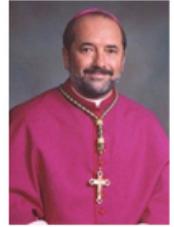




DIOCESE OF FALL RIVER
OFFICE OF THE
**PERMANENT
DIACONATE**



Bishop Edgar
da Cunha

DEACON UPDATE

Happy New Year

May the peace and hope of

Christ's birth

be with you now and in the days ahead...

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE IN CHRIST'S LOVE



Christmas lights and decorations are taken down. The evergreen trees that spread their fresh fragrance are now displaced by the curbside as trash. "It's a wonderful life" is neatly shelved perhaps along side "Fast and Furious"! Life returns to normal. Have we returned to our pre-Christmas normal or are we different?

After so much isolation and distancing, it was a joy to gather even as a "masked" community. But even the masks couldn't hide the sparkling eyes of children who eagerly waited to discover the treasures wrapped in colorful ribbons. In the darkness of so many concerns, Christmas is the perennial season of hope that reminds us of a light that has pierced the shadows of humankind by the cry of a child born in the manger. But the miracle of that birth lingers in the mangers of all seasons. The hope of Christmas is the declaration of a wonderful life lived in the fast and

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furious moments of everyday and in the mangers of our personal dwelling places. Are we different this year? After all the roads we have had to navigate this past year, after all the ongoing pathways we still face, does the light of Christmas hope, does the evergreen of God's fragrant love still linger?

I'm reminded of the journey of the Magi. They had the persistence to keep following the star. They, despite the twist and turns of the journey, never gave up the dream. When these "wise" men saw their hopes realized they shared their gifts. The gift they received inspired them to share the gifts of their lives. We have seen the treasure of Christ, what gifts do we bear in the seasons of our journeys? Gold, of talents, treasures, time; frankincense of our praise and the language of thanksgiving; myrrh of self-sacrifice, these are all treasures we too bring to each other as we unwrap the love of our lives in self-donation.

The New Year is filled with such rich promise. However so often the resolutions of today can become so easily broken tomorrow. Promises made are usually promises fulfilled because a heart has changed. Cardinal Neumann once suggested that to change is to grow and to change often is to become perfect. How have we grown? How are we different this year? The Magi were changed by what they saw. It says in the Gospel account, "they went home by a different route" (Matt. 2:12). These "Wise" ones were changed by what they witnessed. With transformed hearts they walked away by a new route, a new way of living, loving and hoping.

The Christmas lights may be stored away, the trees relegated to pulp, but the light of Christ, the evergreen scent of His love, still dwells in the hearts and lives of those who allow their mangers to be the place of His birth. It's a wonderful life! May the wonder of Christ's love find a dwelling place in the fast and furious demands of 2022.

In His love,
Fr. Bob Oliveira

DIACONATE OFFICE PRIORITIES FOR 2022

The Office of the Permanent Diaconate, with the input and support of the Deacon Council and Wive's Council, has set the following priorities for 2022:

SPIRITUALITY
COMMUNITY/FELLOWSHIP
HOMILETICS

Our planning and programming for 2022 will focus on advancing these priorities.

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR ALL ACTIVE DEACONS

CEU REPORTS DUE JANUARY 30, 2022

As Deacons of the diocese of Fall River, we recognize the need for continuing intellectual, personal, emotional and spiritual development. We also understand that no formation program can possibly teach or anticipate the needs of the deacon that might arise in an ever-changing world. However, we do know that growth is an integral part of our ministry, to needed to develop a deeper understanding of self as well as the world around us. **Lemay**

Continuing formation requires daily prayer, spiritual direction and training courses to increase understanding of the Catholic faith and theology. With this in mind, the Fall River Diocese has established guidelines for the ongoing formation of Permanent Deacons. They may be found on the website.

To accomplish the aforementioned, it is the policy of the Diocese of Fall River that **all**

permanent deacons given faculties to minister within the Diocese must complete a minimum of thirty (30) hours of continuing formation each year. Only the Co-Directors of the Permanent Diaconate can give waiver for these requirements.

These CEU reports are to be submitted yearly to the Office for the Permanent Diaconate. **In order to be considered a deacon in good standing in the Diocese of Fall River, CEU reports are required yearly of all active deacons.**

Please take some time now to start pulling together your CEU hours so that you can submit the report by the end of January. Please recall that we moved CEU reporting to a calendar year (January, 2021 - December 2021).

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

NEXT DIACONATE CLASS - EARLY START

With the recent release of the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States by the USCCB, the formation program will be modified to now include two years of Aspirancy instead of the current 1.5 years.

As a result, we will begin to notify men in the diocese of the next diaconate class formation beginning in February, 2022. Information Nights will be held through the summer of 2022.

The first full year of Aspirancy will begin in September 2022 (rather than March, 2023) with several sessions a month from September through May, 2023. Final applications and other requirements will be finalized in the summer of 2023 with admission to the second year of Aspirancy (which includes the first year of education formation classes) beginning in September, 2023.

The program will then continue with Candidacy in June, 2024. In effect, we will be beginning the next classes' Aspirancy phase seven months earlier than we have in the past.

We will be providing additional information in the weeks to come.

THE WIVES' CORNER

This month's contributor is by Elizabeth Porter



Happy New Year! How are your resolutions going?

While attending mass this morning at one of the six churches we have attended since leaving North Attleboro, I felt certain degree of validation of the thoughts committed to this month's submission from today's homily, as the celebrant addressed sacramental life in today's world, and what people are missing when they fail to participate in the richness of each sacrament available to members of the Catholic Church, with Baptism, the all-important gateway to our life of faith. I do need to clarify the reason behind so many churches over the past three-plus months: it's not that we are hard to please, it's just that we have run across multiple unexpected building delays in what will someday be moving to our new home. Let's put it this way: the most significant part of the nativity story this year that spoke to me was the nomadic nature of the story, and, like Mary and Joseph, the people we have unexpectedly met along the way. Now onto the business at hand...

During the closing days of 2021, I realized that 2022 finds us entering our third year of this pandemic. As a healthcare worker, each year of this pandemic has brought us different wrinkles, challenges, highs and lows. Ditto for the human being part of me. But it is a battle and we must soldier on. One of the most vivid memories I have of the start of the pandemic, pertinent to my message, is the last time I attended mass before the "lock down".

A wave of despair hit me, that day, as I came to the realization, standing on the front steps of the church, on that sunny, cool Sunday morning in March 2020, that the mass I just attended may very well be the last, for an unknowable period of time. That meant I would not be able to attend mass, pray with "my community" and receive communion. Back then, spiritual communion was not something I had ever heard of! I NEVER in my life expected to come across lack of ability to participate in mass, and receive communion. I look back on this day and realize how naïve, how pampered I was! Most of us do not appreciate our good fortune, our ability to have the body and blood of Christ so available to us. And yet, in August 2019, just seven months prior to this, the Pew Center released results of its investigation that took a closer look at Catholics and communion. Do you remember this report? Putting aside some concerns as to the specific wording of some questions, the report found: "about six in ten (63%) of the most observant Catholics - those who attend mass at least once a week - accept the church's teaching about transubstantiation. Still, even among the most observant group of Catholics, roughly one-third (37%) don't believe that the Communion bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ (including 23% who do not know the Church's teaching and 14% who know the Church's teaching but don't believe it.)" (Smith, G.A. "Just one-third of U.S Catholics Agree with their church that Eucharist is the body, blood of Christ" www.pewresearch.org. Last accessed Jan. 9, 2022). I recall a significant amount of dismay at this finding, although, based on my personal anecdotal experiences, found it to be plausible. Fast forward to November, 2021 with the US Conference of Catholic bishops voting to launch a three-year revival, slated to start June 19, 2022 (the Feast of Corpus Christi) to address the Catholic faithful's appreciation of the Eucharist. The three years are currently scheduled to conclude with a National Eucharistic Congress in 2024. Plans for this initiative include new teaching materials, training for diocesan and parish leaders, a website (reportedly funded by FORMED), and a special team of priests expected to travel around the country to preach about the Eucharist. (Mullen, S. and Yoder, K. "Everything You Need to Know About the National Eucharistic Congress". Catholic News Agency. Nov. 17, 2021 - last accessed Jan. 9, 2022.)

Tired about our fellow travelers' lack of understanding of basic Catholic teaching? Are you looking to help build up desire within and among our fellow travelers? Stop, pray, and listen. Are you hearing the call to participate in this work? This could be the opportunity of a lifetime!

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On an personal note, and a different sacrament: I started out by sharing a bit of our (Gary and my) ongoing “nomadic journey” over the past three months and counting. One of the church’s we have worshipped during this time is St. Patrick’s Church in Whitinsville, MA. On the most recent Fourth Sunday of Advent, Gary had the opportunity to baptize our newest grandson, Liam Declan Porter (I had mentioned the impending birth of this grandchild in July 2021.) I could not have been prouder of this monumental event, and happier for Liam, his parents, his family, and others important to this new family. And truth be told, during our “slumber parties on Saturday night, Liam this newly minted Catholic, “joins” his grandmother in night prayer.

On behalf of Gary and me, please accept our sincere wishes for a wonderous 2022. May God provide you with what you need to see the year through!

NADDI FEBRUARY WEBINAR

"Catechesis; Past, Present and Future"



Deacon Mike
Berstene

In July of 2020 the USCCB published a new Directory for Catechesis. As deacons, called to be heralds of the Good News and in this capacity effective catechists. The new Directory for Catechesis is a significant step in the journey of the Church to share, teach and form the faithful. Within the history of the Church, we have been through a number of iterations in learning how to effectively share and engage others in faith. In this webinar we will look at where we have come, where we are now and where the Church hopes to lead us.

Come join us for an interactive discussion of the new directory. Let us explore the Church’s emerging expectations for us.

SAVE THE DATE: Tuesday, February 8, 2022 - 7:00 pm

FORMATION CLASSES - SECOND SEMESTER

Classes for our candidates begin again this month. As you know, all classes are recorded and made available to our deacons and spouses on the website.

We are offering two classes this semester - St. Paul and His Letters with Fr Jack Schrader and Patristics with Fr David Pignato. The previous class sessions are also available on the website.

Viewing these classes may be used for CEU credit.

OFFICE CONTACT

As a reminder, the diaconate office email address is office@frpermanentdiaconate.com. This address is currently available for your use. The verizon email address will no longer work. Please make the change in your address book.

The address remains, Office of the Permanent Diaconate, 121 Mt Pleasant St., New Bedford, Ma 02740 Thank you!

LETTERS OF SUITABILITY FOR TEMPORARY MINISTRY

To request letters of suitability to exercise your ministry outside our home diocese for a temporary stay, visit the Deacon Portal and select the “Letter of Suitability Request” link. If you are planning to move on a permanent basis please contact the office for the letter of suitability.

DEACON MANUAL

The Deacon Manual, developed in conjunction with the Deacon Council has been approved by the Bishop. There are several changes that were made by the USCCB this summer, so once we review those changes, the manual will be printed and distributed to all deacons.

We expect the manual to be released at our Convocation this March.

SAVE THE DATES!

We will continue to publish dates as soon as they are available as requested by the Wive's Council. At their suggestion, please cut this out and place on your refrigerator so you won't miss these important events!

CEU Reports Due
January 31, 2022

Advent Day of Reflection
November 19, 2022
Holy Trinity Parish
Fall River, MA

Convocation
March 19, 2022
Location TBA

**Installation to Order of
Acolyte**
June 21, 2022
Holy Trinity Parish
Fall River, MA

Deacon Retreat
September 30-Oct 2, 2022
LaSalette Retreat Center
Attleboro, MA

***All in person dates are tentative and depend on the Covid-19 situation at the time.*

Birthdays

JANUARY

Richard Biron 29
Frank Lucca 26
Del Malloy 15
Jean Mattar 1
Eduardo Pacheco 28
John Simonis 21
Paul Spearin 19
Robert Surprenant 12

Prayer Requests

- Marie Guy - wife of Deacon Mike Guy
- Janice Fitzpatrick wife of Deacon John Fitzpatrick
- Patry Lukac, wife of Deacon Ted Lukac
- Deacon Steve Minninger
- Marissa, daughter of Deacon David Boucher
- Michael Wojcik

In Memoriam

- Edward Macedo, brother of Deacon Paul Macedo

...and for all those that we do not know of that are in need of prayers and support

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