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## CALENDAR UPDATES & EVENTS...

### Upcoming Events

- January 18, 2020 – Annual Day of Reflection for the Diaconate and Formation Communities, 8:00am to 7:00pm, "Deacons: Pioneers of the New Civilization of Love" Presented by: Deacon Tom Dubois, Executive Director National Association of Diaconate Directors. Includes breakfast, lunch, Mass and dinner.
- March 7, 2020 – Annual Mass of Recommitment with Bishop Gregory Parkes, 10:00am at the Cathedral of St. Jude, St. Petersburg; lunch and social to follow.

### Continuing Formation Opportunities:

- STEP, Satellite Theological Education Program at the University of Notre Dame
- Franciscan Center Programs
- Online courses and graduate programs
- For other Links of Special Interest and Continuing Formation Opportunities please visit our diaconate website.

### Of Special Interest:

- Please do not unsubscribe from Constant

Contact; this is how we send most of our important e-mails to Deacons and participants in the formation program. Other diocesan departments also use Constant Contact. Please call Sue to obtain the username and password for the "Deacons Only" site.

### Directory Updates...

#### Please Change:

- Deacon Eusebio "Papo" Torres from Active/Full Time at St. Cecelia, Clearwater to Active/Full Time at Our Lady, Queen of Peace in New Port Richey.
- Deacon Ron and Isabel Rojas from Active/Full Time at Most Holy Redeemer, Tampa to Active/Full Time at Corpus Christi, Temple Terrace.
- Deacon James "Ben" and Pam Hooks from

Active/Full Time at St. Patrick, Tampa to Active/Full Time at St. Peter Claver, Tampa.

#### Please Welcome:

- Deacon Gene & Joyce Eastham to Active/Retired-Seasonal at St. Justin Martyr in Seminole from the Diocese of Denver, Colorado.
- Deacon Rich & Colleen Spiro to Active/Retired at St. Paul, Tampa from the Diocese of Venice, Florida.
- Deacon Mike & Deanna Sweeney to Active/Full Time at St. Stephen, Riverview from the Archdiocese of New York, New York.



Sue Huertas is Administrative Assistant for the Office of the Diaconate for the Diocese of St. Petersburg. She and her husband, Deacon Wil, attend St. Cecelia Catholic Church in Clearwater. Sue can be reached at [diaconate@dosp.org](mailto:diaconate@dosp.org) or [smh@dosp.org](mailto:smh@dosp.org).

If your e-mail or other info has changed please send corrections to: [diaconate@dosp.org](mailto:diaconate@dosp.org)

For updates & more info visit our website: <http://home.catholicweb.com/DiaconsofStPete>

## New Deacons Ordained: "You are the Light of the World"

Deacon Steven Girardi

With Bishop Gregory Parkes laying his hands on the heads of eight men to ordain them as permanent deacons, the Diocese of St. Petersburg and the kingdom of God grew a little bit brighter.

"You are the light of the world; a city on a hill," Bishop Parkes told these new deacons, echoing the Gospel reading



from Matthew (5:13-16) during his homily. "Thus so, your light must shine. My dear Brothers, may the light of your ministry lead others to Courageously Live the Gospel."

It was an inspirational call and reminder of the special ministry entrusted to these men and to us who came before them during the two-hour and 12-minute Ordination Mass at the Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle on Saturday, October 19.

"Today is a day of great joy for the Diocese of St. Petersburg," Bishop Parkes said, reflecting the sentiments of our entire diaconate and church community.

The morning rainstorms gave way to sunshine just before Mass began at 11:00 a.m., as about 800 family members, friends, acquaintances and faithful Catholics filed into the cathedral to participate in this bi-annual ordination

of permanent deacons in our diocese.

"I testify they have been found worthy," Deacon John Alvarez, director of diaconate formation, announced to the bishop as the eight were presented for ordination.

With these eight men, from diverse backgrounds and ranging in age from 40 to 63 years old, we now are blessed with 130 deacons in service to the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

"And yet they share at least one thing in common," Bishop Parkes said. "They have been called by God to serve you, his people, and to serve this diocese."

This is the second group of deacons ordained by Bishop Parkes during his five years leading our diocese.

He reminded them – and each of us – that the call to this order is neither

merited nor deserved, but rooted in God's love and our response to his invitation.

"We are grateful to your 'yes' to God's call," he said. He quickly added thanks to their wives and children who persevered and sacrificed with these men during four challenging years of formation.

*Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.*

*Rite of the Ordination of Deacons*

For our new deacons, it was a day of anxiety and excitement, awe and joy. And the realization, as those of us already ordained know and our newest brothers will discover, this is not a call to ceremony, but to service in a deeper and more intimate way.

"It suddenly became more real for me, for my vocation," said Deacon Marc Garofani, who described the day as "surreal."

See [Ordination](#) p7 ▶



## St. Vincent De Paul Seminary: a Deacon's Reflection

Deacon Eusebio "Papo" Torres

As people of God, all of us are called to love and serve the Lord without limitations. Within that context, I believe that we should share our faith and our spiritual life and experiences with others. This could be done through spiritual retreats, workshops, or private conversations among people. That is why I would like to share with you a wonderful experience I had when I attended the St. Vincent De Paul Regional Seminary (SVDPS) in Boynton Beach, Florida from June 2-7.

Each year SVDPS sponsors the Deacon Summer Institute, a study week of ongoing formation for Permanent Deacons. The Institute provides inspiring presentations, intellectual stimulation and time for prayerful recollection, all in a pleasant environment. Being a first-timer in attending this year's Summer Institute, it was precisely the environment that caught my attention. Once you enter the premises, you can feel such a serenity, peace and comfort, bodily and spiritually. The meals were exceptionally good and the campus equipped with the

latest technology. Each student is assigned a private bedroom. It feels like you are both on holy ground and right at home.



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL REGIONAL SEMINARY

I can only say that it was one of the very best spiritual experiences I have had since my ordination back in 2009. The topic for this year was *In Accordance with the Scriptures*, a learning experience in reading and preaching the Old Testament. The theme of the workshop was appropriate for the week before Pentecost. As scheduled, we explored the different books of the Old Testament canon. We looked at narratives – prophetic, poetic and prose; psalms; wisdom literature; and apocalyptic passages, seeking to unlock the hidden treasures contained in the inspired word of God. In doing so, we explored St. Peter's Spirit, a leading example of proclaiming Christ as Lord

"in accordance with the scriptures." As normal, we also took time for praying the Liturgy of the Hours and attending Mass on a daily basis, which enriched and enhanced our spirituality.

If we are to truly "live the Gospel" as it is properly understood, we are to live the commandments as Jesus taught us, following him, his bride the Church and making disciples of all nations. After all, life is a long learning process. To me this is what *Courageously Living the Gospel* means. Learning and sharing the Good News, so that others have the chance to learn and have everlasting life. ■



Deacon Eusebio "Papo" Torres was ordained in October 2009 for the Diocese of St. Petersburg and is assigned at Our Lady, Queen of Peace in New Port Richey. He and his late wife, Helga, have three adult children. He can be reached at [etorres1201.et@gmail.com](mailto:etorres1201.et@gmail.com).

## A New Captain of the Ship

Deacon Cris Stout

This magazine, *Diakonia*, is a combined effort of many, the most important of which is the authors who contribute articles that make *Diakonia* one of the leading deacon's magazines in the country. These articles don't just come together, and they are just a part of what the Coordinator of *Diakonia* is responsible for, along with soliciting, scheduling, reviewing, proofing and submitting those articles to our publisher, jsGrafx.

We are pleased to announce that Deacon John Fox has agreed to assume the position of Coordinator of *Diakonia*, beginning with the Spring, 2020 edition. Deacon John is not a stranger to *Diakonia*, as he has submitted many articles in the ten years he has been ordained. But now

with his leadership, *Diakonia* will not only continue its excellent reputation as an informative and inspiring magazine, it will be raised to a new standard that is consistent with how Deacon John approaches everything he does.

Please continue to play your part and when "Captain" John calls, know he is asking you to be a part of his desire to make *Diakonia* the best deacons' magazine ever! ■



Deacon Cris Stout was ordained for the Diocese of St. Petersburg. He is assigned to St. Lawrence Catholic Church, where he is also the Administrator of Finance, HR, and Facilities. He and his wife Sharon have two daughters and two granddaughters. He can be reached at [deaconcris@stlawrence.org](mailto:deaconcris@stlawrence.org).

We have had some e-mails bounce back as undeliverable. If your e-mail address has changed, or if you have changed phone numbers or have eliminated your land line, please let us know by e-mailing your updated information to [diaconate@dosp.org](mailto:diaconate@dosp.org) so we can stay in touch. Thank you!

**Diakonia** (De •ak'ə•né •a) is a seasonal newsletter published two times a year by the Office of the Diaconate, Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida.

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## From pg 1 Ordination

Deacon Marc, our youngest at age 40, said his mantra from the Second Vatican Council fathers has been: "The joys and hopes and griefs and anxieties of this day and age are our joys and hopes and griefs and anxieties."

"That became more real," he said. "I wouldn't say it changed. It's now a reality."

Deacon Wil Huertas spoke of service as an extension and realization of our baptismal call to be priest, prophet and king.

"Being clergy, being able to serve at this level, we can be the light to the world through the Gospel," he said. "In our work, we are the bridge, the walkway to bring that to the community."

Deacon Marc said he was calmed and encouraged when the deacons at the Mass lined up to greet each one of them with a handshake or an embrace.

"That was a special moment because you worked so hard during formation, and all of these deacons who came before you are welcoming you into the community with joy," he said.

And whatever nervousness he had about the ordination, he told his wife, Ana, he was more anxious about Sunday, when he would go public with his first homily.

"I prepared and prepared and prepared, and finally at the last minute I had to say, 'OK, God. I've done what I can and it's in your hands,'" he said.

Deacon Wil Huertas said despite his years of experience serving at Mass, he was apprehensive to assist for the first time as a deacon.

"I was thinking, what am I supposed to do? Where am I supposed to stand?" he said on Monday after that Mass. "I wanted to hit all the marks."

Deacon Wil was vested by his cousin, Msgr. Ivan Huertas from the Diocese of San Juan, Puerto Rico. We, of course, are more familiar with his wife, Sue, the administrative assistant of our diaconate office, who cares and provides for us on matters large and small.

"One of the deacons walked by me (on Saturday) and said, 'Sue, now you

have one living under your own roof,'" she said. "I said, Oh, no! I do."

She said it has been challenging being on both sides – as both wife and administrator. "But probably a little more for him because I'm his wife and I also need to keep him in line," she laughed.

As Bishop Parkes sent these new deacons into the world, he reminded them – and, really, each one of us: "You will be heralds of the Good News to a world that needs it."

Do not become discouraged, he said, "The Lord, the source of hope, is always with you." ■



Deacon Steven Girardi was ordained in 2015 for the Diocese of St. Petersburg. He is assigned to Espiritu Santo Parish in Safety Harbor where he and his wife, Joy, are parishioners. He may be contacted at [sdg1925@gmail.com](mailto:sdg1925@gmail.com).

## From pg 3 Aging

bigger barns) was offered with an empty nester at the center of the story. The man had done very well with his investments, and decided to buy a professional gas grill, a 65" TV and a wine refrigerator. "What shall I do to provide space for all of these new things?" The "bigger barns" solution would surely do the trick. Then he could binge watch Netflix, eat fabulous grilled foods, and drink perfectly chilled wines to his heart's content. God's response can be found intact in the rest of Luke's Gospel account: "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" Perhaps acquiring more bunk beds and video games would be a better way to upsize.

Time for prayer, fellowship, and reflection was ample, and included a penance service, our annual Mass for deceased deacons and wives, and Sunday Mass with Bishop Lynch. The soon to be ordained diaconal candidates and wives were able to join us for Evening Prayer and dinner. Special recognition was given to them (along with their new assignments), as well as anniversary

## From pg 6 Should I...

good friend, Fr. Edwin Palka, who was the main presider at Deacon Bill's funeral Mass. I felt something different when I heard Fr. Ed's voice break as he prepared Deacon Bill's coffin for Mass with the Book of the Gospel and his stole. Fr. Ed's voice broke several more times throughout the Mass, causing him to pause.

Before the final blessing, Fr. Ed turned to the deacons in attendance and said, "I want all you deacons here today to know how much you affect the lives of the priest." Fr. Ed said to us that it was Deacon Bill Diaz who had a big influence on his vocation to the priesthood and in his priestly ministry. He wanted to take the time to say "thanks" to all of us, for our ministry as deacons. I can't speak for the other deacons there, but I was deeply touched by his words of thanks and personally shook his hand before I left and thanked him so much – for his words of thanks to us.

I guess I answered my own question of "should I, or should I not, go" correctly on that particular Friday. ■



Deacon Mike Menchen was ordained for the Diocese of St. Petersburg in 2013. He is assigned to St. Mary, Our Lady of Grace in St. Petersburg, where he and his wife, Sue, attend. They have three sons and four grandchildren. He can be reached at [deacon@stmaryolg.org](mailto:deacon@stmaryolg.org).

milestones of the already ordained.

To quote (mostly) from the liner notes in a famous album from the sixties, "A splendid time was had by all." That same group provided the basis for an alternate title suitable for our departure: "Baby You Can Drive My Lark." ■



Deacon Greg Lambert and his wife, Kathy, serve at St. Lawrence in Tampa, where they assist with adult faith formation and Sacramental preparation. Deacon Greg was ordained for the Diocese of St. Petersburg in 1997. He can be reached at [dgreg@stlawrence.org](mailto:dgreg@stlawrence.org).

## Should I Go? Or Should I Not Go?

Deacon Mike Menchen

I was faced with that question on Friday, September 27. I found myself torn between attending the funeral Mass for a brother deacon, Bill Diaz, whom I really did not know that well. Or play golf with some friends at the Innisbrook Resort, on the Copperhead tournament course. Or should I go to the prison in Zephyrhills to preside at a communion service in the infirmary. We often find ourselves torn between so many different choices in our ministry as

deacons, with the question *should I, or should I not, go.*

In our ministry as deacons, we have so many different emotional experiences that stay with us. We experience the excitement of the couples that we are preparing for marriage. We experience the hurt, agony, fear, and apprehension of the annulment process as we guide someone through it. We listen to broken voices and watch the tears of happiness run down the cheeks of both brides and grooms as they exchange their vows in front of us, saying

“I do.” We struggle to hold back tears as we stand at the graveside with a family who is in deep mourning. We are given the great privilege of baptizing newborn babies as we stand with parents, godparents, family and friends. At all these times and others, we never think about *thanks* for what we do as deacons.

On that September Friday I heard thanks from someone who was very close to Deacon Bill Diaz. That “thanks” came from Deacon Bill’s

See **Should I...** Next page ►

## Meet Our Eight Newly Ordained Permanent Deacons



**Deacon Rafael & Barbara Ferreris, Jr.**  
Home Parish: Sacred Heart – Tampa  
Assigned to Sacred Heart – Tampa



**Deacon Marc & Ana Garofani**  
Home Parish: St. Timothy – Lutz  
Assigned to St. Timothy – Lutz



**Deacon Wil & Sue Huertas**  
Home Parish: St. Cecelia – Clearwater  
Assigned to St. Cecelia – Clearwater



**Deacon Mike & Suzanne Miller**  
Home Parish: St. Mary – Tampa  
Assigned to St. Mary – Tampa



**Deacon Pablo Riano & Mariana Cristancho**  
Home Parish: St. Mark the Evangelist – Tampa  
Assigned to Corpus Christi – Temple Terrace



**Deacon Hector & Patricia Rios**  
Home Parish: St. Mark the Evangelist – Tampa  
Assigned to St. Mark the Evangelist – Tampa



**Deacon Andrew & Elizabeth Williams**  
Home Parish: Espiritu Santo – Safety Harbor  
Assigned to Espiritu Santo – Safety Harbor



**Deacon Carlos Zayas-Hernandez & Teresa Santiago**  
Home Parish & Assigned to Nativity – Brandon

## The Spirituality of Aging

Deacon Greg Lambert

The 2019 Annual Diaconate Retreat for deacons and wives was led by Father John Durbin, pastor of St. Andrew the Apostle in Apex, North Carolina. It was the second time we were treated to his lighthearted, insightful views. *The Spirituality of Aging*, the title of the retreat, could not be improved upon; hence the title of this article. Every phase of our lives has a spiritual component, and our “golden years” are no exception. Father John’s engaging style and humor provided for a weekend of prayer, fellowship, and laughter.

Various quotes from a variety of books were stacked and ready for use. The unique format, each quote on an index card, allowed for a seamless delivery of very useful information about aging. An extensive bibliography was provided for our ongoing reference. Spiritual authors Rolheiser, Rohr, and Burghardt were listed alongside more secular authors such as Albom, Jackowski, and Vorhees to provide a well-rounded library for our enrichment.

Throughout the weekend we were provided opportunities to engage in small group discussions about various aspects of aging. Topics such as *What Are Retired Persons Supposed To Do* and *Deepening Our Spiritual Life* spurred lively discussions in the small groups, and then were summarized and shared with the entire group.

The “pluses” and “minuses” of aging were explored, always with the right touch of humor. Aging is no laughing matter, but neither is it an excuse to be grumpy and out of sorts all the time. The balance necessary to stay the course on the middle path was addressed especially in terms of spiritual development and growth.

Suggestions for deepening our spiritual lives included setting aside time each day for prayer and reflection, and expressing love as often as possible. Living each day as though it were your last and following the golden rule were also encouraged. Perhaps the most esoteric advice was to become “mellow.” While lyrics from songs of the sixties were parodied and tweaked to suit the theme of the retreat, *Mellow Yellow* was not among them. Father went on to explain that the word mellow best describes the serenity that is associated with a healthy spirituality.

One of the most interesting discussion questions was whether to upsize or downsize in our retirement years. Although the prevailing wisdom skews toward downsizing, it was surprising to learn (according to a 2015 Merrill Lynch report) that 3 in 10 empty-nesters actually upsize in order to accommodate grandchildren and great-grandchildren! Others decide to stay in their homes for the same reason. Downsizing, however, is the most common strategy.

A modern interpretation of Luke 12:13-31 (big harvest –



See **Aging p7** ►

## For the Times They Are A-Changin’!

Deacon Jim Grevenites

Bob Dylan I am not, but the times they are a-changin’ – for the annual Diaconate Retreat. We recently notified you that the annual retreat will be undergoing changes. These are the first major changes since the year 2000, when Deacon Vinnie Alterio discovered the Embassy Suites and worked out



a good deal and process that fulfilled our needs for 19 years! What’s bringing on these changes? Over the last ten-plus years two questions often surfaced: Isn’t there a more spiritually reflective location for us to meet? Is there a way we can reduce the expenses and/or simplify the food? With those questions in mind we did some homework. We found that many of the nearby dioceses offering a retreat

for deacons and wives offer it at two or three different times in the year. They agree not being together as a group is tough but the size of the location is a struggle, and the flexibility of people being able to attend at different times is helpful.

We then took the idea to a small committee of deacons and asked the question, “What would you do?” Our discussions and focus landed us with the consensus being to keep us together for at least two nights (a commuting retreat isn’t really a retreat); finding a way to have the same retreat experience; and most definitely having a more reflective, spiritual experience. Armed with those ideas we met with the leaders at Bethany to see if we could coordinate something with them. The discussion only took about a half-an-hour and we satisfied all of our hopes. First, we have moved away from the peak of hurricane season as we’re scheduled for the third week of October. Second, the entire retreat center will be dedicated to the Diaconate Retreat for that week: the chapel, the conference rooms, the food preparation. Third, we are able to find a retreat director to address both the weekday (Tuesday night through Thursday noon) and weekend group (Friday night through Sunday noon). Fourth, it is financially responsible for both the parishes and for the Diocese. The entire cost will only be about 70% of what we have been paying – and most of those funds will go right back to the Diocese. Fifth, the execution of the retreat will be (OK, should be) much easier: the meals, the schedules, the Liturgies flow with the site layout and with no outside distractions.

We are excited and are looking forward to the change. At first it may cause some concern about “splitting up” the group but, then again, it just makes sense. Bishop Parkes reflected on it with that perspective and encouraged us to give it a go! It is good for the diocese; it is good for our deacons and wives. An opportunity to really get away, be at peace and enjoy some time immersed in reflecting on our vocation. The first retreats will be the weekdays of October 20-22, and the weekend of October 23-25, 2020. Yes, the times they are a-changin’! ■



Deacon Jim Grevenites is the Assistant Director of the Office of the Diaconate, Diocese of St. Petersburg. Deacon Jim and his wife, Leslie, attend St. Raphael Parish in St. Petersburg, where he is Business Manager. Deacon Jim was ordained in 1994 for the Archdiocese of Chicago. He may be contacted at [jig@dosp.org](mailto:jig@dosp.org).



**DIACONATE ORDINATION MASS**  
October 19, 2019  
Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle  
Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida

