

## LEGACY FOR OUR MISSION:

*For Our Children and the Future*

### DEACON CANDIDATES PREPARE FOR THEIR LAST YEAR BEFORE ORDINATION

Four years ago Benedictine Father Bede Cisco, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey and director of the archdiocesan Office of Deacon Formation, accepted the invitation from Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein to establish a permanent diaconate program.

“Deacons are part of the structure of ministry established by the Church in the sacrament of Holy Orders,” said Father Bede. “The order of deacons expresses the Church’s commitment to the ministry of charity that Pope Benedict XVI described in his encyclical *God Is Love*. The men in formation are dedicated to caring for others in a way that reveals God’s love.”

The formation program provides education and guidance to men who are preparing to serve the archdiocese as permanent deacons. During the four-year program, participants change from simply seeing the diaconate as a way to serve to seeing themselves as deacons who are called to a life of service.

“The call was so pronounced. I was sitting in Mass and the Holy Spirit nudged me to investigate the program,” said Steve Hodges, deacon candidate from SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi in Greenwood. “The deacon represents Christ the servant and throughout the past three years we have been shaped and formed to be servants to our parish and to the community.”

The deacon candidates gather one weekend per month from August to June to pray together, study theology and explore issues and methods in ministry. They study Scripture, the sacraments, the beliefs we profess in the Creed, church history and practical areas such as religious education, preaching and assisting at liturgies. Besides the lessons that



come from classroom participation, there are the lessons that come from serving the community and learning from those who are struggling to find hope, love and fulfillment.

“We are being called to take Christ to others in the community,” said Hodges. “For the past three years I have been serving at the Johnson County Prison with Jean Martin, pastoral associate at St. Rose and the chaplain at the Johnson County jail. We read and reflect upon the readings from the upcoming Sunday and pray with the inmates. Some come to worship; others come to break up the monotony that is their lives in prison. Whatever the reason, we’re glad they’ve come.”

The third year of the program has just come to a close and the deacon candidates are preparing to begin their final year of formation before ordination in June 2008. In addition to the courses they take, the candidates continue to learn about ministry and are being formed as deacons by the people they serve

in their parishes, their communities and the agencies of the archdiocese.

Addressing the needs in such settings is a fundamental reason why the *Legacy for Our Mission* capital stewardship campaign is critical for the future of the archdiocese. Funds raised in the campaign will help ensure the success of initiatives such as the permanent diaconate program. But pledging a thoughtful contribution to the campaign isn’t the only way to help ensure a successful diaconate program. People can also contribute through prayer, through active awareness of the new ministry and through a sincere consideration for prospective new deacons.

“In September 2006, we began the inquiry and discernment process to gather the next deacon formation class,” said Father Bede. “Those who complete the initial process enter into the application process. The applicants accepted by the archbishop will begin as aspirants later in 2007 and move into the full four-year program in August 2008. During the coming months, we will be concluding the pre-ordination formation of the current class and begin formation with the next.”

*Legacy for Our Mission, the archdiocese’s capital campaign, is guided by the principles of Christian stewardship and addresses the needs of archdiocesan ministries such as the Permanent Diaconate Program. By contributing to the Legacy for Our Mission campaign through your local parish, a portion of your gift will be allocated to future ministry needs and distributed to efforts such as deacon formation.*

Please visit the new online home of the *Legacy for Our Mission* campaign at [www.archindy.org/legacy](http://www.archindy.org/legacy). It can also be accessed at [www.LegacyforOurMission.org](http://www.LegacyforOurMission.org).