

Journey Jottings: Notes from St. Luke's Deacon in Formation

The Deacon Class of 2020 met for its monthly eight-hour formation seminar at the Cathedral on August 18. The day began by sharing Morning Prayer with the senior deacons in formation: those who, God willing, will be ordained in June of next year. The responsibility for leading Morning and Evening Prayer alternates randomly with individual deacons in formation, so by "the luck of the draw," Morning Prayer was led Pam Bell (Class of 2019), and Evening Prayer was led by me. Following Morning Prayer, we split up into our respective groups and spent the remainder of the day with the faculty assigned to teach our respective curricula.

The topic/theme for the day was Part Two of a three-part series entitled "Transforming One's Sacred Spirit," taught by retired Archdeacon Veronica Ritson.

Deacon Veronica had covered Part One during our initial retreat/orientation at the Franciscan Renewal Center in June, so she "picked up where she had left off" and dove deeper into strategies and practices to enrich our spiritual lives. She began by leading us on a walking tour of the Cathedral neighborhood, during which we were asked to engage all five of our senses. After that, we became acquainted with the beginnings of monasticism via a presentation by each of us on two "Desert Fathers" whom we had been assigned to research, write a paper on, and present to the class. After a lunch break, we doubled down on our spiritual development, discussing assignments that we had been asked to complete between Class One and Class Two, including starting a journal that will be maintained throughout the two-year formation program; reading three chapters of the book, *Sacred Rhythms*, which presents spiritual practices that can lead to deeper union with God and others; keeping a moment-by-moment diary for two non-consecutive weeks; practicing silence and solitude; engaging in self-examination; and attending a worship service of two different denominations (I went to a Spanish Mass at Sacred Heart, and attended a Sunday morning service at The Heights Church). In addition, prior to the class, we submitted a paper on the topic of "Native Spirituality" and its meaning for each of us, which will be used in Class Three on September 15, taught by Deacon Dorothy Saucedo. The final activity of the day, prior to Evening Prayer, was a discussion about creating a personal rule of life, and how, in a practical sense, to go about establishing one.

There was much reflect on as I drove back to Prescott; thankfully, the trip back home was as safe and uneventful as the morning trip down! And already I'm "up to my neck" in new assignments, including writing an essay comparing Biblical creation and flood myths with Native American creation and flood myths; continuing to develop a personal rule of life; and preparing to teach a 45-minute class on prayer, using one of the chapters of *Sacred Rhythms* as a springboard.

In addition to attending classes of the Deacon Formation Academy, I (and Amy and Susan) are already included in the diocesan community of deacons, which means that we are in the same "communications loop" as all the other deacons in the diocese; we also attend quarterly regional meetings, convened by Archdeacon Sarah Getts and hosted by different parishes. As one might expect, St. Luke's is part of the Northern Arizona region. I attended my first regional meeting in May at St. Thomas Church in Clarkdale, and will also be attending the the next one on September 4 at Church of the Epiphany in Flagstaff. Additionally, I've joined the Association of Episcopal Deacons (AED), a national organization of about 3000 deacons in the United States, and another 300 in Canada. AED is not only a clearing house for information on all things diaconal at the national level, but also is an advocacy and networking group for deacons, promoting diaconal ministry in its multiplicity of forms and settings across North America.

Thank you for your prayers and support on this journey! It's a grace-filled path that we are walking together! -
Keehna Sture