their material needs—needs of the body, but also spiritual needs - the need in the soul; we must care for their soul, their salvation. This season, let us encourage at least one or as many as possible among our friends and neighbors to go for the sacrament of reconciliation - a sacrament often overlooked as if one can grow in Christian discipleship without it. It would be a wonderful and memorable pastoral plan for the Deacons and would Deacons to help others bring a new "Spring" in their lives. God bless.

## MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR OF DEACONS

Deacon Thomas and Sandi Helfrich



As we compose this article together, we preparing to ordain 14 men deemed worthy to be permanent deacons. In my (Tom) role as Coordinator of the Permanent Deacons in the Diocese of Belleville this has been a time to reflect back

on mine, and Dawn's, journey through diaconate formation from initial discernment to ordination. These future deacons (God and the Bishop willing) and wives have been in the hearts, minds, and prayers of us as well as the faithful in our parishes.

Throughout the next few issues of The Belleville Deacon we would like to share some of our experiences and memories with you, beginning with the mystical power of discernment. So here we go. In the beginning (just kidding). It was on the Feast of St. Stephen on December 26 that we solidified our decision to apply to enter deacon formation in 2008 after many months (even years) of discernment. St. Stephen, as many of you already know, was one of the first seven Deacons of the Church, and the first to be martyred, the protomartyr. We get to know him in Acts of the Apostles. Prior to this, similar to each of you, we had been attending information meetings, talking with those already ordained, reflecting, praying, and discussing with each other and our children.

For reasons which now allude us, there was no priest available for that day and our Pastor had previously asked Tom to preside at a weekday communion service. While in the sacristy getting ready, in walks Fr. Paul Wightman, a native of Waterloo but living out of state and visiting family for the Christmas holiday. He assumed Tom was the priest, likely as he was already in an alb, and asked if Tom would mind if he concelebrated with him. Ha! Ha! Of course, Tom explained the situation and Father asked if he would mind assisting him with Mass rather than a communion service.

During his homily he spoke on St. Stephen and his role and importance in the Church, the role of the modern deacon in the Church today, the aging and declining number of vocations to the priesthood, and the need for men to seriously consider a vocation to the diaconate. Well, during Fr. Wightman's homily we just looked at each other and knew we had just made our decision. It was time to apply to enter formation. The rest is history. Please join us next issue, to learn a little more about our "history".

## DEACONS INVOLVEMENT IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION

By: Deacon Tom Powers



In formation, we learn about the sacrament of ordination in depth. Same for Eucharist and Reconciliation in our early years and Confirmation in our early teens. We also go through formation for the Sacrament of Marriage.

In our diocese, Marriage Preparation includes meetings with a priest or deacon to complete the required interview, to speak with witnesses on the couples' behalf, and the completion and review of the Prepare Inventory. Additionally, we require our couples to attend a Pre-Cana Day. Today's Pre-Cana is not the one you may remember from your own Marriage Preparation years ago.

Several years ago, we switched from a program that had couples listening to a series of lectures to a model that has facilitators introduce topics and then has the couples discuss them - like adults are supposed to do. We use a program out of the Archdiocese of Chicago called "Marriage in the Lord." The program is a great help in opening the conversations couples need to be having to walk into life after their wedding day with their eyes and hearts wide open.

We would invite all deacon couples to get involved in this ministry by starting a Pre-Cana team in either your parish or your Vicariate. Right now, after the pandemic, we have a shortage of these days being offered and are having to send couples to surrounding dioceses. Please pray on it and reach out to me at (815) 302-5168 or [4sssster@gmail.com](mailto:4sssster@gmail.com) if you would like more information. Peace.