

# LEGACY FOR OUR MISSION:

*For Our Children and the Future*

## OFFICE OF DEACON FORMATION DEVELOPS FUTURE MINISTRY PROVIDERS

**F**UTURE PERMANENT DEACONS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS WILL SOON PROVIDE A NEW KIND OF MINISTRY, AND THEIR PRESENCE IN PARISHES AND COMMUNITIES WILL BE WELCOMED IF NOT ALWAYS WIDELY SEEN.

Permanent deacons in two years will help address the changing demographics of parish ministry. Benedictine Father Bede Cisco, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey and director of the archdiocesan Office of Deacon Formation, has been working to bring that concept closer to reality for the Church in central and southern Indiana.

Father Bede accepted Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein's invitation in 2003 to help the archdiocese establish a permanent diaconate program. That's when he began building programming for the formation of men who wished to explore serving the archdiocese as permanent deacons. The Office of Deacon Formation—which includes Father Larry Voelker, pastor of Holy Cross Parish in Indianapolis and the program's director of spiritual formation, and Benedictine Sister Sharon Kuhn, the office's administrative assistant—has established the groundwork for a new ministry that will serve people in parishes and in all corners of the archdiocese.

Today, 25 men who represent almost every deanery of the archdiocese will each adopt a personal focus reflecting their individual identities as they prepare for ordination in 2008.

"In that sense, they will have ministries in parishes and in organizations outside of parishes," Father Bede said. "They won't just be exclusively serving in parishes.

"Deacons are going to help us meet the 'quieter' needs of the Church," Father Bede added. "That's kind of a difficult notion for us to grasp, but they will help us in more ways than we know."

Helping to meet those quieter needs is part of what attracted Wes Jones, a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis and a professor of marketing in the School of Business at the University of Indianapolis. Jones is a prospective deacon who says the



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deacon formation process has been "like stepping into another world" of ministry and service to others.

During his time outside the classroom, Jones has been serving in various Catholic Charities agencies such as Holy Family Shelter and the Refugee Resettlement Programs. These experiences have offered him insights into how he might someday assist personnel who need to be served as they minister to others.

"The culture is very different," Jones said of the deacon formation program. "I'm very much focused on helping and serving other people—much more than serving an organization."

The permanent diaconate program is made possible in part by Saint Meinrad School of Theology, which offers the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and other dioceses a diaconate formation program that draws on the school's heritage of preparing candidates for ordained ministry. Working with Saint Meinrad, the Office of Deacon Formation addresses intellectual, pastoral and spiritual formation requirements of the Church in the United States. Saint Meinrad partners with an individual diocese to provide a formation plan built with the school's experience and resources but based on the diocese's particular needs.

The archdiocesan deacon formation program has four components of human, intellectual, pastoral and spiritual formation. In pastoral formation, the candidates can participate in a variety of settings such as healthcare facilities, jails and in ministry to couples, just to name a few examples.

Addressing the needs in such settings is a fundamental reason why the Legacy for Our Mission 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.

"It's an honor to be part of a group of men who will help serve the Church for the rest of their lives," Jones said. "This has changed me—it's changed my heart."

*Legacy for Our Mission, the archdiocese's capital campaign, is guided by the principles of Christian stewardship and addresses future ministry needs the archdiocese. By contributing to Legacy for Our Mission through your local parish, a portion of your gift will be allocated to future ministry needs and distributed to efforts such as the permanent diaconate program.*