



*Heavenly Father, since the time of the Apostles you have inspired the Church to commission certain members to assist in a special way in the pastoral mission of Christ. Bless the deacons and all other ordained and non-ordained ministers that they may be humble and faith-inspired in their service. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen*

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# Deacon News

*Diocese of Davenport*

*Winter 2021*

## From the Diaconate Office:

I pray that you are well as you receive and read this winter newsletter. I am personally missing my normal mid-winter break; it has been a full year since I have seen my Arizona family and miss them dearly. The pandemic has caused a great deal of anxiety, additional stress, and depression across the country, our diocese, and likely within the diaconate. See page 3 for some tips from Dcn. Mark Comer for recognizing and handling the stress of the pandemic.

This stress is one reason we started the Deacons Call, a monthly video call for all deacons in the diocese. Some months it is just open conversation to talk about what is on your minds. Some months a specific topic is the center of discussion. One page 2, read about the topics of discussion the last 4 months. Up to about half of the deacons have called in to the calls. If you are missing out on these dynamic conversations, join us next month to find out about what the Davenport Diocese is doing with and for Catholic Relief Services.

In the mid-January Clergy call, I was completely surprised when Bishop Zinkula said we are living in a post-Christian society, and in mission territory. Sadly it is true. It is a call to action for the diaconate as well as the presbyterate and the entire diocese. Read the Bishop's call to action on page 4, and the plan for action on page 5.

Active Deacons (not retired) are expected to attend at least one spiritual retreat each year. You may attend a retreat in another location, but the diocese offers a deacon retreat every year. See page 6 for details about the 2021 Spring Deacon Retreat.

God Bless,

Deacon Michael Snyder, Director of the Diaconate



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Virtual Clergy Days Tuesday, 2 March 9:00 - 12:00
- Chrism Mass Monday, 29 March 2021. Details about clergy attendance to be announced in coming weeks.
- Spring Deacon Retreat Saturday, April 24, 2021 *For Deacons and Wives*  
Held virtually via Zoom
- Fall Deacon Convocation Saturday-Sunday, October 16-17, 2021

In November 2020 the deacons of the Davenport Diocese began holding monthly calls to talk about topics of interest for deacons. In November we talked about the challenges for Mass and liturgy during the pandemic. In December, we talked about unique ways for deacons to minister during the pandemic. You may be able to use some of the ideas shared:

- Many deacons and parishes are calling parishioners. Some call all parish members every few months. Some have a list of members who do not attend Mass, and they call monthly to let them know the parish is thinking about them. Some call those who are at risk and are staying away from the public, every week. The most interesting calling idea was calling parish members on the birthday to give a personal Happy Birthday message.
- Encourage prayer by mailing prayer cards to all parish members.
- For those who are not online and don't have access to weekly bulletins, mail a bulletin to them weekly.
- Most parishes have a newsletter. Write a Deacon message for that newsletter to talk about the opportunities within your parish for members to serve others.
- Get involved with a new charitable organization. Use your experience to invite others to participate. The demand on food banks is very high this year; find a way to collect or distribute food through a food bank or food pantry.
- Start an online Bible Study or book study class.
- Start a small faith sharing group in your parish; follow the Diocese Emmaus Group program for content.
- Make yourself available. Many people who are depressed or anxious need someone to listen. Make sure your contact information is available for people to contact you when they need.
- (If you have experience) Offer to help families fill out advanced directive papers. At the time of an emergency is not the best time to plan one's advance medical directives.
- Find ways to get more parishioners involved

In January, Dcn Mark Comer led a discussion on Stress, Anxiety and Depression. We heard several good ideas for how to handle situations, and things to remember as we interact with others, and care for ourselves. See Mark's article on page 3.

In February, Dcn Frank Agnoli presented approaches to preaching during Lent. You received the slides in your diodav email; if you cannot find them, let Mike Snyder know.

The March topic will be a discussion about Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the effort to start a chapter in the Davenport Diocese. Call in to find out what CRS Chapters do, and how we can participate.

### Anxiety, Depression and Stress

I received an email reminder from the parish religious education director encouraging me to update my Virtus training last week. It was no surprise to find that the training focused entirely on stress and anxiety in homes that might be affecting children and ways to address it. Not surprised because if one is paying attention currently to concerns surrounding stress, anxiety and depression, literally every form of media appears to be addressing these issues daily and have been for months. As deacons we are not immune to mental health problems ourselves but also as deacons, we have a unique opportunity to help those who are sufferers. Both perspectives will receive attention in this short essay.

Stress keeps us safe by preparing us to act in threatening situations, activating our “fight-or-flight” response. Everyone experiences stress and not all stress is bad, a little is even good for us. However, too much stress can be unhealthy for us both mentally and physically, affecting our mood, our ability to relax, causing feelings of being overwhelmed, even leading to anti-social behavior and depression. A simple internet search will reveal many possible physical and mental symptoms, some quite surprising, and being educated can help us remain healthy. ([https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-symptoms-effects\\_of-stress-on-the-body#2](https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-symptoms-effects_of-stress-on-the-body#2))

Long term stress can result in mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and personality disorders. (Link to anxiety/depression information <https://www.healthline.com/health/anxiety#symptoms>) With the combination of trials that our communities continue to be affected by, that have ensnared us for over a full year now, deacons might ask themselves how we can help. This question was asked by the current Virtus Annual Safe Environment Online Training (2021) and the following was recommended.

- 1) Find ways to reduce your own stress, so that you can be more available to others in need.
- 2) Pay close attention to behavioral changes we witness in family and friends and ask what is wrong; be a listening ear to someone in need.
- 3) Reach out to others in your contact list, see **how they're doing and if they want to talk** or video conference.

In our parish role as deacon we have an incredibly personal link to every parishioner, whether we imagine we have a personal relationship or not, that if exercised can be a source of healing for silent sufferers. Everyone, absolutely every single adult and many children, are harboring unspoken anxiety and if they are asked by a willing listener, with everything that's going on right now, pandemic, child-care issues, social distancing, unemployment, election coverage, family gatherings, family in nursing homes, limits on travel, etc. **“How are you doing?”** that listener can be a vessel of grace and healing for a great deal of pain.

Listeners are very difficult for people locate. It's easy to find those who will “one-up” our pain with their own example or attempt to fix our problems but if we can patiently make space for others to speak, ask questions that encourage deeper introspection, and refrain from giving unsolicited advice instead offering prayer, we can be a means through which God's healing grace will flow.

Dcn. Mark Comer

Interfaith Staff Chaplain

University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics

A Note from Bishop Zinkula

The Church has been in decline since the Second World War. We are now living in a post-Christian society with a post-Christian worldview. Some people refer to this age as post-Christendom. The old way of doing business isn't working very well because it is geared toward a Christian society.

So we need to make changes in the Church – in parishes, the diocese, how we do business. It can no longer be merely a matter of managing our parish buildings, schools, programs, etc. We can no longer be primarily focused on keeping them going and restoring them to stability. That is a static rather than a dynamic approach. Maintenance rather than mission.

We can't focus the vast majority of our attention on the small percentage of Catholics who are actively engaged in the Church – those who show up every Sunday and do almost all of the financial giving and volunteering in a parish. We obviously can't and shouldn't simply forget about them. But our entire way of thinking has to change, in terms of how we manage our parishes and the diocese. We are living in mission territory and we need to get back to our primary mission, which is to evangelize.

The orientation of our diocesan church has to change from being fundamentally inward looking – people come to the parish and everything is self-referential – to being fundamentally outward looking. In other words, we need to turn things inside out and upside down. The diocese and every parish and family has to be fundamentally about mission, discipleship and evangelization. That has to be the primary responsibility/obligation of every person in the parish.

Yes, Catholics need to go to church, but baptism calls disciples to win souls for Christ. Celebrating the Eucharist – the source and summit of Christian life – is hugely important. But in the grand scheme of things, it isn't the primary end, which Jesus tells us in the Gospels is to evangelize. We are sent forth from the Mass to make disciples of all nations. The sole purpose of the parish isn't to form good Mass-going Catholics. The mission of the parish is to train/form missionary disciples.

How is God calling us – how is the Spirit leading us – to reinvent our Church, to discover a new way of being and doing Church, to recognize its role in a post-Christian society?

That is where Vision 20/20 comes in. When we read the current signs of the times, we see COVID and we ask the question, "Will they return to Mass?" The Iowa bishops are working together to roll out a public relations campaign when the time is right to invite people back to Mass. The USCCB is working on a long-term Eucharistic Revival Project. Rediscovering Sunday is a diocesan initiative that will plug into these initiatives and lead the effort in our diocese to bring folks back to Mass. The Eucharist – the Real Presence, the source and summit – is an appropriate place to begin Rediscovering Sunday. But it won't end there. Rediscovering Sunday is an intentional, broad and multi-pronged endeavor, a process rather than a program. We have a joyful message to share with others. Let's address structural issues and make transformational changes so we can do that the best we can.

Bishop Zinkula

### Rediscovering Sunday

With the pandemic leaving our communities separated in many ways, work is going on at the Diocesan level to prepare for what our churches might look like post-pandemic. The reality is that there will be many people who simply don't come back.

At the state level, the four Catholic Diocese in Iowa will be working together to roll out a statewide marketing campaign that will encourage people to return to Mass. But what will people find when they do come back?

*Rediscovering Sunday* is a new diocesan initiative that will help our parishes focus on the future. Returning from COVID protocols will only be a part of this effort. The hope is that we can provide parishes with tools to encourage the faithful through meaningful liturgy, increased catechesis, improved relationships and community outreach. Our hope is that this look to the future will help us grow vibrant parishes filled with engaged disciples who actively evangelize outside the four walls of the parish. Bringing new life to our evangelical efforts will renew parishes and change lives. Work has begun at the committee level to plan for what this looks like moving forward. The hope is to begin talking about this initiative on the "Sunday of Sundays" Easter Sunday. Then throughout the year, parishes will be provided with practical suggestions to help parishioners rediscover Sunday as a cornerstone of their lives.

So much of what we are talking about is diaconal in nature. So we look forward to having our deacons as integral parts of this effort at the parish level.

Ryan Burchett and Fr. Thom Hennen

### Catholic Relief Services

CRS Lead the Way and Diocesan Chapter

In 2019 CRS launched several new programs to encourage involvement. The CRS *Lead the Way* Website (<https://www.crs.org/get-involved/lead-way>) states:

*Our faith calls us to believe. To serve. To lead. At this pivotal time when COVID-19 is impacting health, societies and economies around the globe, we can come together as missionary disciples to make a difference.*

*Join a powerful movement of advocacy and action to transform our world. Leading the way begins now. We come together as a community and as individuals to pray, learn and take meaningful action to help those who will suffer the most from this global pandemic: migrants and refugees, communities that lack access to enough food and nutrition and people living in poverty.*

Part of *Lead the Way* is CRS Chapters. The Diocese of Davenport is moving towards the formation of a diocesan-wide chapter. A CRS Chapter is a community of people committed to the transformational change CRS envisions as part of *Lead the Way*. Chapters participate in two main ways: advocacy and giving. Members of chapters will receive specialized support and training to put their faith into action and make a difference in the world. A Chapter Launch Workshop is being planned currently. In this event, participants will learn what it means to be part of a chapter. Details will be forthcoming. After the launch event, four training sessions will be conducted to receive training, form the new chapter, and select chapter leaders. Are you interested? Please contact Deacon Joe Welter, [welterj@diodav.org](mailto:welterj@diodav.org), (319) 331-6663 to express interest.

### Spring Deacon Retreat

Last year the Spring Retreat was cancelled due to COVID and the pandemic restrictions. Restrictions are still not relaxed, but the 2021 Spring Retreat will be held virtually.

Several deacons have expressed an interest in Spiritual Direction and Spiritual Director Training. The topic for this retreat will be three aspects of Spiritual Direction: 1. How to get more out of our own Spiritual Direction. 2. Without being a trained Spiritual Director, how to handle conversations that happen naturally in life and in our ministry, that cross the line into Spiritual Direction. 3. An introduction to Spiritual Direction Training - not actual training, but what training programs include.

Fr. Marty Goetz will be the retreat leader. More details will be available in early Easter.

A virtual Deacon Council meeting will be held on the same day.

Block your calendars now for Saturday, 24 April, and plan to join this retreat.

### Welcome Deacon Patrick Murphy

Please welcome Deacon Patrick Murphy and his wife MaryBeth to the Diocese of Davenport. Pat comes to us from the Diocese of Peoria where he was ordained in 2002. He was previously serving at Sacred Heart in Moline IL. Originally from Wisconsin and Northern Illinois, Pat graduated from St. Ambrose, and has lived in the Quad City Area throughout his adult life. Pat and MaryBeth have lived in Bettendorf near grandchildren for about 3 years. Pat is assigned to Our Lady of Lourdes in Bettendorf, effective immediately.

### Prayer and Help Requests

Please let us know if you have any needs; either for prayer or otherwise.

Call Mike Snyder at 563-726-5426, or send email to: [snyder@davenportdiocese.org](mailto:snyder@davenportdiocese.org)

### **Save the Date!**

Spring Deacon Retreat **April 24-25, 2021**

*For Deacons and Wives*

To be held virtually on Zoom

### **Save the Date!**

Fall Deacon Convocation **October 16-17, 2021**

*For Deacons and Wives*

Held at the Chancery in Davenport