

THE Belleville Deacon

OFFICE OF VOCATIONS | DIACONATE FORMATION | DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE



JUBILEE 2025 PILGRIMS OF HOPE

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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**

"The Belleville Deacon" is published electronically (monthly) by the Office of Permanent Deacon Formation, Diocese of Belleville, 222 South Third Street, Belleville, IL 62220



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF DEACON FORMATION.

Reverend Steven Pautler

Many of you have been asking, "Where is my *March Belleville Deacon*?"

I offer my apologies for missing the deadline. I customarily take the week before Ash Wednesday to get away, and this year I went on a much-needed vacation, which happened to overlap with the end of February. Thank you for your patience and understanding—it's good to step back once in a while, even if it means juggling a few deadlines.

So... how's your Lent going? Are you managing to live up to those promises you made—to God and to yourself—about heading into the desert of your soul, seeking deeper peace, and cutting back on life's everyday distractions? (No pressure, but if you realize that "desert" is starting to resemble a crowded highway, rest assured you're not alone on this path!)

As we continue our Lenten journey, I'm keenly aware that our first-year Candidate Formation program is nearly complete. This spring, the candidates are tackling some of the more challenging topics in diaconal formation—Fundamental Theology and Old Testament. I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to the presenters who are sharing their expertise. The candidates (and the deacons who attend) have offered wonderful feedback, which speaks volumes about the quality of instruction they're receiving.

Lastly, remember that as "Pilgrims of Hope," we journey in the footsteps of the earliest disciples, who walked alongside Jesus, learning from Him day by day. During this Lenten season, every new insight—whether born of theology, prayer, or simple acts of service—brings us that much closer to our Lord. Let us embrace the joys and struggles of each day, trusting that God's grace will guide us toward deeper compassion, authentic humility, and spiritual renewal. And don't forget: a little humor goes a long way! Laughter reminds us that

God's mercy is endless and that He meets us where we are—no matter how crowded or quiet our desert may be. God bless you and keep you strong in your Lenten commitments!



CHRISM MASS: APRIL 15TH. CATHEDRAL OF ST. PETER

On Tuesday of Holy Week, April 15, 2025, the Chrism Mass will be celebrated at 11:30 AM at the Cathedral of St. Peter. During this special liturgy, the bishop, along with priests, deacons, confirmandi, and the faithful, will gather to consecrate the Sacred Chrism and bless the Oils of Catechumens and the Sick for use throughout the Diocese in the coming year. All priests are invited to concelebrate, and deacons, along with their wives and families, are warmly welcomed. Religious, the faithful preparing for the Easter Vigil, and candidates for Confirmation are also encouraged to attend.

Each parish or partnership may send two representatives to collect the holy oils, and priests and deacons may also take oil home. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available from 10:00–11:15 AM in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Vesting begins at 11:00 AM in the Undercroft; priests should wear Diocesan vestments, and only deacons assisting at the Mass will vest.

All other deacons, and candidates are invited to join their families, parish communities, or confirmandi in the pews. Please keep the bishop in your prayers this Lent, as he assures you of his own.



Ordination to the Sacred Order of Priests.

Please mark your calendar for Saturday, June 7 at 10:00 AM at the Cathedral of St. Peter, which is being held as the date for the priestly ordination. Further details will be provided by the Office of the Bishop.

All deacon candidates are especially encouraged to attend this celebration, as it offers a meaningful opportunity to witness the call to priesthood and deepen their own discernment of the Diaconate and Priesthood.

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

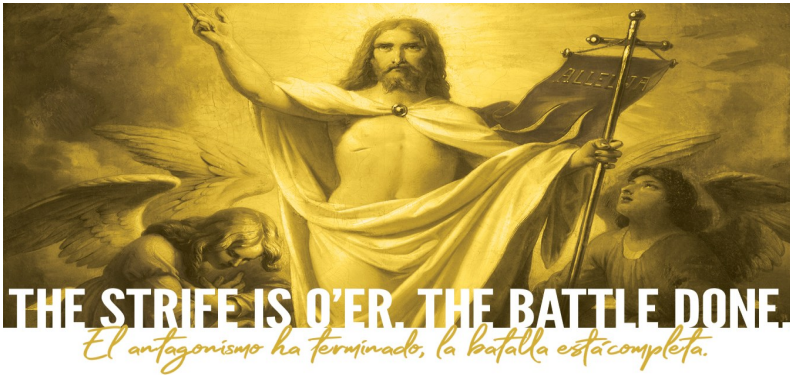
Annual Retreat for Deacons and their Spouses September 26-28, 2025 Location: St. Meinrad Archabbey



MESSAGE FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Rev. Michaelsami Arockiam

The second Sunday of the holy season of Lent always presents the gospel of Transfiguration. The authors of the synoptic gospels provide their accounts. St. Mark provides his account of Transfiguration this year. Transfiguration is truly purposeful: at the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appear and speak to Jesus; among the Old Testament figures these two alone were blessed with an encounter with Him on Mt. Sinai. These two gave witness to the eternal divinity that belongs to the Son. The Father declares Jesus as “His Son.” Peter and the apostles have the confirmation that Jesus, whom Peter proclaimed as “the Christ” (Mk.8:27-30), is the Beloved Son of the Lord God of Israel and the confirmation is given to them now when he is in His divine form. Thus they are given personal perception, experience and knowledge of His divinity so that they will also come to grasp, understand and then give witness to the depth and extent of self emptying of the Son. They would never be able to foresee, imagine

or understand “the self emptiness” of the Son without having this glimpse of his divinity at the Transfiguration. The gospel of transfiguration invites all in the Lenten season, especially us who are called to serve the People of God to align ourselves with the Son who became man not to be served but to serve. Our service to community is fruitful to the extent we have the followed “the self emptying of the Son” in our lives. God bless.



Your Prayers Needed

Seminarians

Deacon Levi James, Mr. Casimir Cozzi, Mr. Terry Marmion, Mr. Greg Kassen, Mr. Kyle Kellerman.

Deacon Candidates Belleville/Springfield Cape

Tom Braun & Betsy Amoroso, James & Chelsea Burris, Jeffrey & Jennifer Craig, Nathan & Carrie Higgerson, Douglas & Cynthia Kuhl, Matthew & Angela Lees, Andy & Cheryl Orlet, William & Judith Rebholz, Timothy & Joan Taylor, Gary & Dorothy Zwilling, Brian & Barbara Bauknecht, Bob & Lori Janota, Jim & Holly McCleary, Brad & Emily Stroder, Ron & Linda Yates.

Prayer for Vocations

Gracious God, You have called us through Baptism to discipleship, believing in your Son, Jesus Christ, who has sent us to bring the Good News of salvation to the world. We pray to you, asking that you grant us more priests and religious who will help us build up your Church in the Diocese of Belleville and the world. Stir up the grace of a religious vocation in the hearts of many of our youth. Grant to them the willingness and generosity to give of themselves in service to our Lord Jesus and His people. May a new generation of priests, deacons, sisters and brothers be a sign of your presence among us. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord, Amen.

Academic Year 2025 - 2026 Course Schedule						
Dates	Course Title	Instructor	Seminar Saturday 1:00 p.m.—3:00 p.m.	Presenter	Wives Seminar	Presenter
March 14 - 16, 2025	Fundamental Theology	Brad Peper	Ministry to the Sick & Aged	Fr. Gene Neff	None Scheduled	TBD
April 11 - 13, 2025	Old Testament	Dcn. Anthony Cassaneto	Introduction to the Deacon at Mass	Fr. Godfrey	None Scheduled	TBD
May 9 - 11, 2025	Old Testament	Dcn. Anthony Cassaneto	Deacon & Proclamation of the Word	Msgr. Myler	TBD	Michelle Miskell
June 13 - 15, 2025	Spirituality	Matt Hilton	Deacon & Leading Marian Devotion	Msgr. Myler	None Scheduled	TBD
September 12 - 14, 2025	Synoptic Gospels & Acts	Fr. Michael Arockiam	Not Yet Scheduled			
October 10 - 12, 2025	Synoptic Gospels & Acts	Fr. Michael Arockiam	Not Yet Scheduled			
November 14 - 16, 2025	Epistles	Fr. Michael Arockiam	Not Yet Scheduled			
December 12 - 14, 2025	Epistles	Fr. Michael Arockiam	Not Yet Scheduled			
January 9 - 11, 2026	Johannine Literature	Fr. Michael Arockiam	Not Yet Scheduled			
February 13 - 15, 2026	Intro to Liturgy	Not yet assigned	Not Yet Scheduled			
March 13 - 15, 2026	Ecclesiology (St. Meinrad)	Not yet assigned	Not Yet Scheduled			
April 10 - 12, 2026	Ecclesiology	Not yet assigned	Not Yet Scheduled			
May 8 - 10, 2026	Sacraments	Not yet assigned	Not Yet Scheduled			
June 12 - 14, 2026	Sacraments	Not yet assigned	Not Yet Scheduled			



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PERMANENT DIACONATE

Deacon Thomas J. and Dawn Helfrich

When you read this we'll be a little past the half way point of Lent. "Lent is an invitation to rearrange your priorities—to focus on what matters most and leave behind what matters least. Lent is the season where the Church prepares for Easter. ... Lent spans 40+ days until Holy Thursday. In the fourth chapter of Matthew, Jesus spends 40 days in the desert, fasting, praying, and preparing for his mission. Lent is your opportunity for that same focus. Lent is your invitation to take your spiritual life seriously. Lent is the perfect time to form life-giving habits and abandon self-destructive habits. Lent is your chance to discover the abundant life Jesus invites us to at Easter.

Take these 40 days to explore God's dream for your life and it will change everything." (Dynamic Catholic) An important part of this is prayer (don't forget about fasting/sacrifice and almsgiving). If your email subscriptions and social media feeds are anything like mine, you have been inundated before and during Lent with requests to buy or subscribe to daily Lenten prayer and reflection aids. I have seen them from the National Eucharistic Revival, Dynamic Catholic, Ascension, Hallow, the Jesuits, Word on Fire, etc. etc.

I seem to recall that most of these resources used to be free, but now many of them require a subscription or require/suggest purchase of a book. Then there are the monthly booklets that are available year round and that many of you, and your parishioners, use regularly - Give us This Day, The Word Among Us, Magnificat, etc. So as we near the end of Lent, and approach Holy Week and Easter, if you, or your parishioners, need help with Lenten prayer I recommend you avail yourselves to one of these resources. There are too many QR codes to include here, so let me know if you have any questions or need any help finding these resources.

WHAT IS THE CLASS OF 2028 DOING?

By Deacon Candidate Matt and Angela Lees

On behalf of the Class of 2028, I want to begin by thanking all of you for your prayers and mentorship as we continue our journey towards ordination. During our February formation weekend, Deacon David Mills and Deacon Gary Mueller taught a seminar on Prison Ministry.

Deacon Mills has been involved in prison ministry for a number of years. "I did not choose prison ministry," Mills stated, "prison ministry chose me." Deacon Mills helps to coordinate the, *Prison Fellowship Academy* where the incarcerated are inspired to lead lives of purpose inside outside of prison. This faith-based approach has proven effective, with less than 1% of graduates reoffending compared to a national rate recidivism rate of 68% according to the Bureau of Justice statistics.

Deacon Gary Mueller is also involved in prison ministry through, *Our Brothers' Keepers* (OBK) a faith-based organization committed to helping the incarcerated transition successfully into society. Mueller explained, "When they get released all they have is the clothes on their back. Our Brother's Keepers provides hygiene kits, transportation, clothes, temporarily housing, literacy, interview skills, and job opportunities." He noted that this assistance has led to a significant reduction in reoffending rates.

The Class of 2028 were inspired not only by the effectiveness of these programs but also by both men's obvious passion. It is clear that prison ministry can change lives. Many left with a new perspective on this sometimes-overlooked service area.

We want to thank both men for sharing their time and wisdom with us and invite the entire Deacon community to continue walk with us on this journey. Your prayers and support for the Deacon

candidates and our families are a source of strength for us. As St. Paul said, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." — **Hebrews 10:24** Together, let's continue to answer the call to serve.

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 April Formation, please contact Martina at 618-722-5043; a \$20 donation is suggested, but not required.



APRIL SEMINAR, SATURDAY, APRIL 12TH.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DEACON

AT THE MASS.

PRESENTED BY FATHER GODFREY O.S.B. V.G.

We are pleased to announce an upcoming seminar tailored for ordained Deacons and Deacon Candidates on Saturday, April 12, 2025, led by Father Godfrey Mullen, O.S.B., V.G., Director of Worship for the Diocese of Belleville. Father Godfrey brings years of liturgical expertise and pastoral experience, making this an excellent opportunity to deepen your understanding of diaconal ministry.

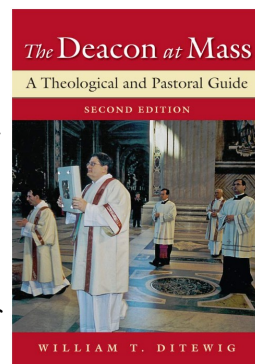
The focus of this introductory session will be the Role of the Deacon at Mass, exploring both the theological foundations and the practical dimensions of diaconal service. Whether you are seeking to enhance your existing knowledge or are just beginning to uncover the rich tradition of the diaconate, you will find valuable insights and guidance in Father Godfrey's presentation.

The seminar will take place at 1:00 p.m. in the Undercroft of the Cathedral of St. Peter. We encourage participants to arrive early, allowing time for fellowship and any necessary registration. If you wish to reserve a meal or need additional details about the schedule, please reach out to Martina, who is overseeing registration and logistics.

This event not only offers a chance to refresh your liturgical responsibilities, but also fosters a spirit of ongoing formation—essential for nurturing a vibrant and effective diaconate. We invite all those involved in diaconal ministry to take part in this seminar and strengthen your commitment to serving.

The Deacon at Mass: A Theological and Pastoral Guide by William T. Ditewig is an invaluable resource for men preparing for the Catholic permanent diaconate. This second edition offers a well-balanced combination of the theological depth and pastoral practicality, making it an essential companion for both formation and ongoing ministry. Ditewig, himself a deacon and theologian, brings a clear and insightful perspective to the unique role of the deacon during the celebration of the Mass. He explains the deacon's liturgical functions in a way that is both respectful of tradition and attuned to the pastoral needs of today's Church.

What sets this book apart is its ability to connect the "why" with the "how" — grounding liturgical actions in the theology of Holy Orders and the Church's mission. It is especially helpful for candidates in formation, offering guidance not only on rubrics and gestures but also on the spirit of service and humility that defines the diaconal vocation. Whether you're just beginning your formation or are already serving as a deacon, this will help to guide your ministry.





**Bring Hope Behind Bars:
Big Muddy Prison urgently
Needs Priests, Deacons
and Lay Ministers.**

Big Muddy River Correctional Center in Jefferson County, Illinois, is a maximum-security state facility located at 251 North Illinois Highway 37, Ina, IL 62846. There is an immediate need for priests, deacons, and even lay ministers who can bring the sacraments to those who are incarcerated—offering hope, spiritual renewal, and a vital connection to the faith community.

This particular need extends beyond Big Muddy River Correctional Center to numerous county, state, and federal prisons throughout southern Illinois, where individuals are seeking guidance, support, and the presence of Christ’s compassion. Such a ministry provides a remarkable opportunity for a Deacon Candidate (or any dedicated volunteer) to make a meaningful impact on the lives of those who hunger for spiritual care. If you feel called to serve in this capacity, please reach out to Deborah Hutson, CMP, MS Ed, Volunteer Services Coordinator II at Big Muddy River Correctional Center, 251 N. Hwy 37, Ina, IL 62846. She can be contacted by phone at 618-437-5300 (ext. 463) or by email at: Deborah.Hutson@Illinois.gov.

**Workshops for
Deacon Wives during
Formation Weekends.**

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

We invite all wives of men currently in diaconate formation—as well as wives of ordained deacons—to join us for our final women’s workshop before Fall formation begins. These special gatherings offer spiritual, emotional, and practical support for walking alongside your spouse in his diaconal journey, and have become a valued space for connection and encouragement. This last session will be held:

Saturday, May 10
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Location: Cathedral Undercroft
Topic: To be determined

We encourage all deacon wives to attend and make the most of this final opportunity before our summer break. Whether you’re just beginning the journey or have walked it for years, your presence is a gift to the community.

As we look ahead to the next formation year, we are also forming a team of deacon wives to help shape future workshops. If you have suggestions or would like to assist in any way, please contact Michelle Miskell:

mmiskell@gibaulthawks.com
Office: 618-939-3883
Cell: 618-407-2415

Let’s finish the year strong and continue growing together in faith and fellowship!




**Father Tom Esselman, C.M.,
available for Spiritual Direction**


Father Tom Esselman, C.M., will be assisting priests and deacons seeking spiritual direction at St. Mary Immaculate Conception Parish in Mount Vernon, located at 1550 Main Street, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on the third Monday of each month. He is also able to meet in various locations throughout the Belleville area for those who cannot travel to St. Mary’s.

Ordained for 44 years, Father Tom considers spiritual direction a vital part of life and ministry—an opportunity to reflect on one’s relationship with God and how it shapes every aspect of life, including service in the Church. He is pleased to offer both spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Even if you already have a spiritual director, but need someone to listen or offer guidance on parish-related matters, Father Tom is honored to serve. Following Saint Vincent’s call to support diocesan priests, he considers it a privilege to accompany you in your ministry.


To schedule an appointment, please reach out to:
Rev. Thomas Esselman, C.M.
1408 S. 10th Street, St. Louis, MO 63104
Email: 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	holyfamly1699.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	stgeorgenewbaden.org	
St. Cecilia	304 S. Washington St. Bartleso, 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	