



Deacon News

Diocese of Davenport

Fall 2014

“Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I say to you, many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.” *Luke 23:24 Feast of St. Francis*

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From the Diaconate Office

Deacon David Montgomery, Director of the Diaconate

I always enjoy this time of year with the changing seasons. Change comes to each of us in different ways. For me this fall it is a knee replacement. Recovery is better than expected after one month but I still look forward to kneeling again soon.

At the April meeting of the National Association of Deacon Directors, I was asked to fill in the unexpired term of Deacon Chris Ast, Director of the Permanent Diaconate for the Archdiocese of St. Louis as the Region IX representative. With some trepidation I resolved to go where I am called so I accepted, not knowing that I will also be chairing the Committee for the National Congress of Deacons in 2018 and a member of the NADD Board of Directors. In this role I will be able to provide to you current information about the 2018 Congress as the planning takes place.

On a separate note, Deacon Tim Barry, who served as Executive Director of the Newman Center, resigned to take a position at Elmira College, Elmira, NY. He will be returning now and then and so will be keeping faculties in the Diocese of Davenport.

I hope all is well with you and your families.

Deacon David



**50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE
DIACONATE**
JULY 2018 - NEW ORLEANS

Workshop Opportunity—FOCCUS Training

From Marianne Agnoli, MPTh, Family Formation Coordinator, Lay Ministry Formation Coordinator, Diocese of Davenport:

If you are currently offering the FOCCUS Pre-Marriage Inventory in your parish and need to be updated in using the new 4th Edition, have not yet been trained as a FOCCUS facilitator, or are interested in being certified as a FOCCUS trainer, please plan to attend one of the workshops on November 21 & 22 at St. Patrick Church in Iowa City. Deacon Mike Conzett, a National FOCCUS Trainer will present 4th Edition updates, certify new FOCCUS Facilitators and/or present Trainer instructor for experienced Facilitators who wish to apply for Trainer Certification. For more information go to www.davenportdiocese.org/faithform/Marriage%20and%20Family.htm. If you have any additional questions please contact me. agnolim@davenportdiocese.org; 563-888-4242

Important Dates

Fall Clergy Overnighter

Nov 3-4, 2014
Clarion Inn
Iowa City

FOCCUS Training

November 21 & 22
St. Patrick Church
Iowa City

Spring Retreat

Apr 18 - 19, 2015
Prairiewoods
Hiawatha

Deacon Alfred Mitchell Returning

Spring Retreat—April 18-19, 2015

Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center, Hiawatha

“As a deacon in the Roman Catholic Church I use stories in my ministry of preaching, teaching and reaching out to others. I have been telling stories all my life, though I didn't become professionally involved in storytelling until after my ordination to the Diaconate. I saw storytelling techniques as a way of bringing my homilies alive and making them more meaningful to the congregation.” - www.deaconalfred.com/

More information coming in January.



Deacon Formation

Deacon Frank Agnoli, Director of Deacon Formation

Class VII

Please keep our deacon candidates in your prayers as they begin their first of three years of candidacy.

Candidate's Name

Wife's Name

Parish Name, City

Jim Barber

Chris

Holy Family, Davenport

Steve Barton

Rosie

St. Paul, Davenport

Dan Freeman

Judy

St. Andrew, Blue Grass

Rob Garber

Gena

Sacred Heart, Newton

Tom Hardie

Mary

St. Anthony, Knoxville

John Jacobsen

Tracey

St. Paul, Davenport

Chris Kabat

Julie

St. Wenceslaus, Iowa City

Karl Lantzky

Kathy

St. Paul, Davenport

Joe Rohret

Tammy

St. Peter, Cosgrove

Mike Snyder

Patty

Our Lady of Lourdes, Bettendorf

Lowell Van Wyk

Denise

St. Mary, Pella

Joseph Welter

Katie

Newman Center/St. Mary, Iowa City

Preaching: The Post-Christian Context—Continued from summer issue

Deacon Frank Agnoli, Director of Liturgy

A Response

There are three kinds of post-modernism, if you will. One I will call a “nostalgic” post-modernism. This approach is characterized by a quest to go back, behind “modernity” to find answers. We see this in various kinds of fundamentalism: whether biblical literalism (a reaction to critical study of the scriptures) or various forms of Catholic fundamentalism (creeping infallibility; returning to liturgical forms of a bygone age). Another type of post-modernism is nihilistic: it takes the three categories above to their extremes. There is no truth; there is only me and what I believe. Nothing and no one else matters. Then there is what I call a “constructive” post-modernism.

I believe this is what Lose is calling us to when he challenges us to develop ways of preaching that are appropriate to this new world and what O’Malley is referring to when he speaks of a renewal of the liturgical homily. What might some qualities of such preaching be?

1. We need to take advantage of the new post-modern openness to the spiritual. While this does not mean that folks will necessarily be flocking back to churches (remember that there are many voices out there competing for people’s attention), it does suggest at least an openness to the transcendent (as opposed to ardent materialists).
2. Postmoderns are suspicious of absolutes, of hypocrisy, of the misuse of power. Therefore, we need to preach the message (truth) of Christ with humility, and, more importantly, we must practice what we preach (remember the words the bishop spoke as he handed you the Book of the Gospels at your ordination). Perhaps truth needs to be presented less as a final answer than as faithful confession (Lose, 19-23); the penultimate that points to the ultimate and therefore calls for our commitment. Preaching, as all liturgy, is to be *beautiful* – it is to attract, not coerce; woo, not force (O’Malley, 115-129). Perhaps we need to be more poets than professors in the pulpit.
3. The liturgical homily is rooted in the scriptural imagination; it helps us see that we are part of a larger story and leads to gratitude (O’Malley, 58-62). We need to present the Scriptures not as static information but as a still-unfolding and dynamic story of what God has been and is still doing in the world, a world of which the listener is a part; we need to tell the biblical story as a story that matters here and now (Lose, 25, 94-95). As Catholics, we tell that story liturgically. Therefore, the liturgical homily is also rooted in the liturgical year, the feasts and seasons. The liturgical texts offer a lens through which we might read the scriptures (O’Malley, 62-65).
4. Nihilistic and purely materialistic worldviews can leave one empty. Christians can offer a message of hope in this context (Lose, 54-64). We must be careful not to present culture as the enemy. Rather, we are called to read the signs of the times, to “name grace”—those place and events where people are meeting God day-to-day, but may not know it—as well as to show how what falls short of the gospel vision in our culture might be transformed through divine love (Lose, 65-78; O’Malley, 69-73).

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In a pluralistic setting, we need to answer the questions that people are asking, that address their deepest needs (Lose, 91-94). The liturgical homily deals with real life, with those “universal themes that are at the heart of being human” (O’Malley, 65-66). We need to get better at listening before speaking; to let go of our agendas—and the idea that we have an absolute monopoly on the truth. We need to remember that the homily is dialogical; and perhaps be bold in exploring ways to make it more obviously so (Lose, 102-110).

There has been a lot of talk lately about “doctrine” in preaching. How do the above concerns and strategies relate to this issue? Doctrine opens up the deepest meaning of the scriptures and reveals the world as it really is; it keeps us grounded (O’Malley, 67-69). Therefore, doctrine also “serves to make sense of the hearer’s experience” –so the preacher is challenged to present the Christian faith as a larger story into which the hearer’s own narrative fits (Lose, 27).

Notice how much this list has in common with what Pope Francis had to say about the homily in *Evangelii gaudium*....

Here’s another way to look at it [from Frank Mercadante, “Engaging a New Generation,” *Lifelong Faith* (Summer 2012): 42-51.]:

Modern Evangelization	Postmodern “Immanuelization”
Individual belief as evangel-	Community belonging as
Emphasis upon rational argu- ment as the primary apolo-	Emphasis upon the life of the church as the primary apolo-
Emphasis upon individual questing (Good News for	Emphasis upon service evan- gelization (Good News for
Appeal of “having it all to-	Appeal of being together in
The mission and agenda of evangelization	The mission of accompany- ing people

In this new context, our focus shifts. We move from the head (appeal to truth) to the hands and heart (appeal to the good and the beautiful). We move from proving to witnessing, confessing, giving testi-
mony with our lives. We move from arguing and convincing to attracting and wooing.

This means that our language, our homiletic content, will need to be concrete, imaginal, poetic... again, approaches stressed by Pope Francis. More on that in the next installment.

Resources:

Allen, Ronald J., Barbara Shires Blaisdell, and Scott Black Johnston. *Theology for Preaching: Authority, Truth, and Knowledge of God in a Postmodern Ethos*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.

Fretheim, Terrence E. and Karlfried Froehlich. *The Bible as Word of God in a Postmodern Age*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.

Lose, David J. *Preaching at the Crossroads: How the World—and our Preaching—is Changing*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013.

O’Malley, Timothy P. *Liturgy and the New Evangelization: Practicing the Art of Self-Giving Love*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2014.

Stiller, Brian C. *Preaching Parables to Postmoderns*. Fortress Resources for Preaching. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006.

Wisdom, Andrew Carl. *Preaching to a Multi-generational Assembly*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2004.