

# THE *Belleville Deacon*

OFFICE OF VOCATIONS | DIACONATE FORMATION | DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE



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**Candidates please remember you can find course syllabus, agenda, required books, and other information at St. Meinrad's Student Portal... BLACKBAUD**

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(from left to right): Front row: Jeffrey Craig, Tom Braun, Bishop Michael McGovern, Gary Zwilling, William Reholz . Middle row: James Burris, Douglas Kuhl, Timothy Taylor, Matthew Lees, Nathan Higgerson, Andrew Orlet Back row: Father Michaelsami Arockiam (Assistant Director of Deacon Formation), Deacon Levi James.

## Ten Men Admitted as Deacon Candidates in Cathedral of St. Peter Ceremony

Ten men from across the Diocese of Belleville received the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Deacons during Mass at the Cathedral of St. Peter on November 9, 2024. During the past year, the candidates have been in formation and discerning a call to serve as Deacons in the Diocese. The Mass marked a pivotal step in their journey toward ordained ministry. It represented the Church's formal acceptance of the candidates' intention to pursue Holy Orders and their commitment to serve God's people.

It was also an opportunity for the candidates to publicly affirm their desire to dedicate themselves to the diaconate, a ministry of service that reflects Christ's mission of love. Please keep our deacon candidates and their families in your prayers as they continue their formation and discernment.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Reverend Steven M. Pautler

### Deacon formation class not to begin until September 2028



Following careful consideration and prayerful exploration of various options, it has been decided to postpone the start of the next Deacon Formation Class. The focus for the coming years will instead be on preparing the Class of 2028 for their ordination. This decision aims to ensure that current candidates receive the attention and resources necessary for their spiritual and pastoral development.

This delay highlights the importance of discerning one's vocation thoughtfully and prayerfully. The journey to understanding a calling is a profound and personal experience that cannot be rushed. It often involves deep reflection, engagement with the community, and guidance from spiritual mentors.

While some may have anticipated that formation would begin sooner, this adjustment allows prospective candidates additional time for discernment. It offers an opportunity to deepen your relationship with God, engage more fully in parish life, and prepare spiritually and emotionally for future commitments.

The Vocation Office encourages all those considering the diaconate to use this time for continued prayer and reflection. Engaging in community service, participating in parish activities, and seeking spiritual direction can be valuable ways to nurture one's vocation during this period.

The Vocation Office remains committed to supporting individuals on their vocational journeys. Resources and guidance are available for those who have questions or seek assistance in their discernment. For more information or to seek guidance, individuals are invited to contact the diocesan office.



## Deacons Attend National Conference on the Permanent Diaconate at St. Paul Center

Submitted by: Deacon Jim Keepes

Between November 15 and 17, 2024, Deacons Dave Miskell and Jim Keepes attended a conference at the Saint Paul Center for Biblical Theology in Steubenville, Ohio. The event, themed "A Scriptural Approach to the Permanent Diaconate," featured talks by Dr. Scott Hahn, Dr. John Bergsma, Dr. Shane Owen, Dr. Jeff Morrow, and Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers.

The conference brought together fifty permanent deacons from twenty U.S. states and Canada. Key topics included preaching from the Gospel of Luke during the Jubilee year and exploring the Old Testament origins of the permanent diaconate. Participants toured the St. Paul Center's facilities, including newly completed video and audio studios used for podcast and videocast recordings. They also had one-on-one discussions with the speakers about their books, podcasts, and videocasts.

Deacons Dave and Jim appreciated the opportunity to connect with fellow deacons from across the country and interact with the staff of the St. Paul Center. Deacon Dave serves at Sts. Peter & Paul Parish in Waterloo, while Deacon Jim serves at St. Mary Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St. Sebastian Parishes in Wabash County.

## Save the Dates: Key Events for Deacons in 2025

Formation Meetings with Bishop McGovern  
 March 30, 2025, at 1:30 PM  
 October 19, 2025, at 1:30 PM  
 Location: Cathedral Undercroft

Annual Retreat for Deacons and their Spouses

September 26-28, 2025

Location: St. Meinrad Archabbey

## Listen Up! Preaching Workshop for Permanent Deacons February 14th - 16th St. Meinrad Archabbey

Deacon candidates—both single and married—and their wives are invited to join the Homiletic Intensive Workshop with Fr. Jeff and Dr. Schuhmann, a dynamic team dedicated to enhancing your preaching skills and enriching your person-

al lives. This transformative weekend begins on Friday evening with a special Saint Valentine dinner and social event, where Fr. Jeff will introduce the Flag Page exercise to promote self-awareness in preaching and strengthen marital bonds; single deacons will also gain valuable insights into their preaching styles.

On Saturday morning, participants will delve deeper into the Flag Page, uncovering insights beneficial to both ministry and personal relationships. In the afternoon, Fr. Jeff will lead a session for deacons on Good Friday preaching—"Jesus's Valentine to us"—while Dr. Schuhmann presents to the wives on supporting and partnering with their husbands in their ministry.

Sunday morning concludes with Dr. Schuhmann finalizing strategies for Good Friday sermons. By the end of the workshop, you'll leave with enhanced self-awareness, strengthened relationships, and a solid plan for your Good Friday services this Holy Week.

The cost is \$410 for singles and \$595 for couples, which covers accommodations, meals, and a \$25 per person fee for the Flag Page exercise. After registration, Fr. Nicolas will send a link to complete the Flag Page exercise. Don't miss this opportunity to grow in your ministry and personal life!

**FOR REGISTRATION VISIT  
 CLICK DEACON FORMATION**

<https://www.saintmeinrad.edu/>

## Sacred Heart Seminary And School of Theology

### Inspire Your Ministry: join the 2025 Preaching Conference January 7-9

Join priests, deacons and individuals for the **Preaching Conference 2025** at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology in Hales Corners, WI, from January 7-9, 2025. This inspiring event is designed to enhance your preaching skills and deepen your connection to ministry. Don't miss this opportunity to grow in faith and ability while connecting with others in the preaching community. For more information and to register, visit [shsst.edu/PreachingConf](https://shsst.edu/PreachingConf). You can also reach out to us at [skramer@shsst.edu](mailto:skramer@shsst.edu) or call 414-858-4767. We look forward to seeing you there!

## Invitation to Spiritual Direction for Priests, Deacons, and Deacon Candidates

Father Tom Esselman, C.M. has extended an invitation to any of you interested in spiritual direction. Having been ordained for 44 years, he has found spiritual direction vital to his life and ministry. It provides a blessed opportunity to reflect on one's relationship with God and how it influences all aspects of life, including ministry.

He is happy to offer his services for spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If you already have a spiritual director but need someone to listen or help think through parish-related matters, he is more than willing to assist. Following Saint Vincent's call to support diocesan priests, he considers it a privilege to accompany you in your ministry.

In the coming months, he plans to spend at least one day a month in Belleville for spiritual direction. If there is interest, he may also be available at another location in the Diocese, such as Mount Vernon.

To help plan effectively, he would appreciate your feedback:

- Are you interested in exploring the possibility of meeting for spiritual direction?
- Which day of the week (Monday through Friday) best suits your schedule?
- Do you prefer mornings or afternoons?

**Please send your responses to:**  
[tesselman@vincentian.org](mailto:tesselman@vincentian.org)

**Rev. Thomas Esselman, C.M.**  
 1408 S. 10th Street  
 St. Louis, MO 63104

**Email:** [tesselman@vincentian.org](mailto:tesselman@vincentian.org)  
**Phone:** 314-956-0185



## MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR OF DEACONS

**Deacon Tom and Dawn Helfrich**

As Fr. Steve wrote about in the October issue of the Belleville Deacon, Pope Francis/Vatican has declared 2025 a Holy Year. In connection with this Holy Year the Vatican is hosting many Jubilees, including a Jubilee for Deacons on February 21 - 23, 2025.



The QR code will take you to the Vatican website for the Jubilee for Deacons. There are many travel companies that are organizing travel/pilgrimages to attend the Jubilee for Deacons and travel to other destinations

in and around Italy. Many of these can be found in The Deacon magazine. I also receive emails from travel companies about this and try to forward these to the deacon community but if you would like travel/pilgrimage information, let me know and I will send it to you. In 2016 there was a Jubilee for Deacons in the Vatican and several deacons and spouses from our diocese attended the Jubilee, it was a once in a lifetime experience and I highly recommend everyone experience a trip/pilgrimage like that at some point in your lives. If anyone is interested in getting a group of deacons and spouses together and serving as the coordinator/liaison with a travel company to make a trip like this feel free to run with it. Alternatively, you can certainly contact a travel company of your choosing and make reservations individually.



Priests, Deacons, and wives are invited to a joyful Advent Celebration hosted by the Deacon Class of 2028 as we prepare our hearts for Christmas. Join us on Saturday, December 14, 2024, at 12:00 p.m. in the Undercroft of the Cathedral of St. Peter. We'll begin with Midday Prayer and the Angelus, followed by a delicious dinner and festive social gathering. Music will be provided by the 5:00 p.m. Sunday Evening Cathedral musicians, for a sing-a-long and festive songs.

This is the December formation session for the candidates and will allow them to take a break from scripture study for a little celebration. A freewill offering is asked but not required. Please contact Martina, at the vocation office. Her email is [mskorch@diobelle.org](mailto:mskorch@diobelle.org)

### Memorial Mass for Archbishop Keleher

The Diocese of Belleville will host a Memorial Mass for Archbishop Emeritus James P. Keleher who died on November 9. Archbishop Keleher served as the sixth Bishop of Belleville (1984-1993). Bishop McGovern will offer Mass at 12:10 PM on Wednesday, December 11, in the Cathedral of St. Peter, 200 W. Harrison Street, Belleville, IL. Everyone is invited to pray together for the repose of Archbishop Keleher's soul.



#### PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR SEMINARIANS AND DEACON ASPIRANTS

SEMINARIANS	DEACON ASPIRANTS - BELLEVILLE/SPRINGFIELD CAPE	
Deacon Levi James	Tom Braun & Betsy Amoroso	Timothy & Joan Taylor
Mr. Casmir Cozzi	James & Chelsea Burris	Gary & Dorothy Zwilling
Mr. Terry Marmion	Jeffrey & Jennifer Craig	Brian & Barbara Bauknecht
Mr. Greg Kassen	Nathan & Carrie Higgerson	Bob & Lori Janota
Mr. Kyle Kellerman	Douglas & Cynthia Kuhl	Jim & Holly McCleary
	Matthew & Angela Lees	Brad & Emily Stroder
	Andy & Cheryl Orlet	Ron & Linda Yates
	William & Judith Rebholz	

#### Ordained Deacons & Wives Contact: Martina (722-5043)

Date	Day	Seminar Topic	Presenter
Sep-24	14th	Belleville Church History	Msgr. Flach
Oct-24	12th	Springfield - Cape Church History	Dn. Vaughn
Nov-24	9th	Intro to the Lectionary and Ordo	Fr. Godfrey
Dec-24	14th	Candidates & Deacon's Gathering	TBD
Jan-25	11th	Intro to the Roman Missal	Fr. Godfrey
Feb-25	15th	Prison Ministry	Dn. David Mills
Mar-25	15th	Ministry to the Sick & Aged	Fr. Neff
Apr-25	12th	Intro to the Deacon at the Mass	Fr. Godfrey
May-25	10th	Deacon & Proclamation of the Word	Msgr. Myler
Jun-25	14th	Deacon & Leading Marian Devotion	Msgr. Myler

Date	Days	Course Title	Lecturer
Sep 2024	13-15	Church History	Dcn. Patrick Donahue
Oct 2024	11-13	Church History	Dcn. Patrick Donahue
Nov 2024	8-10	Intro to Scripture	Kevin Perrotta
Dec 2024	13-15	Intro to Scripture	Kevin Perrotta
Jan 2025	10-12	Ministry of Deacon	Dcn. John McGregor
Feb 2025	14-16	Fundamental Theology	Brad Peper
Mar 2025	14-16	Fundamental Theology	Brad Peper
Apr 2025	11-13	Old Testament	Dcn. Anthony Cassaneto
May 2025	9-11	Old Testament	Dcn. Anthony Cassaneto
Jun 2025	13-15	Spirituality	NOT ASSIGNED

### WHAT IS THE CLASS OF 2028 DOING?

By: Candidate Jeffrey and Jennifer Craig



Peace be with you my brothers and sisters. The November Deacon Formation was a full weekend with our next class being Introduction to Scripture. The course introduced the Church's approach to Scripture along with tools presented in Dei Verbum and other methods to help interpret biblical text. Through in-class exercises looking at verses, we are working on our approach to reading the Bible and interpreting Scripture. This class has been rewarding with discovering different methods for Scripture to see how it goes with our Catholic traditions.

On Saturday afternoon Father Godfrey Mullen, OSB, joined us. Father Godfrey spoke to the formation group about Ordo and a General Introduction to the Lectionary. Father Godfrey gave several examples of lectionaries to use and why and he answered several questions.

We attended Mass at Saint Peter's Cathedral in Belleville. The Mass included The Rite of Admission to Candidacy. Ten gentlemen were accepted into the Rite of Candidacy by Bishop Michael McGovern. After Mass, our families joined us for dinner along with the Bishop to celebrate this achievement. I would like to thank everyone who attended the Mass for the Rite of Candidacy and thank all those who have been praying for us in the Diaconate.

I am grateful and humbled by the support that has been given to us. Next month we will continue with another session of Introduction to Scripture. Thank you again for all the prayers and support during our time in formation. God Bless.

### MESSAGE FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Reverend Michaelsami Arockiam



Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

The Church's liturgical year begins with the Advent season and ends with the solemnity of Christ Jesus, the king of the universe; we have just begun the new liturgical year in which we cannot but look at ourselves as God's new creation. The celebration of the Advent season calls us – those who are made "new creation" in Christ (Gal.6:15) by baptism – increasingly become and function as "God's advent people" in our world: as God's new creation, we are to present, advocate and advance the new creation.

Historically the first of the new creation is the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception; the new creation began with her! Thus the Lord God of Israel predestined her to become the Virgin Mother of His only Son and to become the Mother of "the new creation" – His One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church whom the Holy Spirit orients eschatologically to be and to become what it really is, i.e., the new creation.

The Church celebrates the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in the beginning of the Advent season, calling us to gaze on her, "the first of new creation!" While gazing, we should recognize her cooperation and oneness with her Son in his personal life with His Father in his human nature, and also her cooperation and oneness with her Son's supreme sacrifice on the cross to establish His Father's promised "new creation;" and finally, the logical and eschatological outcome of her being the new creation, i.e., her assumption, body and soul, into heaven to be at the right hand of her Son. While gazing, may we learn from her how to progress in oneness with Christ Jesus in his high Priestly life! May we learn from her how to labor with Christ Jesus, the High Priest, in His high priestly ministry of His Word and Sacraments, which established and is sustaining "the new creation."

*I take this opportunity to wish all of you a Happy Christmas. May Mary our Mother pray and obtain for us all the divine help necessary in our being "God's new creation" and "God's advent people." God bless.*

You are Invited to an

# Advent Celebration

Hosted by the Deacon Class of 2028

Saturday, December 14th  
12 PM

Cathedral of St. Peter Undercroft

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Join us for a joyous gathering,  
beginning with midday prayer, followed by  
dinner and a social gathering

Please RSVP to Martina Skorch by 12/6  
at [mskorch@diobelle.org](mailto:mskorch@diobelle.org)

A free will offering is appreciated, but not required