



The Role of the Deacon Fall 2019

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The Role of Deacons: Then and Now

By Tim Drake 10/1/2015

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While priestly ordinations in the United States have decreased over the past three decades, there's one ministerial order that's seen a steady rise. The permanent diaconate has grown from zero in 1970 to 15,000 today. According to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the total number of permanent deacons increases by 10 to 15 percent every year. That bodes well for the Church, but it also raises important questions about the proper role of the deacon.

Although the diaconate as an order nearly disappeared at one point, it dates back to the New Testament. In Acts 6, the apostles appointed seven men, among them Stephen, to serve the poor. Over time, the deacons primarily served bishops—writing letters, assisting in proclaiming the gospel, representing the bishop, and serving the poor and needy on the bishop's behalf.

“A deacon was a powerful figure in the early Church, as evidenced by deacons such as Sts. Lawrence and Ephraim,” said Owen Cummings, Regents Chair of Theology at Mount Angel Seminary in Oregon and author of *Deacons and the Church*. “Many were in charge of the treasury, and many became popes.”

Beginning in the third century, though, confusion between the role of the priest and the role of the deacon led to the decline of the diaconate.

Office of the Permanent Diaconate

DeacoNews

Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey

In Memorial of Our 2018/9 Departed

Edward McFadden	Clodualdo Leonida
Jose Rodriguez	Joseph Francione
Frank McQuade	Robert Puglisi
Richard Searls	Pasquale Vuolo
Keith McKnight	Ramon Villeda
Daniel Ravelo	Richard G. Hodges
Robert C. Millea	Willie Malarcher
James Stumbar	Anthony Scalzo

John Baltus

Mary Stark	Judith Joyce
Erma Ventola	Joyce Bowen
Barbara Pluta	Diane Aponte

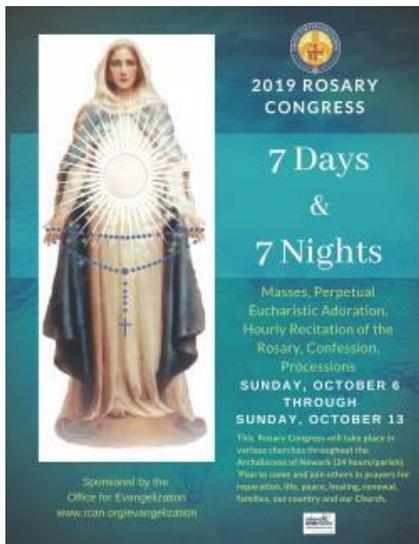
A complete list of all deceased deacons and spouses is listed on this newsletter's website under <https://www.rcan.org/sites/default/files/files/necrology.pdf>

Council President Deacon Michael York



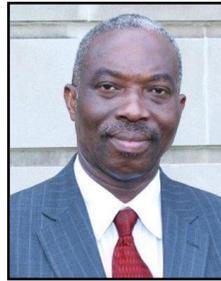
The Archdiocese of Newark will have for the first time, a Rosary Congress. As explained on the rcan.org

website: "Sponsored by the Office for Evangelization, the Archdiocese of Newark will be hosting its first Rosary



Congress. A Rosary Congress is the participation of multiple parishes in a 24 hour, 7 day Rosary and Adoration event. It begins on Sunday, October, 6, and runs continuously through Sunday, October 13." My parish, St. John the Apostle in Linden is one of the several parishes participating...otherwise, I might have missed this opportunity. The purpose is to pray for restoration, life, peace, healing, renewal, families, our country and our Church. At, St. John the Apostle, we have Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration (for more than 20 years), which has been and continues to be a great blessing for the parish, community and the Church...so it seemed natural to become a hosting parish for the Rosary Congress. A parish participation list can be found @ rcan.org/office-evangelization.

Deacon Spotlight



Deacon P. Emeruwa Anyanwu

Igbo Catholic Community/St. Borromeo Parish

Ordained May 2011 By Most Rev. Thomas Donato

Born in Nigeria, Emeruwa migrated to the United States in August 1979 at the age of 25. Emeruwa attended his Elementary and Secondary school education in Nigeria. The call to serve God manifested in his early years as a child. He was a Mass server. He had no interest in attending the Seminary to become a Priest because at such early stage in life, he wanted to be married, have children and still serve God if possible as a clergy, which was not an option for Catholic clergy at the time. He made a deal with God that will serve him as a clergy if he could become a family man and still remain Catholic.

After completing his Secondary School education, Emeruwa attended Teachers College Uzuakoli where he became certified as a High School Teacher. He taught General Science, Biology and Geography in his native country, Nigeria. After teaching for four years, he sought to improve his livelihood by searching for greener pastures in the United States where he studied at Essex County College and New Jersey Institute of Technology, both in Newark New Jersey. By 1984, Emeruwa had earned two Associate Degrees in Mathematics and Engineering respectively, and Bachelors and Master of Science in Civil Engineering, all within five years of arriving in the United States. He was a Teaching Assistant at NJIT from 1982 – 1984, which provided the needed financial assistance to complete his Bachelorette and Masters

degrees. Upon graduation, Emeruwa stated working as a civil engineer in highway design and later as a Project Manager in the Hydropower, regulating the safety of dams in the New York Regional Office of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

During his years as a High School Teacher, he met a young beautiful lady in his native Community and the relationship was blessed. They loved each other so dearly. In 1984, upon graduation from NJIT, Emeruwa married the love of his life, Ugomma and was blessed with Uchechi (relocated to Nigeria), Kelechi, Nnamdi and Nneka; and two grandchildren Joeliz and Chidi, all of which contributed to his dream as a Roman Catholic family man and cleric

In the recesses of his mind the call to serve God remained buried as a seed in the soil ready to germinate. While as a parishioner at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Maplewood, Emeruwa and his wife served as Eucharistic Ministers and CCD Teachers. Both also served in the Parish Council.

One day in 2002, a small advert on the Church bulletin drew Emeruwa's attention to step into deeper waters, a call to become a Permanent Deacon of the Roman Catholic Church. Emeruwa approached his Parish Priest, Fr. Frank Rocchi, to explore how this call could be realized. The class of 2007 has just started their formation. Emeruwa has to wait for 4 years before applying as a candidate for the Deaconate class of 2011.

During this period of waiting, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Maplewood was merged with St. Pauls Parish in Irvington to become The Good Shepherd Parish, Irvington. At the same period, the Igbo Nigerians in the Archdiocese of Newark had a need to cater to the Spiritual needs of their elderly living with their children in northern New Jersey in their Igbo native tongue. From this need, the Igbo Catholic Community of the

Archdiocese of Newark was created as an Ethnic Ministry.

In 2006, Emeruwa applied for acceptance for the class of 2011. On Ash Wednesday, before the Saturday, when the first meeting and interview for selection into the Class of 2011 Diaconate Formation, his mother died. Emeruwa delayed travelling to his native country, Nigeria, to arrange for his mother's funeral until after the interview. As God would have it, he was selected as one of the 35 men for the 2011 class.

Combining work, some travel at work, family life and attending the formation classes was not so easy but God made the burden light. On May 21, 2011, Emeruwa was ordained a Permanent Deacon for the Archdiocese of Newark and was posted to serve his local Community, The Igbo Catholic Community of the Archdiocese of Newark, worshiping and celebrating Mass in their native Igbo language at Blessed Sacrament/St. Charles Borromeo Church, Newark.

Serving the Igbo Catholic Community has been joyful for Emeruwa who proclaims the Gospel in his native Igbo language and preaches about once in a month also in the Igbo language. His ordination has brought the Church closer to his native Igbo Community. He assists the four resident Priests as assigned, ministering to the sick and the youth. The service of a Deacon extends beyond serving at the Table and the Word. Emeruwa uses his profession as a Civil Engineer to serve his community. He is designated to chair the committee responsible for the acquisition of land from the City of Newark for the construction of the Igbo Catholic Community Heritage and Cultural Center that will help to enrich the religious and cultural lives of the Igbo Catholics in the Archdiocese of Newark. His education and professional experience placed him to serve his Igbo Community in this unique capacity,

which is also savings to the Igbo Catholic Community. Emeruwa looks forward to when the dream of the Community he serves will be realized and the Igbo Catholic people will have full identity in Newark, the City that welcomed the Igbo Catholic students as they sought for higher education in the Colleges and Universities in Newark, and Central and Northern New Jersey. When the project is completed, the Igbo Catholic Youths will have a Heritage and Cultural Center that will serve the Community and the Archdiocese of Newark for future generations.

Emeruwa is blessed with a lovely wife, four children and two grandchildren and currently serves as the Essex County representative in the Archdiocese of Newark Council of Permanent Deacons.

Deacon's Then & Now

(continued from page 1)

By the fourth century, bishops increasingly delegated priests to preside in their stead at the Sunday Eucharist, leading many to wonder why the deacons held so much power.

"The role an ordained minister played with respect to the Eucharist determined one's place within the Church. The diaconate went into decline in the post-Nicene period as the Eucharist was delegated by the bishops to the presbyters," said Cummings. "Prior to the fourth century there weren't parishes, so as an increasing number of priests began to meet the pastoral needs, the deacons found themselves, in a way, supplanted by the role of the priests."

As a result, deacons were relegated to assisting priests, primarily at the altar. In addition, the diaconate came to be seen as a step on the path to eventual ordination as a priest, giving rise to the transitional deacon. Scholars suggest that the failure to understand the role

of the deacon in its own right led to the order's collapse. By the Middle Ages the diaconate had nearly disappeared.

While the idea of restoring the permanent diaconate resurfaced momentarily at the Council of Trent, it went nowhere. Four hundred years elapsed before the idea again resurfaced—in the most unlikely of places. During World War II, a group of Catholic men imprisoned at Dachau, a Nazi concentration camp, wondered whether permanent deacons might be able to do positive work for the Church. Called "the Deacon Circle," the group continued to meet after the war's end, addressing the concept of justice through service and stewardship.

By 1959, an International Diaconate Circle was organized, and when the Second Vatican Council convened, many of the German Council fathers called for the restoration of the Church's sacred order. The permanent diaconate was restored on October 30, 1963, and promulgated as part of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church on November 21, 1964.

Cummings cited three challenges facing the modern deacon. The first, he said, was the deacon's accessibility to the bishop.

"The deacon is an agent of the bishop. He often is attached to a parish, but his job is to go and do what the bishop wants him to go and do and be."

The second challenge is humility: The deacon must recognize his own gifts and weaknesses in diaconal ministry. "That's a real challenge," said Cummings. "Deacons should excel in their gifts but try to ameliorate or improve the areas where they are weak."

The third challenge, he said, is balancing his responsibilities and remembering that his priority is to his family.

However: "The number one problem that deacons face is developing the discipline within their own lives of

having enough time for prayer, their work, their families, and their diaconal commitments,” said Shelton.

A Recollection of the Archdiocese of Newark's Permanent Diaconate

(repeated from the 50th Anniversary Issue)

By Msgr Timothy J. Shugrue,
Director 1982-90



The Permanent Diaconate was instituted in the Archdiocese of Newark in 1968 by Archbishop Thomas Aloysius Boland.

According to Wikipedia, Archbishop Boland attended all four sessions of the [Second Vatican Council](#) in Rome, where he was elected to head the Bishops' Study Committee, between 1962 and 1965.

Msgr. Richard McGuinness – 1968 to 1978 as the Founding Director of the Formation Program and left, when he was named Rector of Mt. St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, MD.

Msgr. McGuinness was assisted by Associate Directors Walter Stanecki and Charles Kiley, original founder and editor of this DeacoNews (Charlie spent his entire military service in London, writing for Stars and Stripes and later serving on Eisenhower's press staff: he was the pool reporter for the signing of the German surrender at the end of WW II. Charles Kiley's son and daughter published a book, "Writing the War", which is a wonderful selection of the letters Charles and wife Billee exchanges during the war years 1942-45)

For about two years, I would say, there was no official director for the post-ordination programs. It was Fr. George L. Mader who took on that role, in or about 1979.

Rev. Edward Swierzbinski followed Msgr. McGuinness for about a year as director of the formation program. In 1979 the Program was under the supervision of Msgr. Edward J. Ciuba, Rector of Immaculate Conception Seminary and Secretary for Ministerial Formation (now at Presentation Church, Upper Saddle River).

I was appointed director of the formation program (then called the Permanent Diaconate Preparation Program) in December 1979, and was in that position until June, 1990. In 1982 I also became director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, taking over from Fr. Mader in guiding the services for deacons after their ordination. At some point in Fr. Mader's tenure, the Deacon Council was established. The relationship between the Council and my responsibilities as director of the Office were not clearly defined, but we made it work.

In addition to Deacons Kiley and Stanecki, I was assisted by Deacons Robert Thomann, Gustave Grieder, Daniel Ravelo, John Cullinane and Walter Kraus as Associate Directors of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate and by Father Harvey Ballance (now retired, living in Upper Montclair) who was Associate Director for the Hispanic Formation Program. Later, Deacon Joseph Marcom also assisted and Deacon Asterio Valesco. The wives of the Associate Directors also met regularly with us during those years.

In 1990, Deacon Michael Matthews succeeded me as director and Deacon Robert Thomann assisted with the Formation Program and Deacons Kiley and Stanecki remained involved. Also, at the time of Deacon Matthews's appointment Archbishop McCarrick then named Msgr. Thomas O'Leary as Vicar for Deacons; I believe that, for a time, Msgr. Robert Harahan (now Headmaster of Seton Hall Prep) followed him in that position.

Deacon Ed Porter was appointed as director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, 1995 – 2008 and was succeeded by Deacon John McKenna as Deacon Personnel Director. After a time Fr. James Teti was named director of the Selection and Formation. Deacons Joseph Yandoli & James Tobin are the associate directors.

Editor's Note: Our special thanks to Msgr. Shugrue and Deacon Robert Thomann for their efforts providing this "recollecton"

Did You Know?

The "St Lawrence Welfare Fund" is a donation supported fund instituted to assist Deacons who are seriously financially challenged. Send checks made out to the St Lawrence Welfare Fund to the Diaconate Office, 171 Clifton Ave, PO Box 9500, Newark NJ 07104

Resource Review

"Understanding the Diaconate"

Historical, Theological and Sociological Foundations by W. Shean McKnight, Catholic University of America Press

ISBN978-08132-3035-1
for \$19.95. (code 7-583)

Grief Awareness & Counseling: A very helpful site for those grieving and those supporting the greiving, particularly in immediate loss:
www.refugeingrief.com

If you have resources that you use and feel would be beneficial for the community to be aware of, please let us know so we can highlight them in this new column of the DeacoNews.

Send submissions for this column to
edcampy@comcast.net