



The Alaskan Shepherd



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Some give by going to the Missions

Some go by giving to the Missions

Without both there are no Missions

HEARING THE CALL TO SERVE AS MISSIONARY DEACONS IN NORTHERN ALASKA

Editor's Note: I am indebted to Sister Kathleen Mary Radich, O.S.F., Coordinator of Rural Ministry for the Yukon-Kuskokwim region, for the following article which offers a glimpse into the discernment process and service of our Native Deacons, as they live out and celebrate their callings. Sister Kathy's position can best be described as a coordinator of personnel, policies, ministries, and vision for 24 Yup'ik Eskimo parishes. She also serves as Bishop Donald J. Kettler's representative in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region. —Patty Walter



Peter Boy Scout and Christopher Tulik were installed as Acolytes by Bishop Donald J. Kettler at the Liturgy celebrated in Fairbanks during the Alaskan Federation of Natives Conference in the fall of 2007.

Photo by Father Gregg Wood, S.J.

CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA
1312 PEGER ROAD FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99709
Phone: 907-374-9532 <http://www.cbna.info>

Special Masses are offered throughout the year for you and your intentions by our Missionary Priests. Please pray that God may bless us and our work.



Deacon John Ayunerak was ordained in his home parish of St. Ignatius, Alakanuk, Alaska. In attendance were his wife, Paula, his family and the local community. Photo by Sister Rose Monica, O.S.F.

“The Parish Pastoral Council would like you to pray about being a deacon for our parish?”

These are usually the first words a man, who may eventually be a deacon, hears. In the Yukon-Kuskokwim region of the Diocese of Fairbanks, the region of the diocese that is mainly Yup’ik and Cup’ik Eskimo, the parish pastoral councils pray and discern who among them should be called forth to spiritually lead the parish. A member of the council approaches each person and after asking the question, the council waits a few weeks and then returns to the man and his wife and requests a response with no need for an explanation. This was done earlier in 2007 by the members of Holy Family Parish Pastoral Council in Newtok. They invited Phillip Kusayak and his wife Theresa to discern their call. When their response was yes, they were put in contact with the Rural Deacon Office and the process toward becoming a deacon was begun.

Paperwork and ministry mark the next phase. Once a man has given his yes, the first year is called the Pre-Candidate year. During this year, the man takes on some parish ministry. It is then that the parish and the man himself can evaluate if ministry in the church is something that will fit well. The parish ministry could

include taking communion to the homebound, serving as a catechist, assisting with the administrative activities of the parish, or serving as a lector. Abe Kelly is a pre-candidate for the parish of St. Charles Spinola in Pilot Station, Alaska. Abe is the acting administrator of the parish and also ensures that the church is maintained.

**“Are you resolved to prepare yourselves in mind and spirit to give faithful service to Christ the Lord and His Body, the Church?”
(Rite of Admission to Candidacy)**

Study, study and more study. Once the pre-candidate year has ended, all needed paperwork is completed, and the parish pastoral council and the man and his wife determine this is the call they would like to pursue, the parish requests that the man be accepted as a candidate. The Rite of Admission to Candidacy is celebrated and formal formation begins. The candidate’s formation takes place in a few different ways. The Deacon Trainer, currently Father Ted Kestler, S.J., may offer one-on-one sessions with the candidate and include the candidate’s wife and/or a local deacon to join the discussions and study. Father Ted may alternately bring together a few deacon candidates and hold classes in one of the villages. Between visits from the deacon trainer, the priest or sister who sees to the pastoral needs



Current Deacon Trainer, Father Ted Kestler, SJ, may work with a candidate in a one-on-one session and may bring together candidates to have classes together in one of the villages. Photo by Sister Rose Monica, O.S.F.

We want to thank in a special way those of you who have included the Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska (our legal title) in your bequests and wills, and those of you who, at the time of the deaths of dear ones, have suggested that in their memory contributions be made to the Missions of Northern Alaska or to the Alaskan Shepherd Endowment Fund. A suggested wording: “I give, devise and bequeath to the Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska, 1312 Peger Road, Fairbanks, Alaska...”

TO: CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA
1312 Peger Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-5199

Please remember the following petitions during the Novena of Grace:

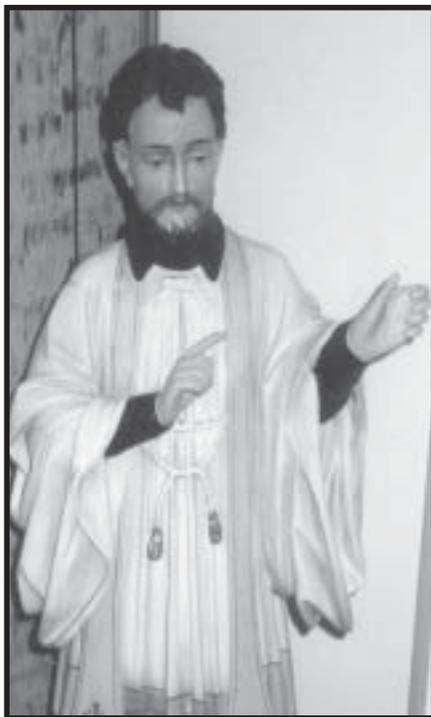
NOVENA OF GRACE

Each year during the month of March, a Novena of Masses is offered for you, our benefactors, and for your petitions.

The Novena of Grace is so called because countless people have had their prayers answered by God through the intercession of St. Francis Xavier, the Jesuit Apostle to the Orient in the sixteenth century and the patron saint of worldwide missions.

We invite you to send us your petitions. Both you and your needs will be remembered on each of the nine days of the Novena when Mass is offered for you. The Fathers on the missions also will remember you and your intentions in their Masses and prayers during the Novena.

We invite all of you to join us in this Novena of Grace by reciting--from the 4th of March to the 12th inclusive--the following prayers.



O most amiable and loving St. Francis Xavier, in union with you I adore the Divine Majesty. While joyfully giving thanks to God for the great graces which He conferred upon you in life and for the great glory with which He has gifted you in heaven, I come to you with heartfelt love, begging you to secure for me, by your powerful intercession, the inestimable blessings of living and dying in the state of grace. I also beseech you to obtain for me the favors I ask in this Novena_____.

But if what I ask is not for the Glory of God, or for the good of my soul, do you obtain for me what is most conducive to both. Amen.

Our Father; Hail Mary; Glory be to the Father.

V. Pray for us, St. Francis Xavier,

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: O God, you chose to bring into your Church peoples of the Orient through the preaching and miracles of St. Francis Xavier, mercifully grant us that we may imitate his virtues, whose glorious merits we hold in veneration.

We ask this through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

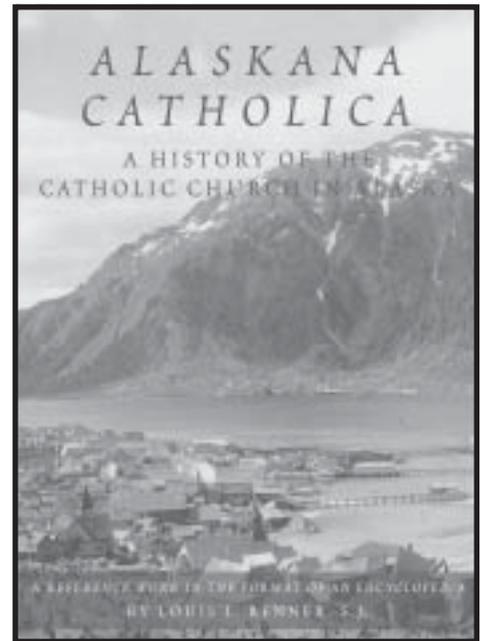
ALASKANA CATHOLICA

“Through years of dedicated research, writing, and documentation, Father Renner has created a succinct yet comprehensive guide detailing in total clarity and conciseness the history of the Catholic Church in Alaska. Within this historic documentation the reader can reference over 225 years of Catholicism in Alaska. Father Louis L. Renner, S.J., has accomplished in Alaskana Catholica a momentous feat—a magnum opus.”

Donald J. Kettler
Bishop of Fairbanks

“Father Renner is the foremost authority on Catholic history in Alaska, writing history at its purest, almost exclusively from archival sources.”

Dr. Dorothy Jean Ray
Historian and Anthropologist



“This fascinating volume offers an intimate picture of the activities of the Catholic Church’s Alaska Mission, from its beginning in the nineteenth century to the present. It is a fact-filled account of people and places with a wonderful array of characters...Father Renner, with a historian’s concern for the facts and a writer’s eye for a good story, has produced a valuable work.”

Francis Paul Prucha, S.J.,
Professor of History Emeritus , Marquette University

“One of the main intents of this volume,” we read in the author’s Preface, “is to keep alive for posterity the memory of many major Catholic Alaskan figures—clerical and lay, Native and non-Native, living and deceased—by the recording of their lives and deeds.”



Alaskana Catholica (“a unique gift, whether to give or to receive”) is a reference work in the format of an encyclopedia. It offers its readers something more than mere bare-bones reference data and Who’s Who-s. Moreover, some entries have a story about the given entry’s subject attached to them. Some have a “tapestry” woven out of a series of quotations from the mission diary of the given place attached to them. These stories and tapestries give readers a kind of “you are there” experience, of being present at an event of the past or at a place remote to them.

Close to 400 images illustrate *Alaskana Catholica*.

**Yes, please send _____copy(ies) of *Alaskana Catholica*,
written by *Father Louis L. Renner, S.J.***

I am enclosing \$85.00 for each book, which includes shipping.

Please make checks payable to CBNA (Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska)

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of the parish is encouraged to work with the candidates and to offer prayer and support. Candidates are also encouraged to participate in workshops sponsored by the Native Ministry Training Program. These trainings often focus on scripture, sacraments, Catholic beliefs, how to give homilies, and the knowledge and skills needed for ministry. Currently Chris Tulik of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, in Nightmute, Alaska, Peter Boy Scout of Sacred Heart, in Chevak, Alaska, and Phillip Yupanik of Sacred Heart, in Emmonak, Alaska, are deacon candidates studying under the deacon trainer and the priests that visit their parish.

“Take this book on Holy Scripture and be faithful to handing on the word of God.”

(Institution of Reader)

“Grant that they may be faithful in the service of your altar and in giving to others the bread of life.” (Institution of Acolytes)

During the years of study, there are also two Rites that the candidates and parishes celebrate with the Bishop. In 2006, deacon Candidate Chris Tulik celebrated the Rite of Admission to Reader. Along with Peter Boy Scout, Chris celebrated the Rite of Institution of Acolyte in the fall of 2007. These celebrations mark different phases of study and preparation, the proclamation of scripture and service at the altar.

“Bishop, Holy Mother Church asks you to ordain this man, our brother, for service as a deacon.” (Ordination of a deacon)



Deacon candidate Phillip Yupanik “practices” the Rite of Baptism during the annual Deacon Workshop held for the ongoing formation of the deacons, deacon candidates and their wives.

Photo by Sister Rose Monica, O.S.F



Deacons, deacon candidates and their wives gathered in Saint Marys, Alaska, in 2007, for the Annual Deacons’ Retreat. Photo by Sister Rose Monica, O.S.F.

The invitation the Parish Pastoral Council offered years before comes to fruition with the presentation of the man for ordination. The years (anywhere from three to six) of formation come to a wonderful celebratory ending with the celebration of Holy Orders in the parish that called the man forth to be their deacon. In 2006, parishioners, deacons from the area, and Catholics from the region came together at the school in Newtok, Alaska, to celebrate the diaconal ordination of John Andy. What a great gathering and a wonderful celebration in the style only the Eskimo people do!

“Pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the vineyard.”

Ministry, service and ongoing formation mark the coming years for the deacons. What is it that the native men who are deacons do in service to their communities? All the deacons, in the absence of a priest, often lead liturgical celebrations in their own language. They assist at the altar when a priest is in the village to celebrate Eucharistic Liturgy and will introduce the different parts of the liturgy in Yup’ik or Cup’ik. The deacons also lead the funeral rites and will often preside at the funeral liturgy when a priest is not available. Other ministries vary according to the needs of the parish. Deacon Denis Shelden is the Pastoral Coordinator for St. Ignatius Parish, in Alakanuk, Alaska. He coordinates the spiritual life of the community. Deacon James Charlie from St. Peter the Fisherman, in Toksook Bay, Alaska, oversees marriage and baptismal preparations.



In addition to their ministry, many deacons and deacon candidates have full-time jobs. Deacon candidate Abe Kelly serves as the Postmaster in his home village of Pilot Station, Alaska. Photo by Sister Marian Leaf, O.S.F.

Bart Agathluk, a deacon at Sacred Heart, in Emmonak, Alaska, visits homes of the elderly and is available for spiritual conversation in addition to sacramental preparation. Almost all the deacons are called when there is an emergency in the village, whether that is a death, an accident, or a family in need. Most deacons rely heavily on the support and assistance of their wives. These women walk along side their husbands to encourage, to help, and to pray with them and for them.

Most of the native deacons live a subsistence lifestyle. They take the time needed to hunt and fish for their families. Some of the deacons have full time jobs in addition to their ministry as deacons. St. Lawrence's Deacon, Elmer Beans, is a Yup'ik instructor at the local school in Mountain Village, Alaska. Three of the deacons at Immaculate Conception Parish, in Bethel, Alaska, work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Once ordained, formation is not over. The deacons, deacon candidates, and their wives gather annually for a three-day retreat. The sharing of prayer and conversation helps in support of their ministry. Once a year there is a workshop for the men and their wives. Workshop topics have included – The Rite of Baptism, Marriage and Annulments, and Preparing and Delivering Homilies. The men are encouraged to attend other workshops that are offered. Priests, bringing the sacraments to a village are encouraged to spend time

with the deacons in support of their ministry and their ongoing formation.

After years of generous service, deacons can retire. Currently there are eight retired deacons in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Region of the diocese. Retirement does not mean the end of ministry or service. These men help with ministry when invited by the Parish Pastoral Council and are available to the active deacons and deacon candidates as mentors and guides. They are also invited to the annual retreat and have much wisdom to share. A retired Deacon attends the retreat as he is able and adds his presence to community activities especially praying for more deacons.

The Rural Deacon Program in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Region of the Diocese has been an active program since the mid 70's. Many men have been formed by the program and all the parishes in the region have benefited from the presence of deacons. Not suprisingly, many deacon candidates did not, at first, fully understand what a "yes" answer to that initial question meant. However, they have grown into their ministry and are trusted by the people of their parishes to be men of faith and men who lead them in prayer. The region and the diocese are grateful for those that said "yes," for the wives and families who have supported

these men, and for those that have given their time in their training and formation.



Sister Kathleen Mary Radich, O.S.F., has been ministering in Alaska since 1986.

Your first class 41¢ stamp donations are greatly appreciated.