

## **The Trumpeter: Volume 4, Issue 2 (#16): May-June 2009**

*The Newsletter of the Deacon Community of the Diocese of Sioux City*

### **News and Notes:**

May the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ continue to fill your hearts with joy and the burning fire of His love for all His children! As we continue to celebrate the season of Easter (and as spring finally seems to have arrived!), you are all in my prayers daily.

Annual Retreat: I'm looking forward to seeing you again for our summer retreat, which begins on Friday, June 19, at about 6 pm, at St. Benedict's Center in Schuyler, NE. Bishop Charron, retired bishop of Des Moines, will be our retreat master this year.

A reminder that, for those who are willing and able among the current formation classes and the recently ordained classes, we will begin at 2 pm on the 19<sup>th</sup>, with an informal discussion of expectations for ordination and whatever else arises. I've arranged with the retreat center that, if the wives wish to take part of that conversation into "executive session," we will be able to find another room for them.

New Aspirant Class: I'm very pleased to say that the incoming aspirant class will include 10 aspirants at this point! There is one additional incomplete application that we are still looking at, which could possibly be added before August. This group will meet in Early on Saturday, June 27, at 9 am, for a short day of reflection. Anyone who wishes to show up and introduce themselves and take part is more than welcome.

Also in Early on the 27<sup>th</sup>, there will be a short workshop, from 1 to 3 pm, on the Liturgy of the Hours and using the Mundelein Psalter. This is a voluntary workshop. The new aspirants will be there, and I invite anyone else from the whole deacon community who would like to attend. I had hoped that this workshop might be scheduled before the retreat, but unfortunately that turned out not to be possible.

Deacon Digest: You all know that there have been significant budget cuts in the Chancery offices this year. One of the things I was forced to reduce was the subsidy for the Deacon Digest subscription. With regret, I will not be able to pay for this out of Office of Deacon funds next year. If you wish to renew the subscription personally, of course, you are free to do so. Another alternative to retain the less expensive group subscription rate would be for the deacon community to decide to pay for the subscription collectively. Active deacons could ask their parishes to pay this from the budget continuing education money; retired deacons and those in formation would have to pay out of pocket. Perhaps this could be discussed at the retreat?

Clergy Day on June 12: Deacons are invited to attend the Clergy Day on June 12, in Early, from **9 am to 5 pm**. Please note the start time is earlier than usual! Lunch will be provided, but please RSVP to Grace Zavala at the Chancery (233-7551, [gracez@scdiocese.org](mailto:gracez@scdiocese.org)) so that the correct quantity of food can be arranged. The topic is the diocesan Strategic Plan, for which the 5-year plan has recently been approved by the Presbyteral Council and sent to Bishop Nickless for ratification and promulgation. There is a reading assignment, namely the book "Pastoring Multiple Parishes" by Mogilka and Wiskus (Loyola UP, 2009). The Diocese still has a few

copies available, I believe; your pastor has also received one, which perhaps he can share with you; or you can order your own.

Diocesan Faith and Ministries Conference, 2009 (DFMC): The DFMC 09 will be in Spencer, at the Clay County Convention Center, on Sunday and Monday, Sept 27 and 28. Dr. John Cavadini is the speaker. The program is the same for both days, so one may plan to attend either day. It's not necessary to attend both. I anticipate that our Chancery personnel to staff the event may be a little bit low, due to various circumstances. I would like to invite two or three deacons and/or wives, who are planning to attend either day, to volunteer to help us staff the day. This would mean helping at the registration tables, directing traffic from talk to food to displays, and being available to resolve any unforeseen issues that might arise. If you're willing to help, please contact me at my office.

Also, the Office of Deacons would like to arrange a display table at the DFMC, but this will only be possible if some of you agree to staff it. I will be happy to provide all the materials, if you will be willing to volunteer. Please contact me if you are interested.

Other dates for 2009-2010: Here are some other dates to keep on your calendar for next academic year:

- *October 31:* Fall Day of Reflection, in Early. Mass with Bishop Nickless, Rites of Candidacy and Acolyte.
- *December 4:* first Friday in December. We haven't laid the plans yet, but I'm assuming that we will organize our annual Christmas party on this day again.
- *March 13, 2010:* Spring Day of Reflection, in Early.
- *March 29:* Monday of Holy Week, Chrism Mass at the Cathedral
- *April 4:* Easter Sunday
- *April 30/May 1:* Ordination Vespers and Mass, at the Cathedral
- *July 9-11, 2010:* Region IX Deacon Convocation, at the Sioux City Convention Center

**Reflection: Chapter Talk, May 3, 2009, by ABBOT ELIAS DIETZ, O.C.S.O., Abbot of Gethsemane Abbey in Kentucky:**

### **Immersion in the Scriptures; The Work of God**

As we listen to the gospel accounts of the days after the Resurrection and to the Acts of the Apostles about the early communities of believers, it is striking to notice how often the scriptures are mentioned. Before his Passion, Jesus had often talked about the scriptures being fulfilled, but at the time the disciples did not fully understand. In the light of the Resurrection, all the passages Jesus had mentioned and many more came to mind in their fullest meaning. On the road to Emmaus Jesus opened the scriptures to his traveling companions, and when he appeared to the Eleven, he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. Paul argued from the scriptures, and the first converts examined the scriptures to see if what they were hearing was true.

Encounters with the Risen Jesus shed light on the scriptures, and, vice versa, knowledge of the scriptures opened the way to faith in the Resurrection. As Jesus says in John's gospel; "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me" (Jn 6:45). The scriptures lead us to Jesus, and Jesus takes us to the heart of the scriptures.

This dynamic is especially important for monks, who aspire to live lives immersed in the scriptures.

Moreover, the word of God leads us to union with Christ in the sacraments, and then it is in the scriptures that we find the key to interpret our experience of the sacraments.

The risk of being so immersed in the scriptures is that we can stop noticing them or go stagnant in our assimilation of their meaning. If we fail to listen willingly to sacred reading, we are no longer listening to Christ and learning Christ. If we content ourselves with passive attendance-or worse yet, no attendance-or if we give up questioning and searching the scriptures to answer personal questions that arise, we are depriving ourselves of a key benefit of life in the monastery. And even if you are a good reader or good listener, do you content yourself with the obvious meaning or the standard commentary? Do you see the scriptures as a deep well that no one else can dig for you? Do you try to extract honey from the rock when the word sometimes seems impenetrable to you?

Revitalizing the quality of one's attention and one's personal level of interest in the scriptures is as essential as maintaining one's physical health; once it starts to deteriorate, it is not easy to reverse the momentum. We remind ourselves of this as a community by having occasional conferences or classes, but as an individual no one can do this work for you.

And it is work. The Work of God is mostly a matter of reciting scripture, especially the psalms. The depth of meaning we reach as we pray the psalms depends to a large degree on how well we have prepared the ground through personal reading and study. This is not to say that we should attend the office with busy minds. The goal is to come with a well-prepared, undivided, and attentive mind.

In Chapter 19 of the Rule, on psalmody, Saint Benedict tells us to "sing the psalms in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices." On the surface he is simply telling us to pay attention and not let the mind wander, but that is a simplistic, minimal reading of the text. When Saint Paul talks about us being "transformed by the renewal of our minds" (Rm 12:2), he is talking about much more than our thought processes. Mind in the Bible and the Fathers is one of the many synonyms for the whole person: like soul, spirit, or heart. And when Benedict speaks of our voices, he means voices that are pronouncing the word of God. In other words, to sing the psalms wholeheartedly is to allow our deepest self, made in the image and likeness of God, to be attuned to God's spoken word and to the Word-made-flesh.

Just like the early disciples who came to knowledge of the scriptures thanks to Jesus, and who in turn came to understand his Passion and Resurrection thanks to the scriptures, our penetration of the scriptures goes hand in hand with our degree of closeness to Christ. The more the mystery of the Cross penetrates my life, the more I can penetrate the meaning of the scriptures that led up to that mystery.

Again, the psalms have a special place here; we know from early accounts of the martyrs that they spontaneously turned to the psalms for their own prayer and for articulating their response to the call to martyrdom. This is because the psalms are the voice of humanity; they express a totality of experience that is beyond the capacity of an individual. To pray them is to go beyond oneself. Each time we bow and pray the doxology after a psalm, we are reminded of the universal scope of what we have prayed. The General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours puts it well;

The person who prays the psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours prays not so much in his own person as in the name of the Church, and, in fact, in the person of Christ himself. If one bears this in mind, difficulties disappear when one notices in prayer that the feelings of the heart in prayer are different from the emotions expressed in the psalm . . . . The person who prays the psalms in the name of the Church can always find a reason for joy or sadness . . . . In this way human frailty, wounded by self-love, is healed in that degree of love in which the mind and voice of one praying the psalms are in harmony. (GILH, 108).

Praying the psalms is not something you can master. The psalms are too much to assimilate. To study

them from a critical distance or to appreciate them merely from an aesthetic point of view leaves one in control. To pray them is to get lost in them and to identify with a range of experience that is beyond any of us at any given time. It takes work to let the Work of God do its work. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and his ways are not our ways. To pray the psalms is to leave our way behind and let God direct our thoughts.

In the Rule, one of the criteria for discerning a novice's vocation is zeal for the Work of God. This same criterion remains a gauge for monks throughout monastic life. When need be, we recall the Lord's warning in the Book of Revelation; "I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first" (Rev 2;4-5).

Many of the early writings on the psalms are full of enthusiasm, so consulting one of the Fathers' commentaries can be a way of revitalizing one's attitude toward psalmody. I close with a sample from Saint Ambrose:

The psalms are the blessing of the people, a universal language, the voice of the Church, the harmonious profession of our faith, an expression of our complete self-giving, the joy of our freedom, the cry of our overflowing joy. They calm our anger, dispel our worries, and are a consolation to us in times of sadness. They are a weapon by night, and a source of teaching during the day. [...] Beauty vies with doctrine in the psalms; at one and the same time, they are songs that delight the heart and texts that enlighten the mind. Every feeling and thought finds its echo in the book of Psalms. (Enarrationes in XII Psalmos, 1.9-11)

### **Notable Dates:**

#### May

- 5 – Jeff Gallagher, birthday
- 10 – Tim and Sue Murphy, anniversary
- 14 – Sue Murphy, birthday
- 16 – Bud Weiler, deceased
- 18 – Sheri Schon, birthday
- 22 – Mark and Dawn Prosser, anniversary
- 23 – Gerry Bertrand, Ron Pietz, Larry Sitzman, Tony Reuter, Bob Wiskus, ordination (1992)
- 24 – Bob Lenz, Joe Straub, ordination (1980); Gerry Streit, ordination (1986)
- 25 – Fred Karpuk, ordination (1985)
- 29 – Nancy Stone, birthday
- 30 – Tom Morgan, Tim Murphy, Eldon Sullivan, ordination (1998); Greg Sampson, ordination (1992)
- 31 – Doris Weiler, deceased

#### June

- 1 – Maureen Lenz, birthday; Ray Portz, ordination (1996)
- 2 – Mary Straub, David Brown, birthday; Bob Larsen, ordination (1984)
- 12 – Mike Hand, Phil Doocy, Leroy Rupp, ordination (1983)
- 14 – Louis Meiner, ordination (2003); Ray and Gaylene Rosburg, anniversary
- 18 – David and Cecilia Lopez, anniversary
- 29 – Ray Portz, birthday
- 30 – Bill Black, birthday

#### July

- 10 – Jeff and Trudy Gallagher, anniversary
- 12 – Trudy Gallagher, birthday
- 15 – Gary Schon, birthday
- 17 – Gary and Sheri Schon, anniversary
- 29 – Fred and Beth Karpuk, anniversary