

# THE *Belleville Deacon*

OFFICE OF VOCATIONS | DIACONATE FORMATION | DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE



## JUBILEE 2025 PILGRIMS OF HOPE

On May 9, 2024, Pope Francis issued "SPES NON CONFUNDIT" (Hope does not disappoint), Bull of Induction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025. The Jubilee Year of Hope began on December 24, 2024, with the opening of the Holy Door at the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome, and continues until the closing of the Jubilee Year on January 6, 2026. The Jubilee has always been an event of great spiritual, ecclesial, and social significance in the life of the Church. Hope is the central message of the coming Jubilee that, in accordance with an ancient tradition, the Pope proclaims every twenty-five years. Throughout the Church's history, Jubilee Years have been enriched by three signs which attest to the mercy of God, the redemption by Christ, and which foster the faith and devotion of the Christian people: Pilgrimage, The Holy Door, Jubilee Indulgence.

### Bishop Michael McGovern

618-277-8181  
bmcgovern@diobelle.org

### Vicars General

Very Reverend Steven L. Beatty, V.G.  
618-277-8181, Ext. 1061  
sbeatty@diobelle.org

Very Reverend Paul R. Wienhoff, J.C.L., V.G.  
paulwienhoff@sjandcc.org  
(618) 632-7614

### Director of Permanent Deacon Formation

Reverend Steven Pautler  
Parish phone: 618-532-6291, Ext. 307  
spautler@diobelle.org

### Assistant Director of Permanent Deacon Formation

Reverend Michael Arockiam  
618-233-2391  
misar5613@gmail.com

### Coordinator of Deacons

Deacon Thomas J. Helfrich  
618-722-5042  
thelfrich@diobelle.org

### Administrative Assistant, Office of Vocations & Deacon Formation

Martina Skorch  
618-722-5043  
mskorch@diobelle.org

**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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### MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF DEACON FORMATION. Reverend Steven Pautler



February has arrived, and although this is being written in January—before we learn whether our furry friend the groundhog has spied his shadow—one thing remains certain: the warmth and light of Christ never waver, regardless of any seasonal prediction.

The Class of 2028 continues its formation journey, and I would like to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to those who have provided valuable technical support. Their dedication in facilitating live streaming and Zoom connections has been especially helpful during severe weather conditions and for candidates who are undergoing medical treatments or procedures. Such accommodations ensure that our formation process remains consistent and inclusive, allowing everyone to participate fully.

Looking ahead, we anticipate beginning our inquiry stage in late 2026. In the meantime, there has been growing interest in creating small prayer groups that bring together deacons, spouses, current candidates, and other parishioners who feel called to explore or support vocations. These groups will serve as a space for shared reflection and community-building, affirming that discernment is a process grounded in prayer, conversation, and the collective wisdom of the faithful. Over the next few months, we plan to share more details about these prayer gatherings, including times and locations. For 2025, our hope is to coordinate with the Diocese's Jubilee Pilgrimage Churches, thereby weaving these prayer experiences into the broader spiritual life of the diocese.

I will soon be meeting with Bishop McGovern to outline potential seminars for the Deacon Formation Weekend during the academic year 2026. Should you have any ideas or specific requests for topics, please feel free to email me. These seminars

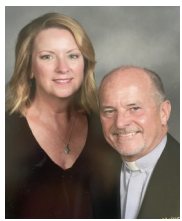
have proven to be a wonderful opportunity for deacons to deepen their knowledge of theology, liturgy, and pastoral care, as well as to enhance their understanding of how best to serve our parish communities. By continually supporting one another in these formative pursuits, we ensure that the vocation of diaconate remains vibrant, prayerful, and responsive to the needs of God's people.

This month, during the Class of 2028 formation weekend, Deacon David Mills will lead a powerful and transformative seminar on Prison Ministry—a ministry that lies at the very heart of the diaconate. To bring the Word of God, the Sacraments, and the power of prayer to those behind bars is not just an act of charity; it is an encounter with Christ Himself, who reminds us: "I was in prison, and you visited me" (Mt 25:36).

For many deacons, this ministry is a milestone in their formation, a moment when they step beyond their comfort zones and into a world longing for hope, healing, and redemption. Across Southern Illinois, many of our deacons are already engaged in this life-changing work, serving in maximum-security facilities like Menard Correctional Center; medium-security prisons such as Big Muddy River, Centralia, Pinckneyville, and Shawnee Correctional Centers; and minimum-security institutions including Southwestern Illinois and Vienna Correctional Centers. The need is urgent and profound.

This ministry is not about judgment, but about mercy; not about condemnation, but about conversion. It is about bringing light into the darkest of places, where men hunger for forgiveness, dignity, and a second chance in the eyes of God. I strongly urge deacons, candidates, and all who feel called to serve to consider this sacred and rewarding mission. Your presence, your prayers, and your witness can change lives—including your own.

Finally, I invite each of you to remain steadfast in prayer for our candidates, for the success of our formation programs, and for those who may be discerning a call to serve. Together, we can nurture the seeds of vocation and help them flourish.



**MESSAGE FROM THE  
COORDINATOR OF  
DEACONS**

**Deacon Tom and Dawn Helfrich**

In past issues we introduced the Jubilee Year of Hope, this month here's a brief summary of opportunities in our diocese during this Jubilee Year.

On January 12 Bishop McGovern issued his Decree for the Jubilee Year which established Jubilee Pilgrimage Sites in each of our vicariates for pious pilgrimages you can make. All the faithful in our diocese, Pilgrims of Hope, are invited to make pious pilgrimages to one or more of these local Jubilee Pilgrimage Sites to receive the Jubilee Indulgence (provided you fulfill all the other requirements for the indulgence). For the faithful who cannot participate in various solemn celebrations, or make pious pilgrimages for serious reasons, there are ways that they too can obtain the Jubilee Indulgence. All the details regarding opportunities in our diocese during this Jubilee Year, where to go, what to do, what is the Jubilee Indulgence, how to obtain the Jubilee Indulgence, etc. etc. can be found here:

<https://www.diobelle.org/news/2433-jubilee-2025>

or use the QR code. If it has not already been done be sure to get this information out to your parishioners.



**Jesus, Dead and Risen, Jesus Living in the Church: Preaching the Paschal Mystery. June 16-18, 2025 | Marten Conference on Catholic Preaching: University of Notre Dame.**



The 2025 Marten Conference on Catholic Preaching will explore the Paschal Mystery—Jesus, dead and risen—as both the heart of our preaching and the foundation of our praying,

reading, and proclaiming the Scriptures. Inspired by the work of theologian Louis Bouyer, this eighth installment in the conference series will take place from June 16-18, 2025, at the University of Notre Dame. The conference welcomes priests, deacons, seminarians, candidates, homiletics teachers, and all who are passionate about the art of preaching.

Keynote speakers include Bishop Joseph Perry, Hans Boersma, Karla Bellinger, Robert Imbelli, and Sergius Halvorsen. In addition to plenary sessions, smaller breakout discussions will feature a variety of scholars and practitioners, covering a broad range of homiletic topics. Registration includes conference materials, receptions, and five meals. General Attendee: before May 1st Early Bird \$300. After May 1st \$350. To register, visit this link: <https://event.me/4lqbNw> For questions about registration or lodging, contact UOES at 574-631-6691.

<https://theology.nd.edu/>

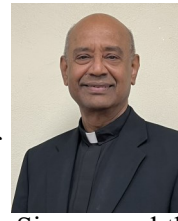
**Save the Dates:  
Key Events for Deacons**

**Formation Meetings with Bishop McGovern (Deacons only) Attire: (grey shirt, vest, rabat, etc.)**  
**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**

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

Date	Day	Seminar Topic	Presenter
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



**MESSAGE FROM THE  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

**Rev. Michaelsami Arockiam**

This year, the Presentation of the Lord is celebrated on a Sunday—the Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time—on February 2. The presentation of the child Jesus in the temple, the encounter between Simeon and the Holy Family, his embrace of the infant, his words of blessing (Nunc Dimittis), his prophecy about the infant and his mother, and the encounter between the Holy Family and Anna are all subjects of reflection on this feast day.

Simeon's prophecy to Mother Mary—that “a sword will pierce your own soul too”—must have brought both sadness and anxiety as she proudly brought her child for the presentation and redemption (Ex. 13:2, 12, 15). Such a prophecy of sorrow and suffering seemed uncalled for on such a joyous occasion! Yet, it was the will of God that she receive this prophecy and begin to experience sorrow. Had God hidden the sword from her, Mary would have been able to enjoy the presence of her Son without anxiety or fear for nearly 33 years until Calvary. But that was not the case. A sword continually pierced her heart, even as she did not know exactly when the ultimate sorrow would come.

Her sorrow cannot be confined to the popular “Seven Sorrows” of Mary, though these preserve her share of the Cross in Tradition. Rather, she carried sorrow in her heart always. Do you think there were no conversations between Jesus and his mother about her suffering? How did Jesus explain the prophecy and her sorrow? It was the will of God that Mother Mary should endure this sorrow almost from the very beginning of Jesus' life, imitating her own Son in his “emptying” for our salvation from the moment of his incarnation.

We must recognize that Mary's vocation as the Mother of God was not complete without her lifelong sorrow. This realization leads us to reflect on our own lives: our small and great sacrifices bring fulfillment to our own vocations and ministries.



**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. Casimir 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 Rebolz	

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





## Workshops for Deacon Wives during Formation Weekends.

By Michelle Miskell, Religion Instructor/Faith Formation Coordinator, Gibault CHS, and wife of Deacon David Miskell

We are thrilled to share that our previous workshop was a resounding success, and we're excited to build on that momentum with a new series of sessions designed especially for the wives of men preparing for the diaconate. Wives of already ordained deacons are also warmly invited to join. These workshops will provide spiritual, emotional, and practical guidance, offering the support you need to walk confidently alongside your spouse on this transformative journey.

We encourage all deacons' wives to get involved and make the most of this valuable opportunity. The workshops take place on the second Saturday of each month in the Undercroft, beginning at 1:00 p.m. and concluding by 3:00 p.m. We look forward to seeing you there!

**Upcoming Sessions: 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

**Gather in the Cathedral Undercroft**

**February 15 – Session 2**

Women's Workshop Topic: Practical Considerations in Diaconate Ministry

**May 10 – Session 3**

Topic: Subject to be determined.

We're also working to form a team of deacon wives to strengthen this supportive community. If you are aware of wives who might be interested, or if you would like to assist please contact Michelle Miskell:

[mmiskell@gibaulthawks.com](mailto:mmiskell@gibaulthawks.com)

618-939-3883

Cell: 618-407-2415

We're truly excited about the upcoming programs and the blessings they will bring to everyone involved. We encourage the participation of the deacon class of 2028, as these seminars promise to be both insightful and supportive. Each session will provide valuable insights and opportunities for discussion, so mark your calendars!

## WHAT IS THE CLASS OF 2028 DOING?

By Deacon Candidate Doug and Cindy Kuhl

Last month our class was instructed on the Ministry and Life of the permanent Deacon. This course covered the development of the role of the deacon in the early Church, an introduction to the principles of the reinstitution of the diaconate as well as, the spiritual, theological and ministerial life of permanent deacons in the Church today. We were honored to have instructor Deacon John McGregor and his wife Kelly from Mississippi, who traveled in some very inclement weather to be with us. He is truly a very knowledgeable and humble servant of God. Our class traveled to St. Augustine of Canterbury Church in Belleville to celebrate Saturday evening mass. A special thanks to Fr. Bill McGhee and Deacon James Laws for their warm welcome along with their encouragement and prayers.

In addition to academic learning, the class has engaged in spiritual formation activities that emphasize prayer and reflection. These workshops have provided opportunities for personal growth and an enhanced understanding of our vocation. The support of our families, particularly our wives, have been invaluable during this journey as we navigate the challenges of everyday life and joys of formation together.

We understand that the journey of the Diaconate Class of 2028 is not alone. We have the guidance of experienced clergy and current deacons, who share their experiences with us monthly. This mentorship provides a valuable perspective on the realities of diaconal ministry and helps us as candidates to better understand the expectations and responsibilities that await us. Additionally, regular meetings with our spiritual directors ensure that we are receiving the support that we need to thrive both personally and spiritually throughout our formation.

We would like to extend our gratitude to Bishop Michael McGovern for his many visits and the encouragement he has provided during our classes of formation. His presence and support has been a source of inspiration for all of us. His guidance has not only enriched our learning experience but has also strengthened our commitment to our faith and community. We are truly grateful for his leadership and support.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Michelle Miskell for all that she does for our wives. Her dedication, support, and thoughtful guidance has helped in our journey. The resources and opportunities she provides have not only deepened our understanding of our roles, but has also fostered a strong sense of community among us. Many thanks for her commitment and for being such a wonderful source of encouragement. We truly appreciate everything she does for us as a group.

We humbly ask that you remember us in your prayers. We are filled with joy and humility as we move forward in our life of service to the Church.

Some of you were looking forward to the next formation class beginning soon; however, the inquiry process has been delayed until late 2026. If you are seriously discerning your vocation, you're invited to audit with the Deacon Class of 2028 during their formation weekends. No textbooks are required, and there is no charge, but space is limited. If you'd like to attend, please contact the Vocation Office and speak with Martina so she can get you registered.



## Still Time To Register for the "Listen Up!" workshop at St. Meinrad.

Deacon candidates—single or married—and their wives are invited to the "Listen Up!" Preaching Workshop for Permanent Deacons, February 14–16 at St. Meinrad Archabbey with Fr. Jeff and Dr. Schuhmann. The weekend kicks off with a special Valentine dinner, introducing the Flag Page exercise to enhance self-awareness in preaching and strengthen marriages (single deacons will also gain valuable insights). Saturday focuses on refining preaching styles, exploring "Good Friday as Jesus's Valentine," and offering strategies for wives to support their husbands' ministries. Sunday concludes with final preparations for Holy Week. The cost is \$410 for singles or \$595 for couples, covering accommodations, meals, and the Flag Page fee; you'll receive a link to complete the Flag Page after registering. Don't miss this chance to grow in both your ministry and personal life—register at:

<https://www.saintmeinrad.edu/permanent-deacons/preaching-workshop-registration/?eventid=15361>.

## Deacons and spouses are invited to join the Class of 2028 for meals and the seminar.

Deacons and spouses are invited to join the candidates for lunch and social. Deacons and their spouses can attend at 12:00 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. on formation Saturdays—held the 2nd full weekend of each month—to build relationships, share experiences, and foster spiritual growth. If you'd like to participate in February Formation, please contact Martina at 618-722-5043; a \$20 donation is suggested, but not required. This month features Deacon David Mills, presenting "prison ministry," offering both candidates and experienced deacons a clearer understanding of service to those in prison.



## Annual Preaching Conference, Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology.

Deacon Arthur Hampton  
Holy Trinity and St. Stephen Parishes

This year's theme at Sacred Heart Seminary School of Theology was titled "Know Your Audience: Who's in Your Pews?" I thought this was one of the best conferences I have attended. I haven't been to a bad one, but this was outstanding.

Our first session was presented by Fr. Mark Mastin, SCJ, on "The Lakota and Dakota Indians Teach and Preach to Me." Fr. Mastin talked about how he had to immerse himself in the culture to understand and be able to preach to them.

He had to go through trials and tribulations of his own to be welcomed into their culture. They are part of the Great Sioux Nation in the United States. It was wonderful to hear about life in these tribes. Nicholas Black Elk is a Native American who is in the process of being canonized as a saint in the Catholic Church.

### Session II

Deacon Anton Nicholai spoke to us on the topic "From the Ambo: Preaching in Multi-Parish Assignments." He is a deacon to four parishes. In his lecture, he explained how he had to learn the differences in each parish to preach an effective message. Knowing where your parishioners are in life—culture, work, etc.—is key to preaching in multiple parishes. One community was made up of farmers, another of career professionals, and so on. He emphasized the importance of preaching the same homily at all four parishes but tweaking it to meet the spiritual needs of each community.

### Session III

Deacon Steve Kramer and his daughter, Jana Kramer, RN, CHPN, presented a lecture on "Preaching a Message of Hope: Homiletic Ideas for Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Facilities, and Hospital Chapel Settings." This was the second time that Jana had joined Steve in a presentation.

They spoke about not only preaching but also being present for both the living and the dying—being there in the good times as a friendly face and a person of faith-filled hope, and being there in times of transition for both the individuals and their family members.

### Session IV

Deacon Jim Matthias presented "Bringing the Gospel Behind Bars." I must say I was captivated by his presentation. I have attended many lectures asking for help in prison ministry, but I have never (I'm ashamed to say) had an interest in it. After his presentation, I felt there might be an interest growing within me for further thought. However, I still have not fully opened myself to this ministry. If you are interested in prison ministry, I highly recommend speaking with Deacon Matthias.

### Session V

Fr. (Paul) Phong Hoang and Fr. Craig Richter, both SCJs, presented "Preaching the Word of God in Multiple Languages." They each serve eight parishes—Fr. Hoang in Mississippi and Fr. Richter in Wisconsin. It was amazing to hear that several of their parishes are Spanish-speaking and how they embrace these communities.

Fr. Hoang, originally from Vietnam, shared his experiences of preaching in Spanish. He admitted that many times, people laughed because he accidentally turned words around or misspoke. He welcomed their loving critiques and saw them as an opportunity for growth.

I highly recommend this Preaching Conference not only for continuing education points but also for the diversity of priests, deacons, and laypeople who attend. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet others in the Catholic faith, talk about their ministries, and journey together in faith.




## Spiritual Direction Available Third Monday of Each Month 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. St. Mary Parish, Mount Vernon, IL.

Father Tom Esselman, C.M., will be available to assist priests and deacons seeking spiritual direction at St. Mary Immaculate Conception Parish, located at 1550 Main Street, Mount Vernon, Illinois 62864. He will be available from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. every third Monday of each month, beginning in February.


Ordained for 44 years, Father Tom has found spiritual direction to be an essential part of his life and ministry. It offers a sacred opportunity to reflect on one's relationship with God and how it influences every aspect of life, including ministry.

Father Tom is pleased 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 navigate parish-related matters, he is more than happy to assist. Following Saint Vincent's call to support diocesan priests, he considers it a privilege to accompany you in your ministry. Contact Father Tom if you would like to meet in the Metro East.


To schedule an appointment with Father Tom, please contact him at: **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



## 2025 Jubilee Pilgrimage Sites



Diocese of Belleville



METRO-EAST VICARIATE			
Cathedral of St. Peter	200 W. Harrison St. Belleville, IL 62220 618-234-1166	cathedralbelle.org	
Log Cabin Chapel Holy Family	116 Church Street Cahokia Heights, IL 62206 618-337-4548	holymfamily1966.org	
Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Mercy	300 N. 60th Street Belleville, IL 62223 618-235-4407	poor-clares-belleville.info	
National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows	442 S. Demazenod Dr. Belleville, IL 62223 618-397-6700	snows.org	
WEST VICARIATE			
Mary Help of Christians	911 Swanwick Chester, IL 62233 618-826-2444	stjoespdr.org	
NORTH CENTRAL VICARIATE			
Mary the Immaculate Conception	1550 Main St. Mt. Vernon, IL 62864 618-244-1559	stmarymtvernon.org	
St. George	200 N. Third St. New Baden, IL 62265 618-588-4323	stgeorgenevbaden.org	
St. Cecilia	304 S. Washington St. Bartelso, IL 62218 618-765-2165	stbonifacechurch.net	
EAST VICARIATE			
St. Mary	125 W. 5th St. Mt. Carmel, IL 62863 618-262-5337	stmarysparish.net	
Holy Cross	5782 Ingraham Ln. Newton, IL 62448 618-752-5671	holycrosswendelin.com	
SOUTH VICARIATE			
St. Joseph	600 N. Russell St. Marion, IL 62959 618-993-3194	stjoseph-stpaul.com	