

Diocese of the Midwest Catechist and Diaconal Vocations Program.
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Report on Activity 7/11-9/11

The June meeting of the Bishop's Council approved the creation of a Diocesan Catechist and Diaconal Vocations Department, on the basis of a proposal by Fr. Elijah Mueller and blessed by Bishop Matthias (and originally encouraged by Archbishop Job) to extend the successful and well-structured Chicago Deanery Program to the rest of the Diocese. This program will be required for all "late vocations" diaconal candidates from the Diocese, from now on. We will work to have qualified instructors from the local area when available, and bring them from other locations when necessary to give direct instruction to both those interested in the diaconate, and those who wish to receive a catechist certificate from the Diocese. Students will take a cycle of 7 classes, with relatively standardized final exams and/or projects, at the completion of each class. We will also help to coordinate with the national OCA Diaconal Vocations Department, and maintain Diocesan records for each candidate. Fr. Elijah is being paid a small stipend for this work, which includes office time on Wednesdays in the Diocesan Center, as well as taking other time in the week to take calls and correspondence, and work on curriculum, syllabi and materials.

Since July, Fr. Elijah has contacted Deans throughout the Diocese to identify candidates and instructors. In the last year, the Chicago Deanery has worked with 8 students, plus a separate program for a diaconal candidate in Green Bay. Since July, we have identified 3 students in Cincinnati, 1 in St. Louis, and 1 in Kansas. We have queries about programs for potential students in Nebraska, Indianapolis, and Michigan. We have contacted potential instructors in the Michigan, Columbus, and Kansas City Deaneries and have some names to follow in Minneapolis. The Cincinnati program has already begun, and the St. Louis and Kansas programs are already working to schedule first sessions. New instructors from other Deaneries are being asked to help give input on the program, to make a collaborative effort on syllabi, materials, exams and projects that can be used easily throughout the Diocese.

By working in small local groups in hands-on educational experiences, we hope to build up knowledge of the Faith and liturgical ministries, and also to supplement the work of spiritual formation within each deanery for those who wishing to further their education, involvement and ministry in the Church, but not able, for so many reasons, to go to seminary.

Please feel free to contact Fr. Elijah with any queries about diaconal candidacy , pursuit of catechist certification, or a desire to teach in the program.

In XC,
Fr. Elijah Mueller
St. Makarios Mission, Chicago