Deacons in ACTION

Diocese of ANTIGONISH

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Comfort of Compassion

This year has been a very busy year in our diocese for each of us as deacons as we continue to serve our parishes and in our service ministries. It has also been a year of prayer, concern and care for our deacons, their wives and families, who have experienced health issues that have challenge us as a diaconate community. I thank each of you for your compassion, friendship and prayers for our brother deacons, their wives and families. As one deacon couple told me, "We could not have gotten through this, without the prayers and love of the diaconate community." I hope that each of you will enjoy the summer season with your families and friends and that our loving God will continue to surround each of you in new and surprising ways.

Deacon Berkley Guthro, Director of Deacons

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Banner Photo: Steve Cover, candidate to the Permanent Diaconate, presents the Fragrance for Chrism to Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick and Master of Ceremonies Deacon Berkley Guthro at the Mass of Chrism on March 30.

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Mass of Chrism

St. Ninian Cathedral, Antigonish
March 30, 2026

Deacon Roy Smith presents the Oil of the Sick to Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick

Deacon Art Riley presents the Oil of Catechumens

Deacon Henry van de Wiel presents the Oil of Chrism

Service Ministry

By Deacon Henry van de Wiel

For about two years I have been doing my service ministry at the noon meal at St. James United Church and the Adult Friendship Corner, both in Antigonish. This takes up two days of my week. In addition, working with other individuals in the area I would say this comes to about 20-25 hours per week total.

The people who attend are pretty much the same at both events and most attend for social contact. Of course, the meal is also important. For some of our clients these two functions are the main part of their social connection which for all of us is so critically important. I have greatly enjoyed working with all my friends on these occasions as each person comes with different gifts to share with the group: some bring the gift of music and song, others bring humour or a friendly smile. All in all these gifts bring joy and fellowship to people that are so often ignored by the rest of our busy world.

Here a friend has gifted me with a shirt he designed and crafted by himself. This took him 3-4 days to complete. I was very touched by his thoughtfulness. The shirt he is wearing is his 'McDonald Shirt', also self-made.

I also help others find their way through our 21st-century bureaucracy dealing with different government or other agencies which most of us can find frustrating.

May God continue to help me see the value in all His children. God Bless all of us in our Ministry.

Pope Leo XIV and the Diaconate

By Fr. Bedford Doucette

Whenever someone new enters our lives, whether it be a boss, a principal, a chairperson, or a bishop, there is always questions: what's he/she like? What do they think of this, that or the other thing? With deacons and the new Holy Father, it is appropriate to ask: "what does Pope Leo think of deacons? Does he have any plans for them in his vision of Church?" This little article is MY attempt to answer those questions at Deacon Berkley's request.

There is little written so far on Pope Leo and the Diaconate although he has been approached by interested groups to pronounce on female deacons. I don't think he wants to become embroiled in that issue just yet other than accepting the recommendations of the two commissions authorized by Pope Francis. You will remember that the "Report of the Theological Commission on the Diaconate" was used as the text in your formation program on the "Life and Ministry of the Deacon."

Not much written but we can glean a lot from Pope Leo's few comments about Diaconate and especially from his life and ministry. Try to see the seedlings of his theology and practice of diaconate in each of the following points:

1) Leo is from Chicago and thus influenced by American Church issues including the Diaconate. The largest number of deacons in the church is in the US. So there is a **profound interest and knowledge** of deacons.

2) Pope Leo is an Augustinian religious with its emphasis upon community and ministering the works of mercy after the mind of their Founder St Augustine. We remember that Augustinian friars ministered from Monastery in our own Diocese (which evidently Pope Leo visited when he was Prior General.) His religious life experience would always express itself in calling for **greater community of people sharing the same charism**.

3) As a missionary in Peru one of his emphases was always the good of people, that is, social justice. As Bishop, he would experience the need for "helpers in the vineyard to wash feet and for clergy to take care of parishioners." There is a picture of Pope Leo in Peru with hip boots helping people in the middle of a flood. The **poor, marginalized, and needy took priority**. He would have appreciated deacons' help, I'm sure. As Pope Francis would say: "Get your hands dirty…" and "smell like the sheep."

The fact that he took the name of Leo reminds everyone very powerfully that he is a continuation of Pope Leo X111's challenges for social justice in the modern world as seen in Rerum Novarum.

4) The people of his former diocese in Chicayo, Peru, summarized his ministry with them by stating simply: "**He walked with us**."

5) In a speech he gave in 2024, he said: "Our work is to enlarge the tent and to **let everyone know** that they are welcome inside the church." A repeat of Pope Francis when he exclaimed "todos, todos, todos"- everyone, everyone, everyone."

6) His first words upon election as Bishop of Rome were: "Peace be with you" which is the first word of Jesus post resurrection. This one word refers to other statements Jesus makes to his followers such as : "peace be with you. Just as the Father sent me so I am **sending** you."

7) Pope Leo is a cautious thinker and speaker. He seems to reflect seriously on an issue before making statements. I suspect he is thinking deeply about diaconate in view of dioceses' issues and how **diaconal ministry can respond**.

From all the above I project Pope Leo's understanding of diaconate would be something like:

The deacon is called by God/Church through good initial and ongoing formation (SHIP) and discernment to be servant like Christ "who came to serve; not to be served." This is humble work with real people. They are men of the church sharing diaconal charism within the Community of Deacons and witnessing to Christian marriage. Deacons, called by the world's reality, serve the poor, the hungry, the addict, those seeking identity, upholding the values of life, etc. He is to serve them first and treat the marginalized as the "treasures of the Church." (St. Lawrence)

It may, indeed, take us a bit of struggle to shift priorities. It is only then that the deacon can approach the altar. Diaconal emphasis is directed to the poor and then Altar and Word. Otherwise, he has less credibility. With the tremendous renaissance in diaconal theology, I suspect Pope Leo will demonstrate that the deacon is the expression of the work of the Church.

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Photo Gallery

Wanda McMaster, Minnie Burke, and Doreen Lewis at the luncheon prior to the Mass of Chrism

A warm welcome for Miley Margaret MacEachern, who arrived in the world on January 27, 2026, a great-granddaughter of Deacon Berkley and Jessie Guthro

Pope Leo XIV and the Diaconate ... from Page 3

As St. Pope John Paul 11 once stated: "We are in the springtime of the church." We might say the same for Diaconate. Pope Leo , I think, will challenge us to see the church/deacon as servant to all: a very demanding and meaningful ministry to the world!

When he was elected May 8, 2025 he said he dreamed of a synodal and missionary church that "built bridges and always open to receive like this square (St. Peter's) with its open arms, all who need our charity, our presence, dialogue and love."

We shall see where Pope Leo will lead us! I hope we are open.

Deacons and wives enjoyed a meal and fellowship after taping Mass for Shut-Ins. This annual outreach is part of our diaconate call to be of service to our brothers and sisters.

"We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become."
St. Clare of Assisi

"Spread love everywhere we go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier."
St. Mother Teresa