

# DIAKONOS

*Newsletter for deacons and spouses  
Diocese of Bridgeport*

*Volume 1 Issue 2  
November 26, 2015*

## *Greetings from Bishop Caggiano*

How fortunate we are every year, as a country, to stop and to gather together as families and as people of faith in order to give thanks to God for His countless blessings upon our great nation.

While we give thanks this year for all we have received, may we also remember to be thankful for all that we have been able to give. Certainly, we are grateful for the blessing and gifts the Lord bestows upon us; and yet we should also to be grateful because we are able to give of ourselves and offer our lives to Christ and for the sake of our brothers and sisters.

Both types of thanksgiving have their proper place in our worship of God, but the latter is specifically Christian. It is a form of thanksgiving we only understand because Christ has taught it to us. Before offering His life on the Cross, Jesus gave thanks to the Father and, in doing so, turns His sacrificial death into a proclamation of thanksgiving and love. He invites us intimately to enter into and to share in that form of thanksgiving and that sacrifice through the Eucharist, the ultimate act of thanksgiving and praise by which we become more like Christ and more self-giving.

St. Paul expresses this mystery when he reminds us that dedication to thankfulness is directly related to living out the Christian virtues that require self sacrifice: mercy,

kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bound together and made perfect through love (cf. Col. 3:12-14). Furthermore, the Collect of the Mass for Thanksgiving Day provided to us by the Church reminds us of precisely of this truth. It asks God the Father that “as we come before you on Thanksgiving Day with gratitude for your kindness, open our hearts to have concern for every man, woman and child, so that we may share your gifts in loving service.”

I am grateful to God for you my dear brother deacons, and I extend that gratitude also to your wives and families. You are a gift to me, to the priests and to the parishes and various ministries of the Diocese of Bridgeport, and your very life of service, of *diakonia*, remind us that we are all called to give thanks to God for His manifold gifts and also for the gift of being able to serve one another.

Best wishes for a Blessed and Joyful Thanksgiving Holiday!

### *From the Director's Desk*

As I sit at my desk, I started to think how quickly this year is passing. Soon it will be the Thanksgiving holiday. Of course, the natural question comes to mind--Where did this year go?

For me and my family, this will be our first Thanksgiving holiday in New England. I am looking forward to the excitement that the holiday and Christmas seasons bring to families and communities. I recall some famous people who left us with several memorable quotes about giving thanks. Cicero, for example, once said, "Gratitude is not only the greatest virtue, but the parent of all others." Some generations later in another part of the world, William Shakespeare spoke these famous words, "O Lord that lends me life, lend me a heart replete with thankfulness." Finally, one of our own, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, assassinated some 48 years ago, reminded us, "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." These men lived in different eras, in different worlds, yet all shared a world that was under attack by political corruption, and war. The world was a dangerous place. If you lived by your convictions (be they philosophical, literary, or political), you placed your career and possibly your life on the line.

The world around us today is likewise under attack by wars, disease, global economic insecurity, and by an enemy that is determined to destroy the very foundation of our free society. Within our country, we have a high unemployment, millions of people starving, the breakdown of family life, prisons filled to capacity, manufacturing at its lowest production level, educational deficiencies in mathematics and science, economic debt that our children will be paying, and a fundamental

mis-understanding of marriage. However terrible this may sound, it should not provoke us to roll over and die. Rather, we have a challenge that should move and shake us to action. We best do this by our example and by animating and facilitating all baptized Christians to bring the message of the gospel to the marketplace every day.

We have an awesome responsibility. Let us go forth with courage as we will soon begin the liturgical season of preparation for the Lord's coming among us. As we quickly approach the Thanksgiving holiday, let us be aware that day we set aside to give thanks is not the only day of thanksgiving but one that gives us time to pause and reflect on the words of JFK, "let us never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

God bless. Happy Thanksgiving!!!!  
Deacon Anthony Cassaneto



WE THANK GOD FOR ALL THE BLESSINGS AND GIFTS THAT HE HAS EVER GIVEN US BEGINNING WITH THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFT OF ALL – OUR FAITH.

## Sharing Your Pastoral Story



If you would like to share your special or favorite ministry with the community, please inform us about what you are doing, with whom, when, where, how, and comment on how this outreach or ministry has greatly affected you and your community. We love to hear from you!

### Prayer for Those Serving in the Military



O Prince of Peace, we humbly ask your protection for all our men and women in military service. Give them unflinching courage to defend with honor, dignity and devotion the rights of all who are imperiled by injustice and evil. Guard our churches, our homes, our schools, our hospitals, our factories, our buildings and all those within, from harm and peril. Protect our land and its peoples from enemies within and without. Grant an early peace with victory founded upon justice. Instill in the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere a firm purpose to live forever in peace and good will toward all. Amen

Queen of the Holy Rosary, we implore you to bless our military forces at home and abroad. Guide their steps into the way of peace. Amen.



## In Memoriam

<u>October</u>	<u>Deacon/Anniversary Year</u>
12	Michael Wolfer/2013
28	John Kucera/2007
<u>November</u>	
3	Thomas P. Freibott/2002
26	Joseph Rowan/2013
27	John Barton/2012
28	Wayne Malloy/2011
<u>December</u>	
1	Robert W. Becker/2000
7	George I. Saulnier/1997



*Please remember the following in your prayers*

*All the deacons and wives who are seeking healing and strength from the loving hand of Jesus.*

*All the men and women who serve in our military or who protect us here at home as police officers, fire fighters, medical personnel, etc.*

*We are most grateful to all of them for their vigilance and fortitude. Let us remember them and their loved ones in our daily prayers.*

# Happy Birthday!



*We wish to all a healthy and happy New Year. May the good Lord abundantly bless you and your ministry during the upcoming year.*

## October Birthdays

02 William D. Murphy  
07 Gauthier Vincent  
11 Bill Bissenden  
15 Norman Roos  
20 Robert Blankschen  
21 Don Brunetto  
22 Bill Kurmay  
28 John Mahon

## November Birthdays

02 Bill Koniers  
11 Lance Fredricks  
11 James Volpe  
12 Steve Genovese  
16 Brian Kelly  
18 William O Murphy  
20 Larry Buzzeo  
21 Roland Blier  
22 Thomas Fekete  
23 Thomas McManus  
27 Rey Olavarria  
28 Luis Torres

## December Birthdays

13 Alix Africot  
18 Don Ross  
20 Paul Pilkington  
25 Harold Lynch

*Ad multos annos!!!!*

## DIACONATE OFFICE - HELP NEEDED

I would appreciate hearing from any retired deacon who can assist me either in the morning or for part of the afternoon one day a week. I have a number of documents and correspondence that must be filed as well as administrative tasks that need the attention of a detailed-oriented individual. If you would like to volunteer, may I ask that you call me at (203) 416-1451 at your convenience so that we can arrange a day and time when you can come in to see for yourself what is involved.

## MERCY

*Our brother, Deacon Don Ross, presents the meaning of mercy in his article. How appropriate it is for us to reflect on this "beatitude." The Year of Mercy will begin on December 8<sup>th</sup>.*

What is mercy? Yes, it's the "loving kindness, compassion, or forbearance shown to one who offends"(CCC). True, it's taking another's burdens as one's own. It's not chaining someone to their past. But there's more to the story of mercy. Much more.

So, what *is* mercy? Let's start with the world of 2015. It's a noisy one for sure, but deafeningly silent when it comes to admitting we personally contribute to the noise and the mess the world is in. To paraphrase St. Paul, either we do the things we don't wish to do or do not do what we should because we think ourselves too busy, too stressed, too tired, too.....well, you fill in the blanks. Every one of us has received the silent treatment at times because we ourselves have been silent about our own human weaknesses. Did you ever view a cold shoulder as a sign of your own need for mercy?

I often hear people say "I'm better at giving love than receiving it." It's no

different with mercy. We'll only show it well if we're humble enough to admit we need it, and if we don't receive it well, we deny someone else the opportunity to give it well.

Mercy, like love, has an elusive, mysterious quality about it. We talk about mercy, we know it when we see it and try to imitate what we see without fully taking it to heart. When this happens, it's time for a deeper exploration of the mystery of mercy.

I only recently came to a deeper heart-knowledge of mercy after over 50 years of seriously pondering it, and it took an 11 year old girl and her 20 year old murderer to teach me.

When I was 9 years old, a very kind and patient mother piled a few of us rambunctious 4<sup>th</sup> grade Catholic schoolboys into her '63 Chevy Sedan for an afterschool trip to the Loew's Poli Theatre on Bridgeport's Main Street. When we asked her what movie we would see, she said "be surprised!" We were thinking she meant an outer space movie or some Jetsons cartoons. She had other ideas. When we got to the theater, there was a single name on its marquee: Maria Goretti. When we asked the Mom "Maria who?", she simply answered "you'll see."

In the 2 ½ or so hours spent in that old theater, we didn't get to see astronauts or the Jetson's, but the movie we did see took us to a world we could never imagine. That afternoon, a bunch of rowdy 9 year olds fell in love with a girl almost their own age, the church's youngest canonized saint of mercy, and I've loved her ever since. That afternoon, Maria introduced me to a love of the saints which today is stronger than ever.

St. Maria Goretti was 11 years old when she was murdered during an attempted rape by a 20 year old named Alessandro Serenelli. Maria's father had died when she was 9 years old, and she was left to raise her 5 siblings while her mother Assunta worked fields in Italy. In addition to caring for siblings, Maria had to cook and clean for the

Serenellis, whose mother worked with Maria's in the fields. Alessandro's liking for Maria took a dark turn to lusting for her, and that dark turn cost Maria her life one day when she resisted his advances. On that dark day of her death, Maria's last words were "I forgive Alessandro, and I want him to be with me one day in heaven." Mercy was given, but how was it received?

During his time in prison, Alessandro had an experience of Maria during which he said Maria once again forgave him. From that moment, Alessandro was a changed man.

After his 30 year imprisonment, Alessandro became a lay Franciscan and just before his death in 1970 wrote "having lived with the Franciscans for 24 years, I serenely wait to see God, hug my loved ones, and be united forever with my guardian angel Maria and her mother."

Maria's life teaches us how to show mercy, and Alessandro's shows us how to receive it, and what happens when we do.

Pope Francis' call to mercy in the coming year brought back memories of a black and white movie that first moved me to mercy at an old Main Street Bridgeport movie theater one long ago October afternoon. One October night 52 years later, at the Trumbull end of Bridgeport's Main Street, I oh-too-briefly visited the earthly remains of the star of that old movie at the Church of St. Theresa. There are no coincidences in life, only graced moments such as the one I experienced as I touched my deacon's cross to her relic. Like so many, I have received a miracle of mercy in more deeply taking to heart that it is in learning how to receive mercy we learn how to give it. The very knowledge that we are forgiven by the same God who so mercifully forgave Alessandro through Maria helps us to more generously forgive, and to free others from the prisons of their past as we ourselves have been freed.

Deacon Don Ross

# Happy Anniversary!

*The following deacons are marking a milestone in their diaconal ordination. We congratulate them for their faithful years of service.*

## **35<sup>th</sup> (1980)**

Deacon Renato L. Berzolla

## **30<sup>th</sup> (1985)**

Deacon F. Paul Kurmay

Deacon William J. Shaughnessy

## **25<sup>th</sup> (1990)**

Deacon Vincent J. Heidenreich

Deacon Richard Kovacs

Deacon Paul J. Reilly

Deacon Gerald F. Sabol

Deacon David M. Sochacki

## **20<sup>th</sup> (1995)**

Deacon Henry R. Hein

Deacon William O. Murphy

## **15<sup>th</sup> (2000)**

Deacon Salvatore M. Clarizio

Deacon Dean W. Finch

Deacon Joseph H. Gagne

Deacon Stephen A. Genovese

Deacon Peter J. Kuhn

Deacon Robert W. McLaughlin

Deacon Thomas J. McManus

Deacon Mark T. Shine

Deacon Luis Torres

## **11<sup>th</sup> (2004)**

Deacon Joseph P. DeBiase

Deacon William A. Koniers

Deacon John M. Linsenmeyer

Deacon Robert A. Salvestrini

## **DW MINISTRIES, INC.**

In September 2014 the wives and widows of the men ordained to the Permanent Diaconate in the

Diocese of Bridgeport organized and founded DW Ministries, Inc. This is a non-for-profit organization and is registered with IRS as a 501 C (3), and with the State of Connecticut Department of Public Charities.

Although their main goal is to support its members as needed, another important part of their ministry is to have food collections for local food pantries, and to support *Off the Streets*, a non-for-profit organization that helps the homeless secure housing, and then supports the person or family with furniture and household goods once obtained housing, it is not limited to this. Another important part of the ministry is to collect goods such as food, clothing, school supplies, etc. for the needy in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Membership is open to all wives and widows whose husbands have been ordained. When a class of men is ordained their wives are invited to join DW Ministries. Meetings are held monthly in the Danbury, Bridgeport and Stamford areas.

## **Deacon Wives Outreach**

In August, 2014, I was contacted by Ilene to try to bring together the women in our Deaconate #5 Area. This encompasses the towns of the greater Danbury area...Bethel, Newtown, Sandy Hook, Brookfield, New Fairfield, Ridgefield and Danbury. I sent out invitations to all the women in our area and held a Luncheon in September at the Black Angus Grill in Danbury. About 8 women attended. We used this time to get to know each other better. We discussed what we might do to involve our women and

become better acquainted. One very good idea was to have a monthly meeting. We had our first meeting in October at St. Gregory the Great's Community room. About 6 women came. Many ideas came forth but one which Stefania Naiman offered was the one chosen. She felt we should contact women who were ill, homebound, or widowed. It was decided we would make them "Care Baskets". The items for the Baskets would be received from the women in the Diaconate #5 Vicariate. They would donate all sorts of things amounting to \$10.00. The following meeting in December was held at St. Joseph's in Brookfield, where we assembled 16 baskets. We divided them among ourselves to bring them to the various recipients along with a social visit. Also in November. Father Angelo Arrando, pastor, of St. Gregory the Great Church hosted a Get-To-Gether dinner for our Diaconate 5 Vicariate. We had 28, husbands and wives attend. A great social time was enjoyed by all.

In the Spring of the year 2015. The Diaconate women in the other Vicariates of the Bridgeport Diocese assembled at St. Luke's Church Hall and prepared Spring Baskets for the rest of the Women in the DW Community who were not reached in the Winter Basket visit. Baskets were again distributed to those who were ill, homebound, or widowed. We will again schedule a visitation in December of this year, making gift boxes.

Welcome and God Bless You in your work for our Diocese.

Respectfully submitted by: Patricia(Pat) Murphy of St. Gregory the Great Church, Danbury.

## Deacon Council News

Your Deacon Council has been hard at work for the past year and a half. Our first order of business was to revise and update the Diaconal Constitution which was approved and ratified by Bishop Frank. Our next order of business was to create a comprehensive Deacon Manual, not only for ordained deacons, but to be a resource for men considering entering formation. Our manual is in its final stages of approval and will be ready for circulation after our next Council Meeting on December 1<sup>st</sup> with the Bishop.

We want to acknowledge and thank all the men who served on our manual committee, who worked tirelessly on different aspects of the manual to bring this all together. Don Ross, Vince Heidenreich, Dan Ianniello, Pat Toole, Jeff Font, Tom Masaryk, Peter Kuhn, Lance Fredericks, Reynaldo Olavarria, John Mahon, Gerry Lambert, Bill Koniers, Tim Bolton, Lou Howe.

The work of this committee has set a new standard for collaboration and teamwork for the diaconate. We worked side-by-side with Bishop Frank to create a manual that is informative, and accessible. This manual will have an original print date in 2016, and then will be always available in the cloud for us to access at any time. The plan is to have the manual able to updated annually as needed, creating a virtual manual that will reflect a vibrant ministry to all.



*The Deacons and their wives who attended the Region 1 NADD meeting in Quincy, MA.*

### **Update on Diaconate Formation**

The Aspirants are now in the final phase of their formation. They will be preparing to begin their formal studies at St. Joseph's Seminary January 2016. They will attend classes on Mondays and Wednesdays from 7 to 9:30 pm. Depending upon the educational background of each aspirant, he may elect to pursue a Masters degree in Religious Studies or audit the classes as part of his theological formation. We look forward to our association with St. Joseph's Seminary.

In addition to the courses at St. Joseph's Seminary, those who are in the new Candidacy Program will also have several spiritual, liturgical, and theological course taught here in the diocese by our own diocesan / religious professional.

Prior to the beginning of their formal theological studies at St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, NY, the following aspirants will be assessed on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The team of deacons and laity will determine their suitability to begin the next phase of their formation. Please keep them in your prayers. They are:

*Joseph Cann, St. Marguerite, Brookfield  
Stephen Hodson, St. Theresa, Trumbull*

*Georges Jabbour, St. Anthony (Maronite)  
Danbury*

*George Kain, St. Mary, Ridgefield*

*Eric Keener, St. Mary, Bethel*

*Joseph Klimaszewski, St. Lawrence, Shelton*

*Timothy Lavelle, St. Mary, Bethel*

*Richard Lawlor, St. Mary, Bethel*

*Michael Ronan, Holy Family, Fairfield*

*We ask you to keep these men in your prayers as they soon will begin their formal studies at St. Joseph's Seminary.*

### **Joseph Koletar reflects on his formation as a candidate**

Our six-member Candidate class in formation has barely passed the half-way point of our scheduled 5 ½ year Diaconate program. Time has gone by extremely quickly, and it has been a true blessing being associated with them. It seems as if it was only yesterday when we started this spiritual undertaking and journey. Although the discernment process varies for all of us, one unquestionable fact is that we're all being continually touched by the Holy Spirit.

In trying to balance the challenges and time constraints of this wonderful process, coupled with employment and family, I feel the most beneficial way is to plan accordingly, and try to follow the aforementioned schedule as best as possible. Both short term and long term goals are essential in handling the course load, through the monthly homework assignments, periodic quizzes and tests, and numerous term papers. I have found that I have improved dramatically since my inception into the program. Business travel was frequent for me, and I had to refrain from procrastinating as it pertained to my formation responsibilities, as not to have to do too much to get caught up last moment. I also had my son's rigorous sporting events to attend, so my plan of attack was to take

every week as an individual unit, and break it down beforehand, essentially opening windows of opportunity to complete my desired course work.

Just like with the Liturgy of the Hours initially, it took a bit of time to get into a groove. Once that was established, it simplified the process. When times were hectic on the home front, I would sometimes take off to the quietness and tranquility of the town Library for solace. When I felt a bit overwhelmed, the power of my parish Adoration Chapel was there to calm my fears. What also I found to be paramount was getting together with my brothers and going over the subject matter together before Final Exams.

None of this would be possible without the tremendous talent of our instructors and Director(s). Their conscientious nature and true genuine enthusiasm are both infectious and contagious. Lastly, without the prayers of all of the clergy, our predecessor ordained Deacons, and families, especially our wives, who are such an integral part of our formation, (which sometimes goes unnoticed and underappreciated for their countless sacrifices on our behalf) it has paved the way for this glorious path to continue.

**HAPPY, HEALTHY, AND  
AN ENJOYABLE  
THANKSGIVING TO ALL!**

**THE LORD THE GIFT GIVER**

Reflect with Paul on his passage from 1 Corinthians 12

*“Now in regard to spiritual gifts, brothers...There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit;*

*there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.*

*To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another the faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues.*

*But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes. “*

Thank you, dear Lord, for all the gifts you entrusted to me. May I use them only for the common good and may you find peace and joy in the giving and the receiving of these gifts for the sake of the kingdom.

MAY THE GOOD LORD BLESS YOUR LABORS, BLESS YOU, AND YOUR LOVED ONES TODAY AND ALWAYS.

**HAPPY THANKSGIVING.**