



## President's Lenten Message



Every Sunday morning while getting ready to go to Mass, I turn on the local classical music radio station which broadcasts gospel music from 6 to 9am.

The program host, Warren Cooper, is an innovator who has taken significant strides in the fusion of gospel and jazz.

His selections are unusual combinations of music all pointing to a greater awareness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What I enjoy most are Warren's pithy introductions, each carrying a message that can take us through the day.

Several weeks ago, one caught my ear which I had to write down: "The children won't know what to do, if they don't see the God in you!"

As our Lenten season starts, from the very beginning we hear: "Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God" (Ash Wednesday, First Reading, Book of Joel), our readings and prayers call us to a life of conversion.

As a deacon, on the day of your ordination your bishop prayed: "He (Jesus Christ) chooses them to lead your holy people in charity, to nourish them with the word, and strengthen them with the Sacraments." (Preface; Mass for the Ordination of Deacons)

Are we leading, nourishing and strengthening our parishioners, our families, and ourselves, or are we too busy doing "deacon things" to see or hear the call to our own transformation?

This Lent, can we take a look at ourselves and ask: "Are others, not just the children, seeing the God in us?" "Are we searching for the God in others?"

Blessed Lent to all!



## LENTEN OPENNESS

by Bishop William Skylstad

Ash Wednesday is a great day of the beginning of the season of Lent. For those of us who have had the experience of distribution of ashes on that special day, we know the reactions of people when receiving them. Their whole demeanor is one of humility and receptivity with a sense of pride and gratitude as they wear the cross on their foreheads for the rest of the day. I always



Bishop William Skylstad walks with Deacon Sam Taub at the 1979 NDICE Conference, on the campus of Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana. During his years as Executive Director of the BCPD, Deacon Taub attended NDICE every year and reported on national developments to attendees. Bishop Skylstad was attending this Conference as BCPD Chairman, and has attended many NDICE conferences after his term as BCPD Chairman was concluded.

enjoy the reaction of little children as one places the ashes on them—often their eyes turned upward with a sense of wondering what is happening and they're not sure exactly what. But the ritual has meaning, and their expressions indicate an openness as to how God touches them at the moment. Yes, the power of ritual, of being touched, and of being marked with the sign of the cross. I'm reminded of the words of St. Irenaeus about the sign of the cross: "much in little".

With that sense of openness to the mystery during this rich season of repentance, conversion, and preparation for the great Feast of the Resurrection, we could do well to look at the concept of our own openness in three different ways.

First of all, an openness of heart. The image of heart is frequently used in Sacred Scripture: "Rend your hearts, not your garments"; "Return to me with your whole heart"; "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts"; "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new heart within you"; "A joyful heart makes a cheerful face"; "For where your treasure is, so will your heart be also." The heart for us is a powerful image. Physically for us, it is life. Spiritually as

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well, the heart symbolizes an attitude that can demonstrate a wonderful openness to God's love and strength.

Secondly, an openness of eyes. How do we see? I'm reminded many years ago when I ordained to the diaconate one of our Native Americans. His daughter commented about her father: "He is like a grizzly bear... he can't see very far (others' faults), but he can sure run quickly to respond to the needs of others." How do we see the poor and vulnerable, the refugee, and the brokenhearted? How do we see the world about us with the magnificence of God's creation? The challenge for you and me is to look at all of life through the lens of faith and the Gospel. Lent urges us to keep our eyes open.

Finally, an openness of hands. The handshake is a wonderful symbol of

gracious greeting with an open hand that indicates I am hiding nothing. An open hand indicates an open heart. But it should also indicate that I am careful that the open hand is a genuine expression of what truly is in my heart. Or I can think of an open hand

in other ways. It is the hand that grasps the steering wheel of my car as I drive to a more remote parish or visit someone in the hospital or in hospice care.

It is the hand that pours water in baptism or gestures during a homily at Mass.

Lent is such a rich treasure and gift on our faith journey. Cardinal Martini S.J., the former Archbishop of Milan, once commented: "The heart of Jesus is like an observatory." In this Lenten season, may we as disciples of Jesus go forth marked with the sign of the cross and with openness in heart, eyes and hands serving the world out there before us. 

An open hand  
indicates an open  
heart.



# Faith

Does faith come in sizes,  
like shoes or shirts or socks?  
Small? Medium? Large?

St. Paul's faith was extra large,  
nothing, but nothing could  
separate him from God's love.

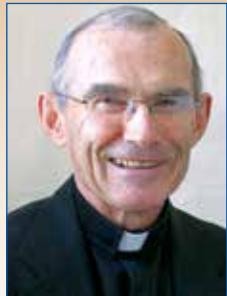
Peter's faith more questionable; it struggled to embrace suffering and death.

Poor Thomas, a world class doubter, would believe only on hard evidence.

But then there are those in life who have no shoes or shirts or socks, nothing to wear or eat or drink, who have no faith.

Jesus has a special love for them—  
we ought to too. 

*Bishop Robert Morneau, auxiliary  
bishop emeritus of the  
Green Bay Diocese, serves as  
sacramental minister at  
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish,  
Green Bay. He is a popular  
author and speaker.*



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# A TERRIBLE, BEAUTIFUL DARKNESS

by Deacon Chris Anderson

Not long ago I was called to the funeral home to do a memorial service for a four-month old baby.

What I'll never forget is the wailing.

The mother was holding the baby in her arms,



and she was rocking back and forth, and she was wailing. The sound of it came in waves, rising and falling.

During Lent we are asked to empty ourselves out so we can be filled with God. To die to ourselves. But this is a hard thing to do, no matter how much we fast and pray. The ego is too strong—and this is true even in the spiritual life. "Over and over," Ruth Burrows says, "we must realize how in what we think of as our love and service of God, lurks a ravenous self-seeking which would use God to inflate self."

This is why the moment in the funeral home was such a grace for me.

Such a difficult grace.

I was certainly grateful to the Church in that moment, for the scriptures and the liturgy. I didn't need to come up with the words myself, and I couldn't have. But I knew where to find them, and I knew how to say them, and they were beautiful words, and they rose and fell, too, they had a rhythm and a force, and I think after a while

they started to calm and center the people in that room, as I said them into the dark air.

But mostly what I felt was helpless, was powerless, and I was helpless. I was powerless.

No one was paying attention to me. No one cared who I was. It was the words that mattered, and what was deeper than words, and I could feel that. For a moment the intensity of the family's shock and the intensity of the family's grief burned through my ego and burned through my pride and I wasn't thinking about myself at all. I was caught up with the mother and the father and everyone else in that terrible, beautiful darkness.

"Let the children come to me," Jesus said. "The kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

And He was there, in that darkness. Jesus was there.

I can't explain it.

At the end, as I made the sign of the cross on the baby's forehead, as I touched her cold, lifeless skin, I could feel the tears of the mother falling on the back of my hand, and how warm they were. Almost scalding.

O Lord, You call us all to be deacons, to be servants: give us the strength to serve.

You call us into your darkness, and into Your light.

You call us deeper than words and deeper than grief.

Beneath all the other voices you are quietly calling us home.

O Lord, You became a little child for our sake: bless us and keep us.

We are all children, we are all precious in your sight: take us into your arms.

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Deacon Chris Anderson

Chris Anderson is a deacon who serves St. Mary's parish in Corvallis, Oregon. He is also a professor of English at Oregon State University and a poet and essayist. His most recent book is *LIGHT WHEN IT COMES: TRUSTING JOY, FACING DARKNESS, AND SEEING GOD IN EVERYTHING*, published by Eerdmans in 2016. He was a keynoter at last year's NDICE conference in Cincinnati. [www.deaconchrisanderson.com](http://www.deaconchrisanderson.com)

# Excitement for the 2018 Congress... is Building

Excitement is building for the 2018 National Diaconate Congress that will be held in New Orleans this July celebrating the 50th anniversary of the renewal of the diaconate in the United States. Over 1,100 deacons and wives have already registered for this extraordinary diaconal event.

Congress participants will enjoy liturgies, daily talks, workshop programs, and multiple opportunities to connect with other deacons and wives. The 2018 National Diaconate Congress begins with Opening Mass on Sunday, July 22 at 5:00 pm at the historic Cathedral - Basilica of St. Louis which is located on Jackson Square. Our host, Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans, will deliver the homily and Keynote Address.

The Marriott New Orleans, the official hotel of the 2018 Diaconate Congress, is where all remaining liturgies and program elements will be conducted. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday (July 23 through 25) we begin with Mass and Lauds. General Session presentations follow that expand



the Congress theme, Christ the Servant: Yesterday, Today and Forever.

Our General Session speakers include His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Tobin, Deacon James Keating, Deacon Gregory Kandra, Most Reverend Frederick Campbell, Bishop-Elect Rev. W. Shawn McKnight, Mrs. Teresa Tomeo Pastore and Deacon Dominic Pastore, Most Reverend Gerald F. Kicanas, Deacon William Ditewig, and Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila. His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo will

conduct the Closing Session and preside at the Closing Mass on Thursday, July 26.



Deacon Tom Dubois,  
NADD Executive Director

A series of afternoon workshops will be offered on topics ranging from practical to entertaining. Certificates will be available for continuing education contact hours.

To learn more about the 2018 National Diaconate Congress, to register, and to book a room at the Marriott, please visit [www.deacon2018.org](http://www.deacon2018.org). Registration is \$250 for individuals (deacons, candidates, priests, bishops and friends). The cost for wives and deacon widows is just \$99. A service fee will be added.

NADD thanks NDICE President Deacon Paul McBlain and the NDICE Board for supporting the 2018 National Diaconate Congress and for this opportunity to encourage your attendance. We hope to see you in New Orleans! 



## Society of St. Lawrence Deacon's Pins

The Society of St. Lawrence, the Diaconate Community of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, New York, has been providing deacon pins to our brother deacons and their wives for many years. We thank you for your support of this ministry.



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| Deacon 20 year anniversary | n/a    |     |            |
| Deacon 25 year anniversary | n/a    |     |            |
| Deacon 30 year anniversary | n/a    |     |            |
| Deacon 35 year anniversary | n/a    |     |            |
| Deacon 40 year anniversary | n/a    |     |            |
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# U.S. Diaconate History Prior to 1968

by Deacon Samuel Taub

(On July 22-26, 2018, deacons in the United States will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the renewal of the diaconate in the United States. In 1971, Deacon Sam Taub wrote the following article while serving in the office of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate (BCPD) office in Washington, DC. This article highlights important diaconate dates prior to 1968.)

On September 28, 1964 the Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, in four separate votes, gave final approval for the restoration of the permanent diaconate by a vote of 1,903 "Yes" to 242 "No." Implementation on a regional basis at the requests of bishops of the world with papal approval as a norm was approved by a vote of 1,523 "Yes" to 702 "No" votes. The vote for married men of mature age was 1,598 in favor, with 628 opposed. The vote for young married deacons (minimum age of 25 years) failed by a vote of 1,364 "No" to 839 who voted "yes."

On November 21, 1964 "The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (*Lumen Gentium*) was approved and published. Within this document is "Article 29," by which the diaconate is restored as a permanent Order, open to both celibate and married men.

On February 21-24, 1967, at the request of Pope Paul VI, the Special Commission for the Study of



the Restoration of the Diaconate as a Permanent and Proper Order of the Hierarchy met in Rome. At the invitation of Pope Paul, U.S. Bishop Ernest Unterkoefer took part in the work of the Commission, a reflection of his keen interest in the diaconal restoration during the deliberations

of the Council. From the work of this Commission came the text of the Apostolic Letter *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*, establishing practical norms for the restoration of the permanent diaconate in the Latin Church, published *motu proprio* on June 18, 1967.

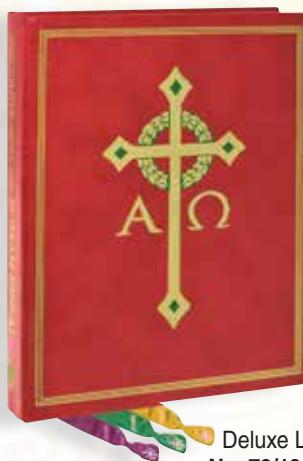
At the plenary meeting of the NCCB on November 13-19, 1967, the members of the Conference requested that a detailed program for the implementation of the permanent diaconate be prepared for the consideration of the members at their next meeting.

At the Spring meeting of the NCCB on April 23-24, 1968, Bishop Unterkoefer presented a detailed program for the utilization of the diaconate. The report contained eight general resolutions and 21 guidelines, all of which were approved. The bishops voted to adopt Bishop Unterkoefer's

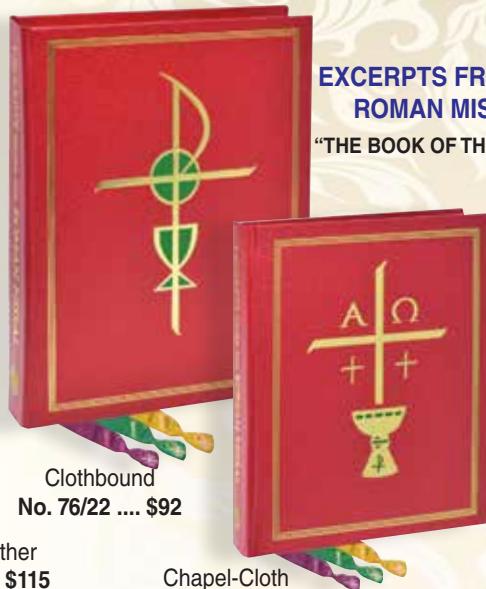
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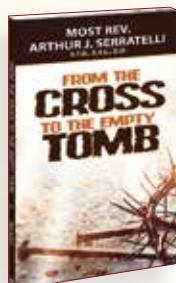


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report as their own and petitioned Pope Paul VI for permission to restore the permanent diaconate in the United States for married and unmarried men of mature years in those areas where there was a need for such a ministry. It was also decided that a standing committee on the diaconate be established and assigned as a priority, the preparation of guidelines for the implementation of a deacon formation program.

On May 2, 1968, in the name of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, John Cardinal Dearden, President of the Conference, petitioned Pope Paul VI for the restoration of the diaconate in the United States, citing as reason for the request, *inter alia*, to enlist a new group of devout and competent men in the active ministry of the Church, and to provide impetus and a source of creating adaptation of diaconal ministries in response to the rapidly changing needs of our society.

On August 26, 1968, the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments replied to the NCCB General Secretary that the Conference's petition to restore the diaconate in the United States had been granted.

At the plenary meeting of the NCCB on November 11-15, 1968, "The NCCB Standing Committee on the Permanent Diaconate" was established and charged with the function of guiding and expediting the restoration of the diaconate. This was to be accomplished primarily through the approval of diocesan plans for diaconal ministry and the establishment of deacon formation programs. At this time, Bishop Ernest Unterkoefer was elected as the Committee's first chairman, for a three-year term.

It is difficult to imagine the enormity of the tasks faced by the first National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate. On January 9, 1969, at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart in Washington, D.C., under the chairmanship of Bishop Ernest Unterkoefer of Charleston, SC,

the following bishops were invited to serve on the Committee:

- Auxiliary Bishop John Spence, Washington, D.C.
- Auxiliary Bishop Walter Schoenherr, Detroit, MI
- Auxiliary Bishop F. Joseph Gossman, Baltimore, MD
- Auxiliary Bishop Harold Perry, New Orleans, LA.

Bishop Unterkoefer cited the following:

- 1) ...the need for a developed theology of the permanent diaconate to include a spirituality fitting for married clergy in the contemporary world;
- 2) ...the permanency of the diaconal vocation, avoiding distraction that could impede the formulation of long-term goals.

During the meeting, the members unanimously approved the first diaconate formation centers at St. John's University, in Collegeville, Minnesota; and at Saint Cyril and Methodius Seminary, in Orchard Lake, Michigan as national formation centers; and the program of the Josephite Fathers for the Archdioceses of Washington and Baltimore, and the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia

as diocesan programs. These four programs began with 80 candidates in formation, ranging in age from 28 to 71.

On June 2, 1969, Rev. William Philbin of the Archdiocese of Chicago was appointed the first Executive Director of the Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate (BCPD) Secretariat. He opened the office of the Executive Director at the NCCB Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

From these beginnings, the formation of deacons was launched. During this first year (1969) the BCPD assembled six times to deal with the increasing numbers of diocesan formation programs, means of avoiding the clericalization of the renewed diaconate, the preparation of national guidelines for the formation and ministry of deacons, the relationship of the deacon with his bishop, the adequacy of theological, spiritual and pastoral formation in diocesan programs, the compatibility of the sacraments of Orders and Matrimony, and the part wives would play in the formation of their husbands for diaconate ministry. 

## ASSISTING DIACONATE COMMUNICATION

This February issue of NDICE NEWS is emailed to ALL U.S. diocesan diaconate directors AND to attendees at the Annual NDICE Conference. The newsletter is available to be forwarded AT NO COST to ALL members of the diocesan diaconate communities.

The National Diaconate Institute for Continuing Education (NDICE) is the Publisher of the NDICE NEWS newsletter. NDICE President Deacon Paul McBlain ([aldanmac1@comcast.net](mailto:aldanmac1@comcast.net)) is Editor and members of the NDICE Board serve as Assistant Editors.

All graphics for the NDICE NEWS newsletter are done by Mary Bolin, who designs and prepares each issue of the newsletter, assisted by Jim Alt.

The NDICE NEWS newsletter is emailed to U.S. diocesan diaconate directors and to NDICE Conference attendees by Jim Alt.

Contact Mary Bolin at [mebbolin@psc.net](mailto:mebbolin@psc.net) (812) 719-2250 and/or Jim Alt at [jalt6@new.rr.com](mailto:jalt6@new.rr.com) (920) 632-7877 for help with your communication needs. They are available to help you with your newsletters, brochures, flyers, direct mail pieces, magazine ads, logo design, print or online ads, and other graphic design/marketing related projects.

We welcome your comments and suggestions related to the NDICE NEWS!