



BISHOP'S LETTER

2026 NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

*I have grasped you by the hand;
I formed you, and set you
as a covenant of the people,
a light for the nations (Isaiah 42:6).*

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We are near the end of the Christmas season. We are called, as Jesus' destiny, to carry on His mission, to accommodate God's people, no matter where we encounter one another, and be His light. We are called, as Jesus is called from the Heavens at His Baptism, beloved!

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

ANNUAL DEACON COUPLE RETREATS

Registration for the Annual Deacon Couple Retreats for 2026 has begun. [Click Here.](#)

January 23-25, 2026: Developing the Interior Life

Led by Deacon Matthew Newsome

Deacon Matthew Newsome serves in campus ministry and the office of catechetical formation in the Diocese of Charlotte. He is the author of **The Devout Life: A Modern Guide to Practical Holiness with St. Francis de Sales** (Sophia Institute Press, 2023), and writes a monthly column for the **Catholic News Herald**. His writings have also appeared in The Deacon, Envoy, This Rock (now Catholic Answers Magazine), and online at Homiletic and Pastoral Review, Dappled Things and Catholic Exchange. He holds a master's degree in Theology from Holy Apostles College & Seminary. His homilies, reflections, and musings on ministry can be found at teachingandpreaching.substack.com.

He and his wife Joannie have seven children and live on a little plot of land in the mountains of North Carolina that they share with a small flock of sheep, a smattering of chickens, and an ornery old donkey. **REGISTRATION FOR THIS RETREAT WILL END JANUARY 14, 2026.**

February 20-22, 2026: Draw Near to God and He Will Draw Near to You

Led by the religious sisters of the Missionaries of the Holy Family

This retreat will lead deacons and their wives to deepen their personal and spousal prayer life. Topics will include Encountering the God Who Loves First, The Deacon and His Wife: Praying as One, and Interceding for the People of God. **The Missionary Sisters of the Holy Family** are a religious congregation rooted in the communion of the Holy Trinity and modeled on the unity of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Three congregation members will lead the talks.



CONTINUED

ANNUAL DEACON COUPLE RETREATS

March 20-22, 2026: God Needs Storytellers!

Led by Deacon Rick Wagner

God is constantly tapping us on the shoulder, letting us know He is actively engaged in our lives. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, many people do not recognize God's presence.

That is where we come in – God needs storytellers! By virtue of our Baptism, we - all Christians – have an obligation to proclaim the Gospel. “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)

This retreat experience will explore our role as storytellers, answering questions such as:

- What do we mean by storytelling?
- Why is it important – especially now?
- What types of stories should we be telling?
- We must walk the walk and talk the talk.

Retreat includes presentations, small group discussion, and some large group sharing.

April 17-19, 2026: Spanish Language Retreat

Led by Fr. Carlos Agudelo

Reverend Carlos A. Agudelo is the Pastor of St. Leon Church in Corona, New York, where he also serves as Area Dean and a member of the Presbyteral Council for Pastoral Practice Affairs. Ordained a priest in 1998 in Medellín, Colombia, he has served in the Diocese of Brooklyn since 2010 and was incardinated in 2016. With 27 years of priestly ministry, he exercises comprehensive pastoral and faith leadership for his parish community. Additionally, he has taught for several years in the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program and for one year at the Josephinum Institute.

PARISHES STILL IN NEED OF DEACONS

Several pastors have requested additional deacons be assigned to their parishes. If you feel God may be calling you to one of these parishes, or that God may be letting you know it is time to change parishes, please contact **Deacon Dave** to discuss one or more of these opportunities:

ST. ANDREW PARISH

801 N. Hastings St., Orlando | Needs a bilingual English/Spanish deacon.

Pastor: Father Leo Hodges

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH (WINTER HAVEN)

532 Ave. M, NW, Winter Haven | Needs a bilingual English/Spanish deacon.

Parochial Administrator: Father Glenn Lopez

BLESSED TRINITY PARISH

4545 Anderson Rd., Orlando | Needs a bilingual English/Spanish deacon.

Pastor: Father Phil 'Skip' Negley

ST. PAUL PARISH AND SCHOOL

1330 Sunshine Ave., Leesburg | Needs a deacon (bilingual Spanish/English preferred).

Parochial Administrator: Father Stephen Ogonwa

ST. MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

1136 Seminole Drive, Rockledge | Needs a bilingual English/Spanish deacon.

Pastor: Fr. Joseph Shaute

As we approach our next Diaconate Ordination, we will begin to review parishes with an abundant number of deacons and thus reassignments will be made. As you can see, several parishes need help. It is our duty to serve the people in need.

FDLC FREE WEBINARS

ORDER OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK AND THEIR PASTORAL CARE

The FDLC is pleased to provide another series of free webinars on the latest liturgical text to be released. Each session will air live at 1:30 p.m. (Eastern) and will be 75 minutes in length. As before, they will be recorded for further viewing. Plan now to register to attend and invite others to join you!

Part One: Wednesday, January 28

The Order of the Anointing of the Sick and Their Pastoral Care

Featuring Bishop Michael Woost (Chair of the BCDW) and Father Dustin Dought of the BCDW Secretariat.

All about the new liturgical text. How does it differ from the current USA translation? What is the same?

Part Two: Wednesday, February 11

A Theology of the Care of the Sick

Featuring Father Jan Michael Joncas

With Scriptural and pastoral insights, we will examine the role of the sick within our parish community and our obligation (and privilege) to care for them.

Part Three: Wednesday, March 4

A Journey of Understanding: Nostra Aetate Reflections- The Gift of the Incarnation and Fulfillment of God's Promise

Featuring Ms. Tish O'Hagan (Diocese of Boise) and Msgr. Rick Hilgartner (Archdiocese of Baltimore)

A look at some practical matters of visiting the sick -- including visiting a sick child, a sick adult, home visits, hospital visits, and nursing homes. Who are the proper ministers of the rites? What can a Deacon do? What can a lay person do? What can only a Priest do?

Free Registration Open: [Click Here](#)



MINISTRIES

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF CENTRAL FLORIDA, PATHWAYS TO CARE

[Learn how to volunteer.](#)

TOURISM

Contact [Deacon Joe Gassman](#) to learn what is needed to serve at the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe.

DIVINE MERCY/FIRST FRIDAYS

Looking for deacon couples to lead the Divine Mercy Chaplet on First Fridays at the Basilica. For more information, contact [Deacon Joe Gassman](#).

MINISTRY TO THE INCARCERATED

If you want to learn more about this ministry, reach out to [Deacon Jimmy Avellan](#). If you know of prisons or jails that are underserved, please let us know.

DIACONATE CONVOCAATION

Please mark your calendars now for our annual Diaconate Convocation on Saturday, October 3, 2026, at Holy Family Catholic Church. We are excited to announce that our convocation keynote speaker will be Sister Helen Prejean. Sister Helen Prejean is known around the world for her tireless work against the death penalty. She has been instrumental in sparking national dialogue on capital punishment and in shaping the Catholic Church's vigorous opposition to all executions.

Born on April 21, 1939, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, she joined the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1957. In 1982, Sister Helen began corresponding with Patrick Sonnier, who had been sentenced to death for the murder of two teenagers. Two years later, when Patrick Sonnier was put to death in the electric chair, Sister Helen was there to witness his execution. In the following months, she became spiritual advisor to another death row inmate, Robert Lee Willie, who was to meet the same fate as Sonnier.

After witnessing these executions, Sister Helen realized that this lethal ritual would remain unchallenged unless its secrecy was stripped away, and so she sat down and wrote a book, *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States*. *Dead Man Walking* hit the shelves when national support for the death penalty was over 80% and, in Sister Helen's native Louisiana, closer to 90%. The book ignited a national debate on capital punishment, and inspired an Academy Award winning movie, a play and an opera. Sister Helen also embarked on a speaking tour that continues to this day. Over the decades, Sister Helen has made personal approaches to two popes, St. John Paul II and Pope Francis, urging them to establish the Catholic Church's position as unequivocally opposed to capital punishment under any circumstances. After Sister Helen's urging, under St. John Paul II the catechism was revised to strengthen the church's opposition to executions, although it allowed for a very few exceptions. Not long after meeting with Sister Helen in August of 2018, Pope Francis announced new language of the Catholic Catechism which declares that the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person, with no exceptions.

Although Sister Helen rarely addresses conferences in person, she has accepted our invitation to speak at our convocation, recognizing that Florida is 'ground zero' for the death penalty debate and knows the influence that the diaconate community (deacons and wives) can bring to this important issue. Don't miss this unique opportunity!

Happy Birthday

— TO OUR SENIOR DEACONS! —

DEACON BOBBY GAUDIOSO	85
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DEACON CLAUDE CURTIN	85
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DEACON MIGUEL BELTRAN	85
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DEACON CHARLIE WEBB	85
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DEACON PHIL GIORDANO	81
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DEACON GUILLERMO GOMEZ	77
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IN REMEMBRANCE

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED

Eternal rest grant unto them,
O Lord, and may perpetual
light shine upon them. May
their souls and the souls of all
the faithful departed through
the mercy of God rest in peace.

Amen.



Memorial Mass

SPANISH - FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 8:15 A.M.

ENGLISH - FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 8:15 A.M.

Mary, Mother of God Chapel
San Pedro Spiritual Development Center

DIOCESAN CALENDAR

Click to view
Diocesan Calendar



LITURGICAL CORNER



**DIOCESAN
LITURGICAL
CALENDAR**



**DIOCESAN
BULLETIN
ANNOUNCEMENTS**



**CONFIRMATION
SCHEDULE**



**ANUNCIO DEL
BOLETÍN
DIOCESANO**



**MARRIAGE
PREPARATION**



DIRECTOR'S NOTES FOR DEACONS
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