

THE SACRAMENTO DEACON

The deacon proclaims the Gospel, is a voice for the powerless and marginal, a witness to the Good News in the marketplace, a leader of public prayer and sacrament of the Lord Jesus Christ who came not to be served to serve.
The deacon, in the image of Jesus, is called to wash the feet of his sisters and brothers.

Just a Kid Again

You have hidden all these things from the wise and learned; you have revealed them to the childlike. Luke 10: 22

Oh no, I'm falling. I'll smash on the pavement. All I can see is florescent green. Bump. Wobble. We're steadying up. I'm peddling hard. Now there are yellow, orange and brown, shapes, houses, fall colors. I'm all right, not in control, but moving fast, feeling fine. Rich is in control; I trust him. My first few seconds on the back of a tandem bicycle were so scary I thought if it lasted another thirty seconds I'd puke. That glowing green was not the vision of my last moment; it was the back of Rich's cycling jacket.

I have ridden tandem bicycles for thirty-five years, but I've always been in front. I am the captain as we tandem riders say. Sissy rides in back; she is the stoker. The captain is in charge. He navigates, steers, shifts gears, brakes, dodges traffic, and he makes all the decisions. All the stoker does is peddle and trust. So now in the stoker position I was learning to trust.

I used to think I was in control. Health has always been a major concern for me. I have studied every new proclamation about self-help fitness since I was in college. I thought I could control my health with diet and exercise. As long as rode one hundred miles every week and followed every healthful living mandate, I would be in control of my health.

A year ago I became so weak I could hardly walk. It was lymphoma, and I was so anemic I couldn't start chemotherapy until I had a transfusion. And then there were eight months of chemo: growing weaker, pain, dull depression. And then the worst of all: half way through the treatment shingles hit me so hard it made me forget about the cancer.

And what did I learn from all this? I learned I am a master of self-delusion. I

had convinced myself that I was in control and my worsening symptoms were simple signs of getting older. The biggest lesson though was I had to learn to trust. I had to give myself over to others. I had to let God work through my oncologist and the chemo nurses. I had to learn to have total trust in them. Trusting the chemo nurses who took care of me during my all day intravenous sessions was easy; they were my angels.

After the seventh treatment my doctor ordered another CT scan. I was getting better, no more chemo for now. Four months later I was finally over the chemo and feeling fine. But I still didn't realize what all I had been through meant until that long ride in the stoker position. I was learning to trust.

And now I wonder; when Jesus told his followers to be like children was he telling them they must be trusting like little ones?

~ Deacon Mike Crowley

Looking Ahead to the New Roman Missal

On December 5, 2009, the recently ordained classes of 2008 and 2006 met at St. Peter & Paul Parish in Rocklin.

Presenter Sandra Holland, Director of Worship of the Diocese of Sacramento provided "Updates on the Roman Missal" and study program available for use with Parish groups. Elizabeth (Beth) White and Deacon Joseph Symkowick, representative of CRS, spoke on "Helping the poor put their lives together in their most desperate moments".

If you missed this event and would like copies of some of the handouts contact the Permanent Diaconate Office.

jallen@diocese-sacramento.org
(916) 733-0244

Deacon Council Website

One of the key tasks of the Deacon Council is to facilitate communication within the diaconate community. Toward that goal, the council recently gained an Internet presence by creating a website at www.sacdeacon.org. Although there is some information in Spanish and a few links to sites in Spanish, it is our hope to expand these offerings in the future.

On the website there is a page for news and events, listing and describing past and future days of continuing education and retreats. Two other pages contain links to several immersion experience opportunities and to many other sites for information concerning educational opportunities, background information, church documents, social justice organizations, etc. There is one page that describes how those who have not been getting e-mails from the diocesan office can configure their e-mail program to bypass the spam filters that some Internet Service Providers have in place, such as SBC Global. An "About Us" page contains an e-mail link to the council chair as well as information about paying dues.

Besides the above availability of information, the site also contains an interactive forum in which members of the diaconate community can ask questions, provide answers, make comments, etc. This is an excellent vehicle to stay in touch with other members involved in ministries similar to yours, or to ask questions about ministries you may be considering.

~ Deacon Larry Niekamp



Food for the Poor in Haiti My Mission Trip

For more than 20 years I have enjoyed working on my family history. In that process I discovered that one branch of the family came from the country of Saint-Domingue. This country became known as Haiti after a slave revolution in 1804. I had often thought of visiting there some day – to see the ancestral homeland.

But as I researched more, I found that the Haiti of today is not the country of my ancestors. The boundaries are the same, but the people, the culture are all new. I read that Haiti is an extremely poor country – most descriptions call it “the poorest country in the Western hemisphere.” My desire to visit there faded until earlier this year when my interest in social justice issues sharpened. I recalled reading an article in the Deacon Digest about the Food for the Poor organization that provides trips to several of the countries in which they serve, Haiti being one of them. The trips are provided free of charge to deacons and deacon candidates.

In August I contacted the coordinator of these trips, Bernard Bonnick, a deacon from Jamaica. In October I found myself standing on the tarmac of the Toussaint L’Ouverture Airport in the capital city of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. My long-held desire had been achieved but for an entirely different reason.

I was one of twenty people on this trip. Fifteen were employees at the Food for the Poor (FFP) headquarters in Coconut Creek, Florida, and five of us were (in their terms) “donors” – a Catholic man from Chicago, a Catholic man from Denver, a Baptist woman from Bakersfield, and another deacon from Milwaukee, and me.

At the FFP offices in Port-au-Prince, we helped dish out rice and soup to those who come for food. At this location, they feed 2,500 people a day, 6 days a week. Most of these people take buckets of the rice and soup home to their families.

We spent the next two and a half days

touring some of the facilities supported in whole or in part by FFP. We saw school rooms crowded with pupils sitting two to a desk, with no lights, no fans, no cross ventilation, no maps or pictures on the wall, but the students appeared happy and smiling and eager to learn.

We saw orphanages, one for boys and one for girls, each with over a hundred residents. These children, too, appeared happy and smiling. In the dormitories, the beds are all bunk beds, pushed tightly together side-by-side with only about 12 inches between the foot of one and the head of another. It occurred to me that the room I use at home for an office would sleep at least 12 people in this configuration, but that room is for my use alone. I had never before thought of personal space as a blessing.

One of our group brought some pencils and gave them to the boys at the orphanage. The boys were so excited! They waved them overhead and crowded around to have their pictures taken with pencils in hand. One simple pencil – a gift, a blessing. I thought of my plans to upgrade my computer to the latest and greatest; did I see that as a blessing the way these boys saw their pencils?

We visited a home for the elderly at which each person had their own little cabin about 12 x12 feet, no plumbing. The cabins were lined up in rows in a beautiful tropical garden of lawn and palm trees. We had the opportunity to meet the residents and dance to bongo drums with them. We also visited a home for handicapped children, most of whom were bed-ridden or used wheel-chairs. These children too appeared happy and smiling.

Each place we visited could probably be described as poor or the best that can be expected under the circumstances. At each place, however, my thoughts went back to one particular stop we made on our first day. It was the place that would be the alternative for all these orphans, seniors, and children with disabilities. It was Cité Soliel, a notorious slum in this capital city. Some of the streets are paved and lined with small, broken-down, concrete block homes. Few of these homes have electricity and none have plumbing. Behind those homes are labyrinths of hovels constructed of rusted

corrugated steel and whatever else can be scavenged. Many of these homes have encroached onto the dump, where piles of trash tumble into the water-filled ditch.

As we stood in the midst of this dump two young boys walked past, bare-footed, and carrying a small kite made of some old plastic bag and a few sticks tied



together. I watched as the boys shouted with joy as they flew their precious kite, oblivious to all around them that so appalled us.

As if the distinction between the dump and the tropical gardens of the orphans’ homes were not sharp enough, we spent each night at the Hotel Montana in Petionville, high in the hills above the crowded city, above the slum, above the dump. There we had clean linens, hot and cold running water, wonderful food, and walkways swept clean every day.

Before I left home for Haiti, several of the people I was in contact with at FFP said it was a life-changing experience. At the time I thought I really didn’t need to have my life changed – I liked it the way it was. But it has changed my life. I pick up a pencil and think of an orphan boy. I put on my shoes and think of the boys in the dump without shoes. I run the water in the sink until it is hot and think of the women in the slum lined up to get a bucket of drinkable water for their families. I think of the blessings I have received. I give thanks for space, privacy, food, water.

I encourage all of the diaconate community to consider taking a mission trip with Food for the Poor; if not to Haiti, then to Jamaica or Nicaragua. For more information, go to www.foodforthe poor.org. You can also contact Deacon Bernie at bernardb@FoodforthePoor.com to learn more about the trips for deacons.

Deacon Larry Niekamp



Book Review
“The Colony”

The “Colony” is a book about those men, women and children, victims of Hansen’s Disease (leprosy), who were exiled to the settlement of Molokai in the Hawaiian Islands beginning in the 18th century and ending in the mid-nineteen sixties. It is a story of fear, persecution, ignorance of the disease and how to treat it. It is also very much a story of how the human spirit can survive and flourish despite impossible odds.

Victims of Hansen’s Disease were initially, literally, dropped off of ships that could barely navigate the seas to reach this settlement that was a naturally closed fortress with a huge cliff to its back that was treacherous to descend or ascend even in the best of conditions. The Hawaiian territorial government gave the victims inferior tools and material to build their huts, along with inferior plants and vegetable seeds to grow and little if any farm animals. More people died initially of illnesses unrelated to the Hansen’s Disease than anything else. People were misdiagnosed often and sent to Molokai to live and die there anyway. Families were broken up and the government struggled for decades with how they were to finance and care for this population. The government’s own lack of scientific understanding of the disease and often times misguided and underfunded plans for the victims are breathtaking in its scope.

The book is wonderfully detailed as a result of heavy use of civil documents composed by various “Governors” of Molokai along with diaries of its residents and other historical records. The book reads truly like a novel with various characters appearing continually

throughout the book. The author, a noted historian, is a master of detail that often renders moving stories of courage, faith and self-sacrificing behavior in the midst of individual suffering and devastation. The book is replete with photographs of the various characters that appear in the book, along with early and later scenes of the settlement’s landscape and structures.

While this is not a religious novel, a lot of the story centers on Father Damien de Veuster (Recently canonized, Saint Damien) and Mother Marianne Cope, two missionaries who came in the 1870’s.

The story about Saint Damien reveals a man who was very much a practical, sometimes brutally honest and always self-sacrificing lover of his people. He was a master carpenter, a holy man, devoted to prayer and the daily Office, but also had both feet firmly planted on the ground. In a bygone era he would have been referred to as a “man’s man”. He was one of the only people who would enter the houses of those exiled and welcomed them into his home. There were times when he also would share his pipe with the residents after a meal. He established an infirmary and became skilled at tending to the physical needs of the sick and the dying. He reported in his exacting diary that sometimes the stench in the church he himself built was so great during Mass, he wanted to flee to run outside to take a full breath of air. He went on to say, however, that how could he do this when his people suffered so themselves. Father Damien personally buried thousands of people in the cemetery that he created next to his church, which still stands today. He would dig the ditch and then put on his vestments and perform the funeral rites of the Church. This often happened many times a day. When he knew, after many years, that he also had contracted the disease this did not stop him. He worked among his people right up until the last few weeks of his life when he could no longer support himself to stand.



For anyone who loves history, sociology or just an inspiring story of the indomitable human spirit, not to mention a story about the self-sacrificing advocates, from within and from outside of the Church, banning together against impossible odds to care for the least among us, this book is for you.

“The Colony” by John Tayman
398 pages, Published by Scribner

Deacon Lou DelGaudio

Continuing Education Day
October 17, 2009

Deacons gathered for a day of reflection and study on Stewardship with presenters Mike Halloran, Director of Stewardship & Development for the Diocese, Deacon Mark Holt and Deacon Larry Niekamp.



Evaluations by the Deacons present indicated that the presentation by Deacon Holt and Niekamp were very enlightening and at times touching with personal experiences conveyed and that Mike Halloran was a great facilitator with an excellent presentation and handouts. It was an information and an inviting call to engage in responsible and personal stewardship.



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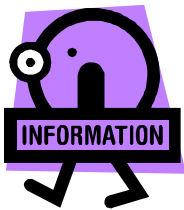


Be still and know that I am God
Psalm 46:10

“Wishing you a quiet place to know the glory and wonder of Christmas”

*Sr. Paulina Hurtado, Director
Judy Allen, Adm. Asst.
Kimberly Morales, Adm. Asst.*

“411”

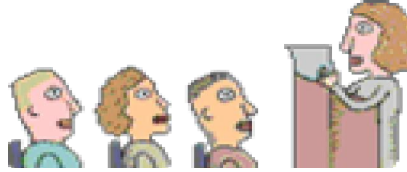


2010 DEACON DIRECTORY

If you would like a copy of the Deacon Directory to be mailed or e-mailed to you, please contact our office at (916) 733-0244 or jallen@diocese-sacramento.org

**CLASS 2014
BEGINS ASPIRANCY!**

We are pleased to announce that twenty-three applicants have been accepted to move forward into Aspirancy.



Class 2014 Aspirant Study Days

~~Holy Family Parish~~

January 9, 2010

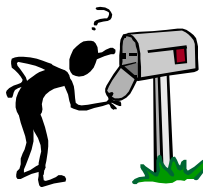
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March 20, 2010

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April 17, 2010

Your welcome to stop by and visit!



Have you moved?
Changed your phone number?
New e-mail?

Contact: _____ →



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- **JANUARY 16, 2010**—St. Clare’s Continuing Education for All Deacons, Visiting with the priests of the Diocese.. Mass and Dinner with Bishop Soto
- **MARCH 6, 2010** Continuing Formation for the recently ordained English Speaking Class 2008
- **JUNE 25-27, 2010**-Retreat (English) ~ Presenter:Richard Groves
- **AUG. 27-29, 2010** -Retreat (English/Spanish) ~ Presenter– Bro. Bill Short
- **OCTOBER 16, 2010!** Continuing Education-All Deacons
- **DECEMBER 4, 2010** Continuing Formation for recently ordained English Speaking Class 2008
- **JANUARY 14-15, 2011** —All Deacons Deacon Convocation Dinner with Bishop Soto



If you have any questions or comments please contact:
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**Get updates by visiting:**  
[http://www.diocese-sacramento.org/vocations/permanent\\_diaconate/permanent\\_diaconate.html](http://www.diocese-sacramento.org/vocations/permanent_diaconate/permanent_diaconate.html)

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