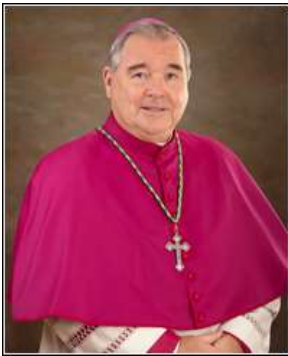


Deacons of Manitoba Newsletter

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Farewell Message



Dear Permanent Deacons,

I bring you greetings during this Lenten Season! This will be my last article for your newsletter as I am now soon to retire. Such an occasion, even though sad, is also an invitation, as St. John Paul II once said, “To live the past with gratitude, the present with enthusiasm and the future with hope.”

This year’s Lent and Easter Seasons, occur during the Holy Year we call The Jubilee of Hope—we are called to be pilgrims of Hope! Hope is not an idle wish for something good to happen but rather a conviction that it will happen—it’s on its way! We speak here of that unique Hope that is Christian Hope as St. Paul says to Titus in the New Testament, “...we are waiting for the blessed hope for the appearance of the glory of the great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11-12) Regardless of who we are and what role we play in the Church, this hope is our very food—the fuel that enables us to embrace our mission as missionary disciples.

I am grateful for the eleven years I spent in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg and an important part of that was my encounter with our Permanent Deacons, their wives and the formation program. I wish to thank all the members of the leadership team that plays such an important role in guiding our program. But even more importantly I am immensely grateful for the dedication and wonderful example of faith among the members of our Permanent Diaconate community.

The blessings of Lent and Easter be yours!

+Richard Gagnon

Apostolic Administrator, Archdiocese of Winnipeg

Words from Deacon James

As we wait for spring, it seems the older I get the longer it takes for spring to arrive, this year is no different.

As we as the faithful, prepare for Easter and continue our Lenten journey, I am so grateful to be a member of an executive that works tirelessly to serve the Deaconate Community in Manitoba.

I would like to thank all that worked to make our retreat at the St. Charles retreat centre a success and a meaningful experience for myself and as reported by others.

I'd like to thank Father Michael Wollbaum for the insight and reflection shared.

In a very special way, I would like to wish a blessed and peaceful Easter to all Deacons and their families.

God bless,

Deacon Jim

Words from Carol

The Community of Deacons of Manitoba met on the weekend of February 21-23 in retreat at St. Charles Retreat Centre, now operated by the Archdiocese. Our retreat master was Fr. Michael Wollbaum, and the topic was on Jubilee and the Pilgrimage of Hope. We had time for sharing and prayer, Eucharist, Reconciliation, and healing prayer led by Fr. Michael and Deacon Michel. And of course, we had time for fellowship, so important to the Deacon Community because we come from three dioceses-- south to north, east to west, and we do not get much opportunity for interaction. We are a group of active deacons, retired deacons, wives of deacons, and widows of deacons.



Fr. Michael with the Deacon Community



Archbishop Richard Gagnon was able to celebrate Eucharist with us on Sunday morning. After lunch the members of the community expressed their thanks to Archbishop Gagnon for his friendship and support. It was a joyful time, tinged with sadness as we said goodbye to him.

Archbishop Richard with the Deacon Community



We will gather together in the fall for our annual Study Day. More information will be forth-coming.

A blessed Easter to all.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Words from Judy



The deacon and wives retreat was held from Feb. 21 – 23, with Fr. Michael Wollbaum as our retreat facilitator. Attending this retreat for the first time without my beloved husband Wayne was painful and difficult, but it was good to see everyone and re-connect.

It's a privilege to share my reflection of the weekend. When Fr. Michael entered the chapel for the first talk, I was immediately struck by the presence of the Holy Spirit flowing through him, as well as the "joy of the Lord" that he exuded. He emanates a Divine presence.

Fr. Michael offered many thought-provoking insights throughout the weekend. I share the following points from his talks that spoke to me:

Throughout the weekend, we were invited to reflect on aspects of Isaiah 61, entering into a new conversion, and re-examining our faith life to become free from enslavements. He encouraged us to be pilgrims of hope, pregnant with the life of God within, and sharing hope, love and light with those we minister to.

Each of us are called and chosen. The movements of Christ within us, in a spirit of humility, allow others to experience forgiveness, liberation, peace, healing, and restoration.

We were invited to ponder, like Mary, the gift of the Holy Spirit -- how we engage with Him and give Him permission to enter the messy places within us, to be transformed and perfected with deeper intimacy. The Holy Spirit is "Light" and "Life".

Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we are vessels of grace and instruments of healing, when we remain connected. We carry the treasure of Christ within us. Perfumed oil has been poured over us by the Holy Spirit to minister in Jesus' name. We are entrusted with Christ's power and presence, which change our lives when we surrender. We are God's messengers.

The importance and power of the "WORD" was emphasized. Jesus encounters us in His Word when it makes its home in our hearts. The "Word" illuminates hearts and helps overcome fears, anxieties and struggles. The "Word" frees, heals, and changes lives. The example of the Samaritan woman was shared, who was set free by Jesus' words and compassion.

Like Jesus on the road to Emmaus, we were reminded about the importance of encountering people where they're at, listening to their stories, their longings, and providing a place for them to speak. People can be blinded by their wounds and pain. A caring, listening presence offers hope and healing.

The final talk invited us to reflect on our personal charisms and the gift of the Holy Spirit in our personal faith journey. Fr. Michael shared that it's not easy "to grow into our calls". Ministries and prayer change. It's okay to wrestle with God, and be open to changes and new callings.

Thank you Father Michael for being our presider throughout the weekend, and for taking time out of your busy schedule to share your gift of deep faith with us. I personally found this retreat to be one of the best.

The talks were fruitful and thought provoking, offering an invitation to reflect on various themes, and grow deeper in our relationship with God.

It was a blessing celebrating Mass with Bishop Richard Gagnon, and enjoying his presence over lunch for the last time. What a wonderful way to end the weekend.

As ambassadors for Christ, let us continue to be “PILGRIMS OF HOPE” and “LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS” - shining and radiating the love of God.

I wish each of you and your families a fruitful Lenten journey and a blessed, joy-filled Easter season.

Judy Johnson

Words from Deacon Claude

A Perspective on the Deacons’ Retreat, February 21-23, 2025

“To proclaim a year of the Lord’s favor.”

The liturgical year of 2024 -2025 has been designated a Jubilee Year by the Catholic Church with the theme of Pilgrims of Hope. In Hebrew sacred scripture, a Jubilee Year was a celebratory time following seven cycles of seven cycles (forty-nine) whereby the fiftieth year, the Jubilee Year, would be observed. Traditionally, this was a year of forgiven debts, release of slaves and captives, a surrender of any borrowed property, a return to one’s home, and to leave fallow any farmland so as to rely entirely on God’s providence for one year.



The Jubilee Celebration was the underlying theme of our deacon’s retreat mastered by Fr. Michael Wolbaum of St. Ketari Tekakwitha Parish in Winnipeg. Using the passage from St. Luke’s Gospel where Jesus reads a part of the scroll of Isaiah in the tabernacle and declares the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy to his fellow Nazarenes, Fr. Michael encouraged the deacons and spouses to examine their ministries in the light of the proclaiming a year of the Lord’s favor, within the Church’s Jubilee Year.

Between five sessions of instruction on this topic over three days, the diaconal community was invited to self-examination, meditation and group discussions on how we celebrate the on-going movement of hope (a surety of God’s promises to come) in our calling and how we can offer this hope to those we serve in our churches and our outreach.

Our fellowship during this retreat was highlighted by sharing and enlightening conversations over some wonderful meals and culminating in Sunday Mass with his Grace, our Apostolic Administrator for Winnipeg Archdiocese, Most Rev. Richard Gagnon, who shared a final meal with the group on Sunday afternoon.

An amazing retreat organized by an amazing board of directors for the diaconal community and by our host, Sr. Lillian of the St. Charles Retreat Centre.

God be with all of you.

Deacon Claude Lambert

Suggestions or comments:

Please do let us know how to do better with the newsletter through email: fraterjim218@gmail.com or michaelmartincordova@yahoo.com