

The Bridgeport Deacon

July 2010

A NEWSLETTER for the
Permanent Diaconate Community



FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the first issue of a newsletter designed to improve communication among the members of the Permanent Diaconate Community in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Each issue will include news of interest to deacons and a story on at least one of our own deacons. Since BD's success depends on your participation, please send us news of milestones in your life, recommendations and brief reviews of books and articles you have enjoyed, news items of interest to our community, and suggestions for more features. We welcome Letters to the Editors!

This issue of "The Bridgeport Deacon" is being mailed to the entire diaconate community. Future issues will be published electronically, as attachments to "The Bridge," the online diocesan newsletter published most Tuesdays. If you do not have access to a computer for online delivery, please let us know so that we can mail you hard copies of future issues.

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From The Director's Desk *By Deacon Tony Detje*



We owe many thanks to Deacons Gary Carpenter, Rich Fenton, and Jack Mahon for their dedication and hard work in producing this newsletter. There have been many attempts in the past, but without sustainable success. The only way that it will continue is if you encourage them, and provide information and stories that they will be able to present in this newsletter.

For those of you who missed Bishop Lori's meeting to review the Deacon Survey, Bishop Lori was quite pleased about the results of the survey. If

you were not in attendance and wish to have a copy of the survey results summary, please e-mail me (adetje@diobpt.org).

At the meeting, Bishop Lori also announced that upon the recommendation of those involved in formation, he has agreed to expand our formation program to five and one-half years. This is being done in many dioceses in order to increase areas of knowledge in Scripture and Theology. It will also create a slightly lighter workload on the Saturdays of a formation weekend. There is more about this in this newsletter.

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Deacons In The News

Jack Sullivan, 71, a deacon of the Archdiocese of Boston since his ordination in 2002, visited England late last year to describe the miraculous healings he experienced through the intercession of Cardinal John Henry Newman. The healing of Deacon Sullivan's back pain has been accepted as a

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DEACON JACK SULLIVAN
(Photo credit *The Boston Globe*)

Deacons in the News Continued

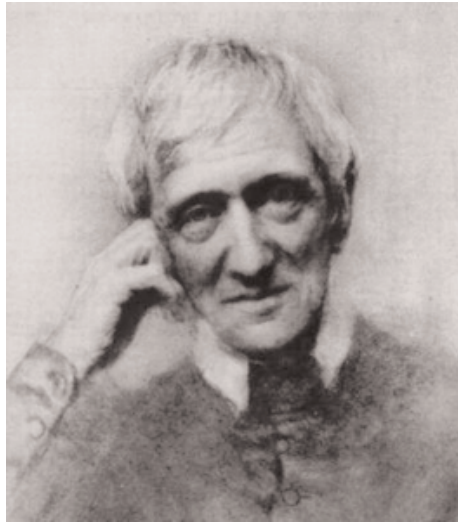
miracle leading to the beatification of Cardinal Newman. Pope Benedict XVI will preside at the beatification Mass during his visit to the UK in September.

Deacon Sullivan preached at both Westminster Cathedral and at Brompton Oratory in London to explain how he experienced miraculous cures twice after praying to Newman, and how he has since prayed for Cardinal Newman's intercession in conducting healing services that have led to healing for others.

Before Sullivan spoke at the Oratory, Father Ian Ker, the Newman scholar, gave an introductory address, speaking about the power and meaning of miracles. He said: "In the past I have often been asked why it was that Newman had not been canonized. I was asked this especially when Josemaría Escrivá was canonized: why not Newman? The answer I was inclined to give was that Escrivá's followers actually prayed for his Canonization, whereas Newman's enthusiasts perhaps prayed less. Well now it seems that the praying had been left to Jack Sullivan: he is the one in whose hands God had placed the prayer needed for Newman's Cause to make progress."

"It has often been said that Newman would be uninterested in miracles. This is a mistake. Jack was healed at Newman's intercession, and Newman regarded intercessory prayer as the great privilege of the Christian."

Father Ker concluded: "I have long been convinced that Newman should be declared a Doctor of the Church. The word Doctor means 'Teacher': for a person to be a Doctor of the Church means that the faithful can approach his or her teaching as a reliable guide



*John Henry Newman,
by Lady Coleridge, 1874*

to Christian truth. And Newman is perhaps especially suited to be a Doctor of the troubled times in which we live. He undoubtedly inspired much of the thinking of the Second Vatican Council (October 1962 – December 1965). But his theology was also deeply informed by history, and this means that he gives us the resources we need for understanding the continuity of Vatican II with tradition. So often since the Council, its theological and pastoral developments have been treated as creating a rupture with the past. Newman, the great theologian of development, can show us that they do not."

Sullivan also visited the Oratory in Birmingham (where Newman lived in the final decades of his long life [1801-1890]), because, after his conversion to Catholicism, Newman became an Oratorian priest, a member of an order founded in Rome in the sixteenth century by St. Philip Neri, and Newman founded the Oratory parishes in both London and Birmingham. In his homily Jack Sullivan reflected on what others could learn from his miracle. He said: "Heaven is a reality even though it's a dimension that we can't see or in normal terms experience.

Heaven is real – I caught a piece of it, a little bit of it. Life after death is a reality – the evidence is in Newman's response to my prayer. What more evidence do we need than the communion of saints? They are in heaven with God enjoying eternal bliss. They are there for us as well. We need help to communicate with the Divine. They are there to help us. They know the bumps and the detours of our road in this life. They know what this life means and they have experienced the difficulties that we do."

"Because this dimension can't be seen, we shouldn't try to see it, we're human, all we have is our senses. But, when we lift our hearts and minds to God in prayer, then we can meet him. We are not self-sufficient. We need all the help we can get. Every prayer is heard, every prayer is answered." Sullivan added: "God wants Cardinal Newman to be prayed to, to be thought about, to be emulated, here and now. Have faith in God's Providence. Have faith in the Providence that God has in store for us. We will persevere because we know that God has promised us eternal salvation. God loves those who are poor in spirit and who turn to Him with tears in their eyes and say,

'God, please be with me.'"

(Reporting provided by *the London Tablet* and by www.newmancause.co.uk)

HAITI

The disaster in Haiti has a diaconal angle—according to Deacon Greg Kandra's blog, "The Deacon's Bench" (address on page 3), a deacon from Southbury was freed from the rubble of the Haitian Center of the Diocese of Norwich in Port-au-Prince after he had been trapped for 10 hours.

From The Director's Desk *continued from page one*

Bishop Lori also announced the establishment of a Deacons' Wives Support Group under the Direction of Sandy Masso and Stephania Naiman. Read the details about this in the following pages. I am sure that Sandy and Stephania will be contacting the wives in the near future.

One of the results of the survey was a repeated request to provide a list or a monthly selection of book(s) for spiritual reading. I will try to do that, and keep it up-to-date. The book that I suggest this month is *Eucharist* by Robert Barron, published by Orbis Books, and part of a new series titled "Catholic Spirituality for Adults." If you cannot find it in a bookstore, it is available at *Amazon*. In this book, Father Barron interweaves meal, sacrifice, and real presence to help us discover the heart of a Catholic Eucharistic spirituality and theology. Father Barron is a graduate of Catholic University, Washington, D.C. and currently is professor of systematic theology at Mundelein Seminary.

Sons of Saint Stephen Ongoing formation starts again in the Fall:

September 18	Catholics & Infertility, Dr. Anne Mielnik
October 16	Jesus' Family & Discipleship in the New Testament, Dr. Gregory Glozov
November 13	Benedictine Spirituality, Archabbott Lambert
March 26, 2011	Second Deacon & Wives Convocation <i>Theme: "Deacons Ministry and Service to the Community"</i>

More will be published about these four dates; please place them on your calendar.

The Class of 2015 began Aspirancy in February of this year. They will commence formation in September. They are:

Anthony Caraluzzi	Saint Mary, Bethel
David Flynn	Saint Francis, Weston
Jeffrey Font	Saint Joseph, Brookfield
Ernest Jeffers	Saint Bridget, Stamford
John Tuccio	Saint Jude, Monroe

Please come to one of the formation weekends and meet these fine men.

Finally, think back to your days in formation. I believe that one of the more enjoyable times was Saturday evening when Deacons would visit and share ministry experiences. At times, the building would be packed. However, over the years the number gradually waned, and now it is rare when one or two Deacons visit formation. The men in formation, and I, find that disappointing because there is such a richness of ministry experience and brotherhood that could be shared.

Recently, Deacon Frank Foyt asked if many were visiting on Saturday evenings of formation weekends, and I said "no." He suggested that I send a letter to all Deacons and wives inviting specific classes to specific weekends, encouraging them to come for dinner, evening prayer, rosary, followed by time to sit around and share with each other. The idea sounds good to me, so I will send the letter. However, if you cannot attend on the weekend when your specific class is invited, come on any weekend that you and your wife are available. We would enjoy spending time with you.

We will start the interview process for the Class of 2017 (commencing Aspirancy February, 2012) in the Spring of 2011. Please encourage any man in your parish or circle of friends who is interested in Diaconate.

INTERESTING WEBSITES/BLOGS

Look at the blog offered by Brooklyn deacon Greg Kandra, <http://blog.beliefnet.com/deaconsbench/>. Kandra, who has written several times about the diaconate for *America* magazine, offers an informative site and good tips on other sites to explore.

Remembering Deacon Hans Jakob Gram



Most of us have seen the obituary notices for Hans, including the letter from Bishop Lori to all priests and deacons of the diocese, in which the Bishop offers a complete outline of the many accomplishments of our brother in ministry, as a businessman, university trustee, generous donor, husband, father, deacon, fine man. Our focus here is on reminiscences provided by members of the community who knew and loved Hans.

To begin at the end—several odd events occurred after Hans' funeral, events that suggested his continuing presence among us. Ingela reports that several years ago, she and Hans bought a Bentley, and nobody liked it very much. Bigger even than a large SUV, a real gas-guzzler. But it was the logical car to use for the funeral. After the Mass, it wouldn't start but, after some minutes of frustration, it did start so that the family could accompany Hans' body to the cemetery. The family hoped the car could be returned to the dealer, at least for repair. But before anyone even had a chance to contact the dealer, he called Ingela and asked if he could

buy the car back! Did Hans have something to do with this?

The incense burner that had been used for the Mass of Christian Burial set off the smoke alarm in the church after Hans' coffin had been taken to the hearse. Everyone immediately said "Sparky," remembering Hans' nickname in formation. Hans set off the smoke alarm in the kitchen at the formation house one weekend morning when he burned the toast, and Ingela's response at the time was that Hans should never have been allowed near the cooking operation—disaster was a real possibility whenever Hans worked in the kitchen! Of course there's a perfectly rational explanation for the triggered smoke alarm, but perhaps Sparky had something to do with it?

More to the point, and verifiable, was the real élan with which the wake, funeral, and post-funeral luncheon were handled, as Ingela says, exactly as Hans would have planned them. Those attending the lunch at Toscana in Ridgefield, the same restaurant where Hans and Ingela offered lunch to family and friends on the day of Hans' ordination four years ago, noticed the excellence of the food, the superb service, and the good fellowship all around. Particularly noticeable was the omnipresence of the waiters who kept filling water glasses and wine glasses, and kept asking if they could be of help as they served the beautiful meal.

More interesting coincidence—when the family was deciding on a prayer-card, they chose a beautiful passage about the sea from the writings of an early Church father. When some of us saw the card, we immediately recognized that the same passage appeared on the prayer-cards Hans distributed for his ordination. But, Ingela and her son Jakob report, the family chose the passage before they realized that Hans had used it

four years ago! The other text he used on his ordination prayer-cards, the Prayer of St. Francis, was included among the hymns sung at the funeral.

In his homily, Bishop Lori pointed out yet another interesting coincidence: Hans was received into the Catholic Church on Pentecost Sunday, 1961. And he entered eternity on Pentecost Sunday, 2010. Ingela reports that, when she went to the 4:00 p.m. Saturday vigil Mass on Pentecost weekend, she was really impressed by the passage from Ezekiel (37:1-14) that was the first reading. When Hans passed away the next day, and the family was deciding on the readings for the funeral Mass, that Ezekiel reading, Ingela realized, was exactly right.

Lying in his coffin, Hans was as elegant as ever he was in life, wearing his diaconal alb and a particularly beautiful white stole. Mourners during the early hours of the wake couldn't help noticing that the grandchildren each kissed their grandfather in a way that said so much about how special he was to them, and how close and loving this family is. Ingela reports that all the decisions about readings, arrangements, and so forth were reached by consensus, and that during those days when the entire family was together to mourn Hans' passing, there were no harsh words or angry moments.

Those who lived in formation with Hans have their own meaningful recollections. Deacon John Moranski writes: "My fond memories of Hans were on the Diaconate Formation Weekends when the two of us shared many conversations about Norway and its history, especially during World War II, and about European economics and business. When I introduced myself to his son at the wake and told him about the many conversations I had with his father, he was well aware of it and told

me that his father thought very highly of me which I thought was very touching. Hans used to tell his son about our conversations and about how much I knew of Norwegian history." Others among us can attest to Hans' generosity, and attentiveness—his sons knew quite a few of Hans' brother deacons from his reports. Dick Magenis, a member of Hans' ordination class, writes: "My favorite memory of Hans occurred one weekend, when he and I went hunting for some soda for dinner. After much searching, I returned with a large bottle, but Hans had found a case of the stuff. Smiling, he turned to me and said: 'Dick, that is why you are a teacher, and I am a CEO.' What classic Hans!" Hans really enjoyed Saturday evenings on the formation weekends, when there was some time to relax—he would sip his single-malt and engage in spirited conversation. He and Dick were on opposite sides of the political spectrum: the discussions were always lively but polite.

Deacon Joe DeBiase also remembers "his deep love of the Diaconate. His willingness to help and also his unbelievable knowledge of the church from early church history to today. He and my classmate John Linsenmeyer could go back and forth for long periods of time discussing church history. Hans truly knew what it meant to be a Deacon." And John Buchholz, another of Hans' classmates, writes: "Hans had amazing integrity. I always admired how he was good natured about the kidding and ribbing he took for some of his "flaws," whether his lack of experience in the kitchen or something about being in the same circles as Moses. But - one-on-one - he was the most genuine, caring and honest of men. You could tell by how he talked about his faith and family that they were his priorities, not the empire he ran or the various organizations he belonged to. I miss him tremendously."

Ellen Mahon, who knew Hans through EPS* before sharing many Sunday afternoons with Ingela among the future diaconate wives, writes: "Remembering his ordination day, I keep thinking, how wonderful that he witnessed to so many business friends who were amazed to see him lie prostrate at his ordination! They came from Europe and everywhere! And how wonderful to go home to God on Pentecost Sunday—to be enfolded by the Holy Spirit who makes Jesus known to us in our earthly life and to know God even as we are known!"

Anthony Cernera, President of Sacred Heart University, recalls that he first met Hans through EPS, when Dr. Cernera offered a workshop on Jewish-Christian understanding. Tony noted early on that Hans was a serious reader who was particularly fond of history.

After Hans joined the Board of Trustees at SHU, he was an active and engaged member who served on the Executive Committee and chaired the Committee on Buildings and Grounds—as chair of this committee, he oversaw construction of the new Chapel of the Holy Spirit. Tony Cernera noted that Hans and Ingela provided the gift that built the graceful bell-tower and its four unique bronze bells.

Committed to the intellectual as well as the spiritual development of SHU's students, Hans supported the implementation of the Common Core for undergraduates as well as various initiatives designed to strengthen the presence of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition on campus. It is characteristic of Hans and Ingela that contributions in his memory should be made to Sacred Heart University, to the attention of the Hans Gram Student Scholarship Endowment Fund, 5151 Park Avenue, Fairfield, CT 06825.

The last word should go to Jerry Lambert, a member of the diaconate class of 2011, who knew Hans as a fellow-parishioner at St. Mary's in Ridgefield. Like so many of these reminiscences, Jerry's captures something of the essence of Hans Jakob, as Ingela always called him:

"Hans was a mentor to me. At first, he encouraged me to "listen" for my call to the Permanent Diaconate. Then, after I began formation, we would talk about discernment and ministry.

"I would ask Hans many questions. He would sometimes begin his response by saying: "As a wise deacon once told me..." I never asked him who that wise deacon was, but thought he may have been referring to himself. I think of Hans every time I pray Morning Prayer on Wednesday of Week I of the Psalter. The reading that day says: "Seek counsel from every wise man." (Tb 5:18) Hans was indeed a very wise man. But Hans' contributions didn't stop there. The full reading that day is as follows:

"Do to no one what you yourself dislike. Give to the hungry some of your bread, and to the naked some of your clothing. Seek counsel from every wise man. At all times bless the Lord God, and ask him to make your paths straight and to grant success to all your endeavors and plans." (Tobit 4:15a. 16a. 18a. 19)

Those who knew him will readily recognize that Hans lived that reading in every aspect of his life. May he rest in peace.

**Education-Parish-Service—adult education in scripture and theology offered through Trinity University in Washington, DC. Classes are taught in our diocese at St. Philip's parish in Norwalk. Hans was one of three recently-ordained Bridgeport Deacons who completed the EPS certificate program before entering diaconate formation.*

New Formation Program

Bishop Lori has announced that upon the recommendation of those involved in formation, he has agreed to expand our formation program to five and one-half years beginning with the Class of 2015. This adjustment brings the program into line with a national trend to offer candidates more preparation in scripture and theology, and the expanded program will also shorten some of the long Saturdays of the current program.

The first year of the new program will be identical to the current one, except that the course in public speaking (Homiletics I) will be moved to the third year. The move means two fewer hours of class every weekend, a welcome change because Saturdays in the first year have been the most demanding of all.

In the second year, there will be 1.5 fewer hours of class. Several courses will be moved to later years so that the course in Patristics can be expanded to 20 hours from 10 and the 30-hour course in Wisdom and Prophets of the Old Testament becomes two separate 30-hour courses, one for the Wisdom literature and one for the Prophets.

The third year will offer a new course in American Church History. Overall, the weekend will involve as many class-hours as in the current structure, the fewest hours in the current four years.

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Year four will shorten total class-time by half an hour. In the new fifth year, candidates will benefit from four new courses, on the Book of Revelation, on the New Testament Epistles (excluding Paul, al-

ready covered in year 3), on Evangelization, and on Ministry II (to follow up on the valuable existing Ministry I course, in which candidates learn about the many ministries pursued by deacons).

Deacons' Wives Support Group

Sandy Masso and Stephania Naiman have agreed to serve as co-chairs of a new support group that will concentrate on forming community and focusing on the gifts that a wife brings to her husband's call. How do we "flesh out" the gift of presence of the wife with her deacon husband as a visible sign of Christ's love of His Church? How does the presence of wife and deacon husband in the parish highlight the importance of marriage within the Church community? There is much to be learned for all through the lived experiences of the wives of deacons, and then the opportunity to "flesh" that out as a peer to peer group. The wives of deacons are unique in their experiences of how God has called them to share intimately in the graces of Marriage that both deacon and wife have received, and the graces of Holy Orders which the deacon has received.

Sandy and Stephania will offer wives a number of opportunities, including days of recollection, an annual weekend retreat for wives, and several social events every year. They hope to organize special outreach to widows of deacons and to the wives of men in formation, especially those with young children.

In addition, they will prepare a wives' workshop for the Deacons' Convocation next March, and they will coordinate with other "Wives Programs" in NADD Region 1.



The mosaic of the Annunciation and the Resurrection, Chapel of the Holy Spirit, Sacred Heart University.