

"Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right.." –Abraham Lincoln

Fall 2023

Volume 1, No. 2



DeacoNews

Dedicated to the Permanent Deacon and His Family

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Is your parish planning a special event or program this fall? Are you or your Outreach Director having a similar Mass and luncheon for your seniors? We would like to hear about it. Contact: deacongurske@stbartholomewchurch.org



Permanent Deacons Attend Annual Retreat at San Alfonso Retreat House

Twenty-two Permanent Deacons from the Archdiocese of Newark attended a weekend retreat, October 20-22, at San Alfonso Retreat House in West Long Branch, NJ, led by Father Anthony Michalik, C.Ss.R. San Alfonso Retreat House is a Redemptorist Spiritual Center situated on nine beautiful acres along the Atlantic seaboard with an unobstructed view of the ocean, the sky and the stars. Rooms are clean, neat and comfortable with a bed, desk, lamp, sink and window.



The dining room is spacious, accommodating six men at each table. Meals were prepared and served by the house staff, with adequate portions and opportunities for second helpings. Juice, soft drinks, coffee and tea were available throughout the weekend.

The grounds are neatly landscaped with colorful flowers and bushes. A long sidewalk leads to two huge tablets inscribed with the words, "Into your hands I commend my spirit." The stones are guarding a large crucifix with an altar in front of it

holding sea shells and various other mementos of retreatants. It is reminiscent of the Jewish custom of placing a rock on the headstone of a deceased friend or relative.



St. Alphonsus Liguori

Born: 27 September 1696

Died: 1 August 1787

Canonized: 26 May 1839 in Rome, by Pope Gregory XVI

Patron of: arthritis, lawyers, confessors, moralists, and vocations.



The seal of the Congregation consists of a cross with a lance and sponge mounted on three hills; on either side of the cross are the abbreviated names of Jesus and Mary; above the cross is an eye sending forth rays; over all a crown. Around the seal is the motto: With him is Plentiful Redemption.

Father Michalik is a Redemptorist priest, recently transferred from the Boston area. He is both knowledgeable and funny, with an easy delivery. His face and hair are similar to one of the saints, but which one?

He gave all four talks, as well as the homily at the group Mass. His devotion to Our Lady is clearly evident, as is his dedication to the principles of the founder—Alfonsus Liguori.

It was an excellent retreat! One of the ideas put forth came in the form of a story about two women looking at the sea. One says, “Isn’t the ocean just so beautiful!” The other replies, “Yes, and that’s just the surface!”

The ocean can symbolize many things, but Fr. Mihalik alluded to the beauty of our Catholic faith and how we have to get below the surface and “dive deep” to learn and appreciate the depth and breadth of Christ’s gift to us in the Eucharist. And, he added, Our Lady is there to help us.

The retreat was well-received. Deacon Peter Emr wrote, “It was a wonderful retreat...thank you for your participation and prayerful presence. Father Michalik’s spiritual guidance provided a nurturing setting for our spiritual journey, peaking for me Saturday evening in the Exposition of our Lord.” Deacon Bob thought that it was one of the best he had attended, but was stuck between internalizing the message right away or taking notes.



Who are the Redemptorists?

Since Cardinal Tobin is a Redemptorist, we should know at least some basic information about them.

The Redemptorists are a religious congregation of brothers, most of whom are priests. We live in community and are passionate about preaching the Gospel, especially to those who feel abandoned and live on the edges of church and society. A growing network of co-workers and associates is evidence of our conviction about the importance of partnership in mission and of our commitment to enable all the baptized to take their rightful place in the life and ministry of the church.

The Redemptorists were founded by St Alphonsus Liguori among the poor and abandoned in the mountains of Southern Italy in 1732 and we have been ministering in Ireland since 1851, when an international group of Redemptorists preached a mission in St John’s Cathedral in Limerick.

There are more than 5,300 Redemptorists working in 78 countries. Most of us are Roman Catholics but we also have members among the Greek Catholic Churches of Ukraine and Slovakia, the Syro-Malabar Church in India, the Chaldean Church of Iraq and their diasporas.

St. Bartholomew the Apostle Celebrates 75 Years in Service to Scotch Plains, Fanwood and the Archdiocese of Newark

A Mass of Thanksgiving was held on Sunday, November 19, with Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R. as presider and current and previously assigned priests concelebrating.



Parishioners, young and old alike, attended the Mass which culminated a year-long celebration of seventy-five years of service to the Township of Scotch Plains, the Borough of Fanwood and the Archdiocese of Newark.

A reception was held in the school cafeteria afterward at no cost to attendees. Fr. Andy Prachar, pastor of St. Bartholomew, wanted to make it available to all parishioners, regardless of their financial situation. The elevator made it possible for those who are physically challenged to enjoy the festivities.



Deacon Bob Gurske accompanies the Cardinal at the offertory.



l. to r.: Fr. Frank Rose, Fr. David Santos and Fr. John Paladino

After Mass, priests, the deacon and servers assembled in front of the Wall of Remembrance for a photo.

From left to right:

Jonathan Blanc, altar server

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin C.Ss.R.

Deacon Bob Gurske

Fr. Andy Prachar, pastor of St. Bartholomew the Apostle

Fr. Frank Rose (retired)

Fr. Matthew Gonzalez (Parochial Vicar)

Fr. David Santos (pastor, St. James the Apostle, Springfield, NJ)

Fr. John Paladino (Dir. of Continuing Ed. for Priests and Deacons)

Fr. Anthony Palombo, Master of Ceremonies.



What does it mean to be a retired Permanent Deacon?

With some of us “getting up there in years” retirement as applied to the deacon can be somewhat confusing. It should be easy, as there is no salary or pension involved. The deacon might be employed by his parish in some capacity (e.g. business manager), but that is apart from his vocation.

Requirements differ slightly from diocese to diocese. A question posed on the Permanent Deacon FaceBook page recently returned a variety of policies and procedures. The information listed below is from the Permanent Deacon’s Handbook, page 26.

Policy for Retirement of Deacons

The Archdiocese of Newark has established a Retirement Policy for Deacons. There are deacons who, when they reach a certain age, would like to be relieved of the responsibilities of their ministry or continue their ministry on a limited basis. Ill health or long-term ill health of a spouse may also be reasons for requesting retirement.

Conditions of Retirement

At age seventy-five (75), the deacon shall request retirement status in writing. He may request earlier retirement for reasons of health.

For reasons such as health and personal circumstances; e.g., non-involvement in ministry, the Archbishop may require the deacon to retire before age 75.

Process

Before he reaches his 75th birthday, the deacon will submit a letter of retirement to the Archbishop through the Director of Deacon Personnel.

The Archbishop, through the Office of Deacon Personnel, will respond in writing indicating his acceptance or rejection of the retirement.

Status of Retired Deacons

Unless otherwise stated a deacon who is retired will retain faculties as long as he continues to live within the Archdiocese. The exercise of faculties are subject to permission from the Archbishop, Director of Deacon Personnel and the local pastor where ministry is to be performed.

Retired status limits the deacon to functioning at weekend Liturgies and to offer occasional, not regularly scheduled, ministry as he is able and as requested.

The retired deacon will continue to be informed of all Archdiocesan activities within the Diaconate Community. He will be invited to participate in every Archdiocesan Diaconate event.

The wives of retired deacons will also be invited to continue their participation within the Diaconate Community for retreats, continuing education, social events and any other activity in which they would like to participate in with the members of the Diaconate Community.



Revitalization of the Mentoring Program

by Deacon Mike York

Through the fifty plus year history of the diaconate in the Archdiocese of Newark, mentors have been assigned (for some classes) to both the men in formation and ordained deacons. Under the guidance of Fr. Joe Chapel, Director of Diaconate Formation and Deacon John McKenna, Director of Deacon Personnel, a revitalization of the mentor program for men in formation is in progress.

The Director of Deacon Personnel oversees the mentoring program for deacon candidates, working in conjunction with the President of the Council of Deacons and the Director of Diaconate Formation. The selection process for mentors is managed by the Directors of Formation and Personnel in conjunction with the President of the Council of Deacons and approved by the Archbishop.

Mentors have been assigned to each deacon candidate currently in formation (and there is an option to continue as a mentor for three years after ordination). A special thanks to all deacons who volunteered to serve as a mentor. Note that the mentor is not from the same parish as the deacon candidate. Each mentor is in “good standing” as established by the Director of Deacon Personnel.

The mentor meets in person with the candidate at a minimum frequency of once per month. The mentor’s role is one of listening and offering counsel. Meetings with married deacon candidates may occur with the mentor or mentor’s wife as the mentor deems appropriate. Additionally, the deacon candidate’s wife (if married) can meet separately with the mentor’s wife (if the mentor is married).

The mentor inquires of the deacon candidate, among other things, about family life, spiritual reading and prayer life; about the regularity of meetings with the spiritual director; about how things are going in the parish – frustrations, accomplishments, the academic experience etc. and may share his own experiences of ministry.

References:

National Directory, Chapter VII, Section I, 239: 113 and Section III, 118

Congregation for the Clergy, Directory for the Ministry and Life of the Permanent Deacons (Directorium Pro Ministerio et Vita Diaconorum Permanentium) (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference 1998), No. 71, 63