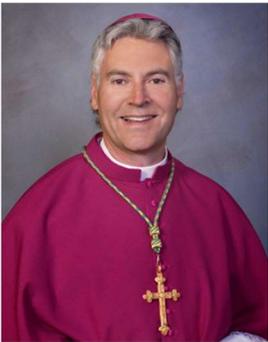


Deacons of Manitoba Newsletter

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Words from The Archbishops



Dear Deacon brothers,

Pope Francis has been full of surprises and his latest has been the calling of a Synod on Synodality. While Winnipeg Archdiocese is feeling a little smug about this, all of us can work at our listening again and again. I believe Pope Francis is inspired and this Synodal process will help us all continue to grow in wisdom and God's way as Church. I wanted to pass on a quote from Fr. Janes Martin SJ on this Synod.

Before Jesus heals Bartimaeus from blindness in the Gospel, he asks him an important question: "What do you want me to do for you?" (Lk 18: 35-43). It wasn't beneath Jesus to ask someone what they wanted, so it shouldn't be beneath us. Today the church is invited to ask that question, especially of people who feel on the margins in the church.

As Francis has said about the Synod, *va*, are we able to be a listening church? Can we listen to people whose voices are often not heard: the poor, women, youth, divorced and remarried Catholics, LGBTQ people, Catholics who have left the church? Or is the church able to listen only to what it wants to hear or is used to hearing?

Notice too that Jesus asks Bartimaeus that question even though he most likely knew exactly what Bartimaeus wanted: healing from his blindness. Jesus is giving a poor man who lives on the margins the dignity of being asked. With Jesus, the church must ask people, "What do you want me to do for you?"

May our ministry continue to involve a lot of listening and may we have the humble confidence in the One who listens to us and is with us.

Have a blessed Advent,

Archbishop Murray Chatlain
Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas

Words from Deacon James

Have a blessed advent.

This is a time of preparation to the great feast of Christmas. Let's not forget that this season is to be observed in its rightful place and not to get caught up in the Christmas rush of the world. Let us prepare the way of the Lord and make his path straight.

*Every valley shall be filled,
And every mountain and hill shall be made low,
And the crooked shall be made straight.
And rough ways made smooth.
And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*

Not only for our Lord, but all his people that are in need during this time.

Have a productive and peaceful advent to you and your families.

Blessings.

Deacon Jim Frater



Thoughts from a Retired Deacon's Wife



Deacon John's retirement
March 2015



Assisting at Helping Hands Kitchen December
2019 with Brandon Clergy and the K of C

Hello dear Deacons and Wives!

My name is Carol MacKenzie-Gruber, wife of Deacon John MacKenzie of Brandon. When Deacon Michael first asked me to write something for this newsletter I wondered what I could say, since my husband is a retired deacon, no longer active in ministry. I decided to tell you what our life was like pre-retirement and how it is now.

First, a bit about myself. I came into the church as an adult at the age of 29 through the RCIA at St. Bernadette Parish. I was one of those avid new Catholics, gobbling up anything Catholic that I could. I joined the choir a week after I was baptized, become a Benedictine Oblate, and took innumerable Catholic study programs.

Deacon John and I married in 1988, and he was ordained to the permanent diaconate on October 25, 1997, celebrating his 24th anniversary this past month. Prior to that, he was a teacher in Nova Scotia and Alberta, and then worked 28 years with the Manitoba Provincial Government and a few years with AFM.

John is from Cape Breton. He has loved the Lord and desired to serve Him from an early age, being an altar boy for many years, and then at the age of 18 going down to Boston States, as they say down home, to discern a vocation as a Franciscan. Happily for us, he discerned that God was not calling him to be a professed Franciscan, although he has a Franciscan heart, a heart for the poor and disadvantaged. His work history reflects this heart.

When John was ordained he threw himself with great enthusiasm into his new vocation, taking on any task that the bishop or his pastor asked him to undertake, from the RCIA, to preaching, to leading Liturgy of the Word with Communion services at St. Augustine of Canterbury's mission parishes, to starting up the Charismatic Prayer Group. He was St. Augustine's representative to the Brandon Ministerial, and active in promoting the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Brandon. In 1999 he was appointed as Parochial Administrator for St. James, Baldur; St. Felix, Dunrea and St. Mary's, Souris. He served them faithfully in this capacity for a year and a half, and then continued service to St. Augustine's mission parishes as requested by his pastor. Prayer has always been an important part of his life and he immersed himself in prayer to enable him to live his call to service.

I accompanied him to all of these places, helped in RCIA, etc. It was my joy to be with him, to help him in whatever way he needed, to be present. We met so many wonderful people in the various parishes that he served, people who loved the Lord and His Church and wanted their parish to flourish. One of Deacon John's gifts has been to help people flourish, sometimes against all odds.

We were on the Deacon Executive for a period of time, attended study days, and the annual retreat regularly. I helped with the music for our retreats for a few years, and started a Support and Caring Committee, sending cards to deacons and wives for various occasions.

Deacon John began to have health difficulties in mid-2013, and these issues have exacerbated over the years. He officially retired in 2015. We had been able to continue in ministry in a small way, celebrating ecumenical church services at several of Brandon's nursing homes, hospital and Brandon Correctional Centre. Post Covid, we will continue to serve in whatever way we can.

It has been a joy to be part of the Community of Deacons of Manitoba. We ask God to bless all members of the Deacon Community in their Diakonia, and we pray you have a fruitful Advent and Happy Christmas.

Suggestions or comments:

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