

Two Saint Elizabeth Parishioners Answer the Call to the Permanent Diaconate

Two members of Saint Elizabeth Parish will be ordained as Permanent Deacons this month. Jon Hess and Kevin Mead, together with 14 other candidates, have journeyed through a seven-year archdiocesan formation program together and will receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders at their ordination by Archbishop Charles Chaput at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul on June 9, 2018.



Becoming a Permanent Deacon in the Catholic Church is no small undertaking. The road to this important ministry is not as simple as taking some classes, getting ordained and assisting the parish priest.

Discerning the call to the diaconate involves a significant amount of time and prayerful consideration, together with input from the candidate's spouse and

family (if married), teachers, mentors and the Church. In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, it takes seven years to become a Permanent Deacon. This includes graduate level theology courses one evening a week, homiletics courses every other week, and weekend workshops and retreats about every six weeks. The first year of the journey is a time of informal familiarization with the formation program and a time of self-reflection and discernment. The following years are more rigorous and demanding, consisting of academic coursework, as well as personal, spiritual, pastoral and liturgical experiences. Men pursuing the diaconate understand their call to holiness as a strong commitment to service and ministry; they experience their desire to serve as a true vocation within the Church.

How did you receive your call to the diaconate?

"Growing up in Catholic grade school, I dreamed of being a priest," explained Jon Hess. "Although life took me in another direction, the

Dates of Interest

Graduation Mass
Saint Elizabeth Parish School
Wednesday, June 13, 7:00 PM

Memorial Mass for Deceased Fathers
Saturday, June 16, 8:30 AM

Independence Day Holiday
Wednesday, July 4
Mass at 9:00 AM

Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary
Wednesday, August 15
Mass at 7:30 AM, 12:00 PM & 7:00 PM in the Church

Labor Day Holiday
Monday, September 3
Mass at 9:00 AM

Saint Elizabeth Parish School Opening Day for Grades 1-8
Tuesday, September 4

Elementary Faith Formation Weekly Sessions Begin
September 10-11-12

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Living Out Our Pastoral Plan

More than 65 parishioners attended a workshop on February 24 entitled: “Saint Elizabeth 2021: The Pastoral Plan, Our Future.” The goal of the interactive workshop was for parishioners to take away opportunities to live out more fully the values and goals of the Pastoral Plan at home, at work and within the parish community.

Our Pastoral Plan reflects where Saint Elizabeth Church is now and where we are called to go as a parish community. It serves as a guide to sustain and enhance Saint Elizabeth in service to God and others. The 2017-2021 Pastoral Plan includes a new Vision, an updated Mission statement, a set of Core Parish Values and six Pastoral Goals & Objectives. A full copy of the Pastoral Plan is available on the parish website (www.stelizabethparish.org).

Father Mullin opened the workshop with prayer and a short introduction; then members of the Parish Pastoral Council presented an overview of the Pastoral Plan to provide the context for the workshop activities.

First, attendees broke out into small-group, roundtable discussions that focused on how to personalize and live out the Pastoral Plan’s Values in daily life. Most parishioners found they had several values that spoke to them personally, while other values didn’t fully align with their own ideas. The groups discussed ways for individuals to live out different values. For example, one group determined that making posters to invite parishioners to a



social event was a form of “Nourishing a Welcoming and Inviting Parish” – one of Saint Elizabeth’s stated Values.

Next, the group brainstormed answers to this question: What would achieving the parish goals look like to us and our community? Flip charts for each goal were set up around the social hall. Small groups had three minutes to brainstorm a single goal and then the groups moved to a different one and built on the previous groups’ ideas. It was like “speed dating” but instead “speed brainstorming.”

Many of the ideas generated focused on the practical application of our goals. For instance, one parishioner said to “proactively meet someone new,” as a way to be more welcoming; another suggested to “tell someone you are praying for them or their loved one.” For the goal “Expand Family Faith Formation,” one parishioner suggested that families pray the rosary together or attend a workshop outside of Mass together. And, for the goal “Continue to Grow Our Stewardship Identity,” participants suggested

that we extend personal invitations to family members to events like the Stewardship Day of Service.

Many commented that the workshop was a great way to learn more about the Pastoral Plan. Parishioners remarked that they really enjoyed brainstorming, interacting and collaborating with one another. To live and help implement the plan, all agreed to stay informed and talk about the plan with family and friends. To become more involved in the community, they planned to pray for stewardship opportunities.

~ Dave Guthrie

“The Spirit” Staff

Editor-in-Chief

Lisa Barbadora

Director of Communications

Deacon Barry Midwood

Communications Coordinator

Sara Richardson

Contributors

Lisa Barbadora

Amy Giampietro

Dave Guthrie

Julie Krumenacker

Elisa Sheronas

Photos

Mary Damian

Layout and Graphics

Amy Giampietro

Other Staff

Jonathan Hess

Sue Morgan

Father Mullin

Youth Group Retreats Shepherd Kids Forward in Faith

Expanding and engaging retreat program attracting more teens

The word ‘retreat’ literally means to move backward, which seems contrary to the intention of spiritual retreats. Saint Elizabeth Retreats do the opposite – they move participants forward, spiritually, towards a more complete Christian life. They are unique opportunities to hit ‘pause’ on our hectic lives and reflect on our relationship with God and how that is expressed in our connection with all those around us. They are special, exciting, uplifting, thought-provoking and altogether moving experiences.

That’s some pretty deep stuff.

So deep, in fact, that retreats could – on the surface – seem overwhelming to kids. They can even seem intimidating or foreign to teens, who are often more aware of their social media than their spirituality. Yet, as Saint Elizabeth Youth Ministry Coordinator Ryan Schwalm might suggest, it is this demographic who may benefit from retreats the most. That’s why Saint Elizabeth is working to expand our youth retreat program while also making them more accessible, relevant and fun.

This year, Saint Elizabeth made a significant push to expand the number of retreats available to parish youth. Currently, Saint Elizabeth offers an annual retreat called “Kairos” for juniors and seniors in high school, and in April, initiated the parish’s first retreat designed specifically for freshmen and sophomores. In addition, Saint Elizabeth coordinates an annual, week-long summer mission trip that includes the



In April, Saint Elizabeth held the parish’s first Kairos retreat for freshmen and sophomores.

Steubenville Youth Conference for all high school students – 25 teens have already registered for 2018!

The Kairos retreat, which has become a parish tradition, gets very high marks. In fact, the majority of the juniors who attended last year returned as senior leaders in 2018. According to Ryan, “We received a lot of great feedback from the kids in past years, and this year was even more successful. While this is not a recruiting exercise, it’s nice to see the impact of Kairos on bringing youth back to church. The more connected they are with the Church, the more of a strong foundation they will have for life.”

The pilot retreat for freshman and sophomores welcomed 12 kids and eight leaders, surpassing Ryan’s expectations. “We went to Black Rock Retreat Center in Quarryville, which encompasses 100 acres of beautiful property and offers great flexibility for small-group discussions, fun outdoor activities and indoor relaxation. Because it was a smaller group, we were able to adapt the retreat to each teen in-

dividually, and this turned out to be a really important aspect of the experience,” explained Ryan.

So, why should Saint Elizabeth youth consider attending a retreat next year?

“For me, it was so important that no one

ever forced my hand to explore my spiritual side. The people in my life allowed me to travel that journey at my own pace, so this is what I want to do for our teens... through no-pressure, engaging activities that fit with where they are right now,” said Ryan.

“We have a young staff, so we understand the teens’ mindset. Even as our retreats grow and mature, this position allows us to get to know and build close relationships with the kids. Isn’t that what Jesus did with his disciples? He never overreached. Retreats allow us to do the same, while also shedding some light on their budding relationship with God – a foundation they can take with them wherever they go.”

For more information about upcoming retreats and mission trips, contact the parish office. You can also email Ryan Schwalm at rschwalm@stelizabethparish.org. He will be busy continuing to create dynamic youth programs and retreats that move the next generation forward – never backward.

~ Lisa Barbadora

School Spirits: Anticipation for the Year Ahead

In her fifth year as Principal of Saint Elizabeth Parish School, Dr. Diane Greco is filled with enthusiasm, energy and positive plans for the future, while savoring this year's accomplishments. "Every year is unique because of the personalities of the students," Dr. Greco explained, summarizing the 2017-2018 school year. She described the efforts of our school to build a community of children who get to know one another and form a cohesive group by helping each other in every learning situation.

This year, Saint Elizabeth Parish School introduced a new program called *Second Step*, a social emotional learning program or SEL, made possible by a grant from The Foundation for Catholic Education. SEL

encourages students to learn a common language of empathy and negotiation, so that they can practice instant problem solving through teamwork. The goal is to help children from diverse backgrounds learn together in an atmosphere free from bullying and social friction.

Also this year, Saint Elizabeth Parish School received a grant for the introduction of the Next Generation Science Standards, (NGSS) for kindergarten and 1st grade children to learn *Nancy Larson Sci-*

ence, a more thoughtful approach to scientific processes that utilizes observation rather than memorization. The 5th and 6th grades also benefited from a new science program this year, while the 7th and 8th grades will begin a new program next year that concentrates on Biology and Physics.

Several 8th grade students expressed enthusiasm when they shared their thoughts on their graduating year's highlights and the upcoming move to high

ership work on the Student Council, the Roller Coaster project in science and, of course, the Eagles' Super Bowl victory! Many of the teachers have been working with these students for several years and commented on their steadily growing maturity.

Many thanks to students Jack Boncek, Mia Girty, Maggie Grant, Michael McGonagle, Olivia Miller, Marley O'Connell, Jack Ringenbach and Andrew Schaeffer, as well as to teachers, Jennifer



Saint Elizabeth Parish School's eighth-grade class has relished their graduating year.

school. There were many highlights, but some of their favorites include: working with 'Kindergarten Buddies' as role models; monthly 8th grade breakfasts; extracurricular events like sports, the musical, Living Stations of the Cross and the class trip to New York City. All agree that 8th grade was challenging and fun; they are excited about going to high school, if not also a little sad to say good bye. Their teachers commented on their cohesion and sense of community, enhanced by their lead-

D'Amelio, Patricia Guzman, Helen Locke, Jen Nangle, Paula Ringenbach, Louise Shanley and Sandi Schoen, for their thoughtful responses for this article. The people of Saint Elizabeth are thankful for our parish school, the principal and staff, students and teachers, all of whom show us every day how fortunate we are to have them as important members of our parish family. We wish them all well as they continue on their educational adventures.

~ Elisa Sheronas

Jon and Kevin's Journey to Permanent Diaconate

longing to serve in another capacity never fully left my mind or heart. After a few years as a member of Saint Elizabeth Parish, I attended an informational meeting about the Permanent Diaconate, but quickly decided I was unable to devote the time requirements, due to my full-time job, which required significant travel. Then, Father Mullin asked me to once again consider the call, assuring me that if it was God's will, all challenges and roadblocks would be overcome. While I could write a short novel detailing the accuracy of his prediction, suffice it to say I am now a short way from receiving Holy Orders."

"I have always felt some sort of calling to ministry," said Kevin Mead. "However, that calling never really came together for me until I converted to Catholicism in 2006. Two years later, I enrolled in Saint Charles Seminary to pursue a master's degree in Theology. At the time, I didn't know God had further plans for me."

How were you able to balance work and family life with your commitment to the diaconate program?

"The amount of class time, coupled with the required course work, is a huge commitment," said Jon. "It is a significant undertaking to manage a full-time career, family and seminary. I am amazed by the level of commitment my classmates have shown. Of course, none of this would be possible without the love and support of our spouses and families."

"This is one aspect of formation I

would not downplay for anyone discerning a call to the Permanent Diaconate," added Kevin. "It takes a substantial amount of time and commitment. However, God makes all obstacles not only manageable, but He offers growth opportunities as well."

For candidates who are married, their wives play a significant role, too. Called to be living examples of marital fidelity, deacons' wives must be consistently supportive of their husbands, who vow to remain faithful to the Sacrament of Marriage in addition to the Sacrament of Holy Orders. In fact, a wife's consent is required for her husband to enter the formation program, due to the time commitment and its impact on the family.

Describe the experience of your husband pursuing the permanent diaconate?

"When Father Mullin spoke with Jon about the diaconate program, I felt it was a great opportunity for him to grow stronger in his faith and to be able to share that with others," remarked Jon's wife, Sandy. "We had no idea going into that first inquiry session that the program involved wives attending classes, workshops and retreats. It took some careful thought and prayers, but I realized this was an opportunity for me to be there for Jon. The program was very rewarding and I have learned so much. I had no idea how much I would grow in my own faith. There were times I felt I was in over my head, but with the support of the other wives, we got through the



Jon and Sandy Hess have learned and grown together in their faith as Jon pursued the Permanent Diaconate.

difficult times. The program has given Jon and me time together, and time to get to know ourselves as the people we have become on this journey of love that began 38 years ago. I will continue to support him as well as 'critique' his homilies," she laughed.

"I wasn't entirely surprised when Kevin first mentioned the diaconate program," said Debbie Mead. "I figured we would go to the informational session and then talk things through. The biggest thing to understand is that this is a life-long commitment. That discussion took some time. The program is intense and seven years seemed like a long time. But throughout that time, we have grown as a couple and made some wonderful friends who have been on the same journey. We have both

(continues on page 6)

Permanent Diaconate Journey

learned a lot about ourselves and our relationship. The formation process brought us closer together and strengthened our marriage. It also deepened our faith and made us better Catholics."

What were some unexpected challenges, as well as joys, of the diaconate formation process?

"I had no doubt I would fully enjoy and embrace the intellectual challenge the program would provide," noted Jon. "My concern was growing along spiritual lines while constantly being open to God's will. I am very happy to say that as my understanding of the teachings of the Church grew, so did my spiritual life, which was a great unexpected joy in the program. Marriage and parenthood remain my first calling and the formation experience has strengthened both."

"The total experience of the diaconate program is difficult to put into words," added Kevin. "So much of it takes place within the heart. At first, I think most people ask themselves if they really feel they are being called to this vocation. It's easy to come up with a list of reasons why we think we can't do it. But then I could hear God saying, 'Look what I've done for you, and tell me again why you can't do this for me?' That's a hard question to ignore. The formation experience has deepened my sense of purpose and made me more aware of the tangible and spiritual needs of others. I'm definitely a better person than when I began this journey."

What is it like to anticipate your ordination and what are your

hopes for future ministry?

"I have yet to meet anyone in formation or already ordained who feel 'worthy' of the call. However, I always believed if it is God's will, it WILL happen," said Jon. "I am nervous and excited, but mostly hopeful that I will be a faithful and fruitful servant to my community. I hope to be an instrument of God's love and

am being ordained, not for myself, but in service to others and to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in which I so strongly believe. I pray that I will bring others to a more profound relationship with Jesus Christ. I hope that my actions, preaching and life will exemplify the joy and peace that God graciously instilled within me. I also want to do my part to ensure that the faith and traditions of the



Debbie and Kevin Mead; Kevin says he is a better person today than when he began his diaconate journey.

mercy. I truly have no expectations, only faith that whatever and wherever I am called, I will have the strength to do God's will."

"It is exciting to anticipate ordination, but ordination also evokes a deep sense of prayerfulness, humility and gratitude to God," noted Kevin. "Ordination is a significant event, but it comes with a purpose, and that purpose is to live out and fulfill the call that God has extended to me. I

Catholic Church continue to be handed down to my family and those I encounter in ministry."

Saint Elizabeth Parish warmly congratulates Kevin and Jon, as well as their wives, Debbie and Sandy. We wish them all the best and God's continued blessings as they live out their sacred commitment.

~ Julie Krumenacker

What is a Permanent Deacon?

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the Permanent Diaconate in the United States. The diaconate is the third in rank of the three orders of ordained ministry (bishop, priest, deacon). Deacons are ministers in the Catholic Church who are configured to Christ to serve the people of God in word, liturgy and service, both in the Church and in the world. In 1967, following the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI initiated the restoration of the Permanent Diaconate after over 1,200 years of inactivity. A year later, U.S. bishops asked the Vatican to renew the Permanent Diaconate as an active, permanent order of ministry.

Early deacons assisted the apostles, who were the first bishops, with distribution of food and

charitable assistance to the poor. The modern-day Permanent Diaconate is a ministry in which deacons do not later become priests. Often confused with transitional deacons, who are ordained deacons in an interim step toward priesthood, Permanent Deacons are typically married men with families (although single men may be ordained), who have full-time employment in the private sector.

The word *deacon* derives from the Greek *diakonia*, meaning service, indicating that a deacon is called, like Christ, to be a servant. Permanent Deacons live the Church's mission of proclaiming God's love and justice, while inspiring others to lives of service and conversion of heart. This involves reaching out to the poor, ministering to the hospitalized

and incarcerated, and advocating for those who are marginalized.

As ministers of the altar, Permanent Deacons can baptize, witness marriages, perform funeral and burial services outside of Mass, distribute Holy Communion, proclaim the Gospel and preach the homily.

Permanent Deacons are committed to living as a representation of Christ in their homes, in the Church, on their jobs, in their community, and in the world. Thank you to the dedicated men who serve as a wonderful example of Christ's love at Saint Elizabeth and beyond.

~ Julie Krumenacker



Congratulation and blessings to the 165 sixth graders that received the Sacrament of Confirmation on Saturday, April 28, 2018.

Summer Reading with a Purpose

During the lazy days of summer, let Saint Elizabeth Parish's resources help you stay connected to your faith or forge a deeper relationship with Christ.

Whether you're looking for a book to take on your travels or to just settle in for an afternoon of discovery, you'll find hundreds of possibilities in the *Adult Spiritual Library*. Located in the Holy Family Room just off the church narthex, the library is accessible anytime the church is open, which makes it convenient to pop in any weekday and before or after weekend Masses. Check-out is on the honor system, with an easy-to-follow card system. Materials, which are organized by categories like Church History, Catholic Worship and Devotional Literature, can be borrowed for one month.

"The room itself offers a quiet place to sit and reflect," said Mary Ellen Tomaine, Librarian. DVDs and CDs complement the collection and can be borrowed, too.

NEW Interactive Resource – FORMED!

If technology is more your speed, check out Formed.org. This digital platform affords Saint Elizabeth parishioners free access to video-based study programs, feature films, audio presentations and eBooks from a number of leading Church presenters. "Formed is free and available 24/7, which makes it a perfect resource for parishioners who might be away from Saint Elizabeth this summer," explained Beth Riordan, Director of Religious Education. The parish site can be found at ste.formed.org. Simply register with an email address and create a password. The community tab links directly to Saint Elizabeth-specific content and to the entire Formed collection. FORMED is also available as an app for Android or iPhone.

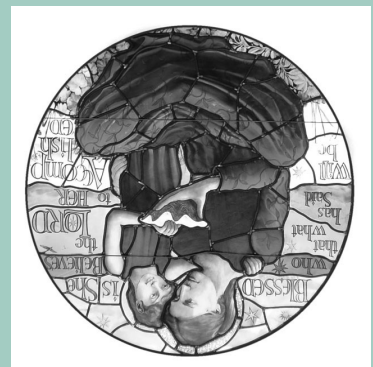


Happy reading!

~Amy Giampietro



Rev. Thomas M. Mullin, Pastor
P.O. Box 695
Uwchlan, PA 19480-0695
Phone: 610-321-1200
Fax: 610-646-6513
E-mail: steuucc@stelizabetchparish.org
Web site: stelizabetchparish.org
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