

Dear Parishioners:

As you know, Our Lady of Lourdes Church has been blessed with the presence of a number of Permanent Deacons over the years. Currently, Deacon Tom Lucie and Deacon Rich Maher exercise their diaconal ministry here. In addition, Deacon Jack Teufel is officially “retired” (retirement is mandatory at age 75), and both Deacon John DeGuardi and Deacon Jack Meehan have recently moved out of state.

On Saturday, May 22, one of our parishioners, **Nilo DeLeon** will be ordained a Deacon by Bishop John O. Barres at St. Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre.

I thought it would be a nice idea to look at the history of the Diaconate in the United States. The Diaconate was restored as an official ministry in 1967 by Pope Paul VI on the advice of the Bishops present at the Second Vatican Council. The first Deacons were ordained in the United States in 1971. Here in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, the first Deacon class was ordained in 1979. Our very own Deacon Jack Teufel was part of that first ordination class.

Men who are ordained to the Permanent Diaconate are called by God to serve God and His people by living a life of charity and service to God’s Word and Sacraments. The Deacon is called to be a sign and witness of the presence of Christ in the world. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has emphasized that the Deacon is called to serve the Bishop, and his priests, by becoming more intimately associated with the poor, and the marginalized.

There are three (3) key areas of Diaconal Service: Ministry of the Word, Ministry of the Liturgy and Ministry of Charity and Justice.

Ministry of the Word: The Deacon, by word and example, brings the message of Christ to the marketplace. The Deacon proclaims the Gospel and preaches the Word of God.

Ministry of the Liturgy: The Deacon presides at Baptisms, Marriages and presides at wakes and burial rites. During Mass, the Deacon leads the Penitential Rite, proclaims the Gospel, leads the General Intercessions, prepares the gifts at the altar and occasionally preaches.

Ministry of Charity and Justice: The Deacon is called to be the icon of Christ, the Servant, seeking to be an advocate of the poor and disadvantaged.

As deacon candidate, Nilo enters into the final weeks of his diaconal formation (which includes a retreat week). I ask everyone to pray in a special way for Nilo as he prepares to serve God as a Deacon in the Catholic Church!

Remember: Together, we can do something beautiful for God.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian