My Dear Brothers,

It’s December and people are walking around in shorts. Oh the joy of living in the South! I pray that each of you is having a good Advent. This time of waiting is a real challenge for some. As we grow older I believe that we recognize that every additional day is a blessing and we should never rush them. This is especially true this time of year. The planning and plotting for Christmas celebrations seems to take so long and then the day after Christmas it’s all over. We should draw the celebration out more and Advent is that special time that reminds us….to wait, to watch, something extraordinary is coming. I love this time of year, the music, the decorations, and the cookies! I’ve heard some complain that we shouldn’t have the tree up or the decorations out until Christmas. That would never have flown around my house either as a child or a parent. Sure there is excitement about Christmas presents but the wonder of the Nativity Scenes and the Carols clearly remind us of what Christmas is really about.

One of the most special things we do each year is attending The Festival Lessons and Carols at Emory University the first weekend of December. The service is described in Wikipedia as “the story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus being told in nine short Bible readings from Genesis, the prophetic books and the Gospels, interspersed with the singing of Christmas carols, hymns and choir music. The format is based on an Order drawn up by Edward Benson, later Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1880.” It’s been a family tradition for nearly 30 years.

 Traditions are an important part of our lives. The cherished holiday traditions remind us of treasured times past and the promise of the future.

My prayer for each of us is that this entire season is filled with the blessings of family and friends. That each of us allows the joy of this precious time of year to fill our hearts with the love of Jesus Christ….the precious Child, Wonderful Counselor, and Savior! I also prayer that we are able to share that love with all we encounter today and throughout the coming New Year.

Know that I am here to serve you and that you are in my prayers. Please keep our entire community in prayer!

Sincerely in Christ,
Last September the Men in Diaconate Formation went to Cullman, AL for their Fall Retreat. The Retreat Master was Fr. Erik Hill, from Prince of Peace in Flowery Branch. The central theme of the talks was Discipleship: Calling, Discernment, and Obedience during the formation period. Excellent talks were presented to allow the Candidates and Aspirants time to discern the call for formation in preparation of the call for diaconate. Information was presented to help those in Formation understand that discernment and obedience are the key for good preparation for Diakonia during formation program. Music was provided by John Harvey and the formation program choir to assist those present to be drawn into the right spiritual environment to leave the retreat.

But, as every year, not everything was listening and praying. As we can see from the information provided by Erik Wilkinson: Approximately 30 men in formation from all years participated in this year’s annual retreat workday at Saint Bernard Abbey in Cullman, Alabama. With such a large presence, the group divided into two teams based on direction from the Abbey. The first team, coordinated by Bill Boyd, cleared brush and scraped and painted benches and a service building next to the graveyard. The second team, coordinated by Erik Wilkinson and Charles Iner, worked to clear an entire three-story building of furniture and debris. The Abbey has begun a capital campaign to return this building to monastic use and the clearing of it was a key first step.

After almost 6 hours of hot and difficult work, and a few cuts and cases of poison ivy, the formation crew gathered together at dinner to relax and share stories, and to welcome class of 2019 for their first time at this formation retreat.

Br. Marcus and the Abbey grounds-crew leader team stopped by to convey how much they appreciated the help and continued support of the Atlanta Diaconate Formation community in giving back to the monastery. Rest assured that, God willing, the men in formation will be back out next year for more of the same!

Finally, but not least, as Peter Harris informed: The Annual St. Stephen Golf Tournament was held Friday morning, Sept. 5th just before the annual Diocesan Formation Spiritual Retreat in Cullman, Al. begins. This activity follows our Thursday workday where aspirants & candidates complete various projects for the Benedictines at St. Bernard’s Monastery and Academy. Both served to bring the different class years together for meaningful service, fellowship, and fun.
As always, prior experience playing golf was not a requirement to participate even if some of the best shots were by new golfers. We also had one hole specially designated for a “closest to hole” contest and another for the “longest drive.” Both gave a golfer whether new or experienced a chance to show off their talent or good luck at these designated special holes.

The Class of 2019 displayed some real golf talent, with Steve Gross winning the longest drive competition and Eddie Hughes winning the closest to the pin.

Along with the expected enjoyment of spending five or so hours on the 18 hole course, we had prizes and trophies waiting in the clubhouse.

The low scoring team will have their names inscribed on our Diacate Golf Trophy. We also had the coveted “Broken Club” award, (someone’s broken club nailed on an old board), for the ‘highest’ scoring team.

The results were as follows: the winning team, named in honor of St. John Paul II (Team 5), came in with a score one under par, 71. Members were: Pete Ranft, Class of 2018, Eddie Hughes, Class of 2019, and Greg Orf & Hedy Sevilla, Class of 2017. The high scoring team, coming in at a score they’d prefer not mentioned represented St. Peter (Team 1) and included Class of 2015 members, Dave Baker and Bill Doohue, along with Dave Schreckenberger from the Class of 2018 and Peter Harris from the Class of 2016.

As always, it was a lot of fun as reported by participants, even those who came in last. It was a great way to unwind from work & studies and spend some quality time with our brothers in formation.

We want to thank Fr. Erik Hill for accepting to be our retreat Master; also thanks Deacon Dennis Dorner and Bill Allen for the time expended with us. Special thanks for the men in formation who participate in the Work day, as always providing their time to help.

Another great year, great formation retreat, thanks to all of you and God bless you.

Deacon Jose
jespinosa@archatl.com
Tis the Season – Advent, of course. The wives of the men in Diaconate Formation joined together on November 15, for a day of reflection on “Women Saying Yes to God”. They used Mary and Elizabeth, two women who said a resounding ‘Yes’ to God, as their guides. Neither Mary nor Elizabeth seemed to be afraid to respond to God with a ‘Yes’. They both knew that their ‘Yes’ would have some consequences. Every wife of a man in Diaconate Formation is also saying ‘Yes’ to God. What responsibilities and consequences come with that ‘Yes’? Yes, I will give up every other Saturday with him so he can attend classes. I’ll coach the soccer team when he can’t be there. I’ll give up time in the evening so he can study, and there is a lot of studying. I will pray for him and myself and our family. Or, Yes, I will give up my Saturday and attend classes with him.

The Wives Day of Reflection was rich with time to start the day with Mass, time for meditation, time for prayer together, time to share a meal together, time to share common concerns, time to create Advent Wreaths, and time to laugh together.

The common theme, I realize, is that we gave ourselves time to be with our God and each other. This time together strengthens our will to respond with a ‘Yes’ to God’s call. During this Season of Advent, let us give ourselves the gift of time, even if just a few minutes a day, to reflect on how we respond to God with ‘Yes’.

If we know the rewards before we start, the decision is easy. Mary and Elizabeth didn’t know and neither do we. We trust God so fully that we say ‘Yes’ even in fear and wonder.

May you know the blessing and wonder of the beautiful Season of Advent. May you rejoice on Christmas with the celebration of the Birth of Christ. May you carry a ‘Yes’ in your heart to the will of God always.

Peace,
Penny Simmons
Jesus came to forgive world debt. We find Jesus making this claim in Luke 4:16-30, when he reads from Isaiah’s scroll. He tells those around him in the synagogue who listen to him read that the Spirit of the Lord is on him in a singularly unique way. He will bring freedom from bondage to sin, including its hold on various spheres of our lives. Jesus is Jubilee justice.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:18-21; ESV)

The Year of Jubilee, which Jesus’ people most likely never celebrated in full, entailed abundant Sabbath rest of exceeding duration as well as the liberation of debts of various kinds (See Leviticus 25:8-55 for God’s instructions about the Year of Jubilee). Such rest and liberation were intended to bring great joy to the people’s lives. Rich and poor alike were to benefit from living according to God’s kingdom Shalom modeled in the Jubilee Year. Jesus informs his listeners that the ultimate Year of Jubilee has dawned in him.

Hello from the Marriage, Family and Pastoral Care Office!
I wanted to make you aware of a great opportunity if you were not already. There are SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE for pastor-nominated students for the online course Foundations of Theology of the Body: An Invitation to Love. This is ideal formation for parish leaders involved in marriage ministry, NFP, and family ministry. The course starts in January of 2015 and is completed in 25 weeks (Spring - 12 weeks; Fall 13 weeks). Registration is open now, exclusively for the Archdiocese of Atlanta, registration will open to other dioceses and to the public after October 31st.
The 40% scholarship per parish could go unused - so don’t hesitate to discuss with your pastor.
Contact me or Daniel with any questions: pmetts@archatl.com or dwest@archatl.com
Thank you and God bless!
In Christ,
Patrick Metts, LPC
Office of Formation and Discipleship
Marriage, Family and Pastoral Care
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta
2401 Lake Park Dr SE Smyrna, GA 30080
P: 404-920-7643 | F: 404-920-7621
E: pmetts@archatl.com / archatl.com/ofd

The **Faith@Work** ministry is excited to welcome Carlos Navarro to speak on Wednesday evening, December 10, 2014.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Carlos Navarro - President of Latin America at Elavon</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Gradually, then Suddenly: What we must pay attention to in order to achieve success.</td>
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<td>When</td>
<td>Wednesday, December 10, 2014 - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.</td>
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| Where            | In McNamee Hall at St. Peter Chanel Catholic Church
                  | 11330 Woodstock Road, Roswell, Georgia 30075 |
| Price            | Admission is free. All are welcome! |

We ask that you kindly register online, if you have not done so, to help us plan for the evening. We also ask that you help spread the word about this compelling talk among your networks. Invite a friend and colleague.
Register NOW for the Spring 2015 Semester

**The Spring semester runs from January 18 - April 25, 2015**

Classes run for twelve short weeks with a holiday break from March 29 to April 11 including Holy Week and Easter Week!

**All classes and exams will be completed by May 2nd.**

There are ELEVEN great courses available this semester!

Including two NEW courses:

- Ecclesiology with Deacon Bill Ditewig and
- Planning and Conducting Funeral and Memorial Services with Deacon Bob McCormick

+ These twelve week classes earn two graduate level college credits.

+ All classes are delivered via the Internet

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**ENJOY OUR GREAT VALUE PRICING!**

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<th>Twelve Week courses (1)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Single Course</td>
<td>$295</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Courses (Prepaid)(3)</td>
<td>$260 each</td>
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(1) Twelve weeks of classes and a final exam week, Starting mid January.

(2) Payment for courses is due two weeks before the start of class.

Additional information is available on our web site: [http://deacons.pcj.edu](http://deacons.pcj.edu)

**Click a link below to REGISTER!**

- **Student Login**
- **New Student Account Setup**

If you have any questions about any of the courses or about registering, please e-mail us at deacons@pcj.edu

or call Deacon Michael Berstene at 1-877-933-2266
My name is Georgina “Gigi” Fontanilla and I am in charge of the Deacon Speakers Program for Food for the Poor. We are based in Coconut Creek, Florida which is about an hour north of Miami. My main responsibility is to make known to permanent deacons the opportunity to visit a Third World country at no expense to the deacon. This is a wonderful experience for deacons to see the extreme poverty in areas that are not that far from the U.S. This trip is for deacons to see firsthand the suffering Christ in the poor and also what Food for the Poor is doing to alleviate injustices and poverty in the Third World.

In return, we do ask the deacon to preach about his experience in the parish he is assigned to on one weekend after he returns. We tell the deacon that he must obtain written permission from his pastor before agreeing to go on a mission trip. If you are not familiar with Food for the Poor, please log on to our website. We have been around for over 32 years and we are the number one international relief and development agency in the United States. We not only provide food but also emergency relief assistance, clean water, medicines, shelter, build schools and so much more. We also provide job training so hopefully one day a family can break out the cycle of poverty and become more self sufficient. Please also know more than 95% of all donations go back to programs that help the poor.

I would like to send more information on this program, with your permission. If you have any questions about this program and the mission trips, you can contact me at 1-877-654-2960 ext. 6622 or email me back at gigif@foodforthepoor.org.

I look forward to hearing from you. May the Lord continue to bless you and your ministry.

Sincerely in Christ,
Georgina “Gigi” Fontanilla

http://www.foodforthepoor.org/
Many Deacons become involved in personal and private conversations with members of their Parish. We were all taught in Formation that we need to be careful in those conversations. Most Deacons are not trained Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Counselors, Clinical Social Workers, or Marriage and Family Therapists. We know that we definitely have limits and that we must refer parishioners with real counseling needs to trained professionals. However, we should also know that Georgia law does allow members of the clergy to help parishioners with personal problems as a part of their ministry. Section 43-10a-7-(b)9 of the Official Code of Georgia, Annotated clearly states that “Active members of the clergy” are not restricted from trying to help those in their Parish with personal problems as long as they do not represent themselves as licensed professionals. In carrying out this helping ministry, some Deacons may wonder what protections exist should the clergy member be called to testify in a court of law about those discussions. Deacons clearly know that Priests cannot divulge information given under the seal of the confession and Deacons also know that they have no such protection. However, the principle of Clergy Privilege does exist in all 50 of the United States. What does the Georgia law say about this issue? The Official Code of Georgia, Annotated 24-5-502 states, “Every communication made by any person professing religious faith, seeking spiritual comfort, or seeking counseling to any Protestant minister, of the gospel, any priest of the Roman Catholic faith, any priest of the Greek Orthodox Catholic faith, any Jewish rabbi, or any Christian or Jewish minister or similar functionary, by whatever name called, shall be deemed privileged. No such minister, priest, rabbi, or similar functionary, shall disclose any communications made to him or her by any such person professing religious faith, seeking spiritual guidance or seeking counseling, nor shall such minister, priest, rabbi, or similar functionary be competent or compellable to testify with reference to any such communication in any court.” As Ordained Deacons, we would definitely fall into the category of “similar functionaries”. This means that we should ethically keep in confidence what is shared with us when we are acting in our ministry as Deacons. The clear exceptions would be if someone is threatening harm to self or others. In this case, we have a duty to warn the family of a person who threatens to harm himself or herself. We also have a duty to warn a person whom someone threatens to harm. Also, in the state of Georgia, anytime that someone discloses to us as ministers information about child abuse, elder abuse, or the abuse of someone who cannot take care of himself or herself, we have a legal obligation to inform our Pastor.

To be a Deacon is truly a privilege. However, like most privileges, it comes with responsibilities. We need to be certain that we are always aware of important responsibilities such as the ones noted above.

Deacon Tom G. Walter
Council of Deacons

Deacon Tom Walter is not a lawyer and nothing in this article constitutes legal advise.
Calling All Wives

On August 23, 2014, there was a Brunch and Workshop for wives of Deacons and men in formation. The program was sponsored jointly by the Council of Deacons and the Diaconate Formation Program. There was a wonderful program presented by Marian Monahan, wife of Deacon Bill Monahan. There was a report on the Workshop by Penny Simmons in the last issue of the Beacon.

When we reviewed the evaluations of the program, we learned that there was one overwhelming concern expressed by the wives. There was a concern that the invitations were addressed:

To the Wife of Deacon . . .

It is understandable that this was seen as somewhat offensive. It is very impersonal. However, there is a practical problem here. Unfortunately, we do not have a good current list of the names, email addresses, and mailing addresses of the wives of Deacons. To remedy this problem, so that we can send personal invitations next time, we ask that all wives of Deacons send their name, email address, and regular mailing address to Deacon Tom Walter, the member of the Council of Deacons who is coordinating programs for the Wives of Deacons. He will develop a database that will keep updated information and add Wives to the list as each class is ordained.

Wives, please send your name, mailing address, and email address to:

Deacon Tom G. Walter
tgwalter5817@gmail.com
5817 Norton Circle
Flowery Branch, GA 30542

Deacons, please make sure that Deacon Tom receives this information for your wife so that we can make sure and include her in future notifications about programs for Wives of Deacons.
**PLEASE PRAY FOR US**

**FOR THE SICK AND SUFFERING**

Deacon Mike Landaiche
Will Thacker is the 10 year old grandson of Steve Thacker, DIF
David Dorner, brother of Deacon Dennis Dorner, Sr., and uncle of Fr. Dennis Dorner, Jr.
For Deacon Don Marchildon
Deacon Tom Metzger following his recent heart valve replacement surgery
For Deacon Monahan
For Deacon Pat Gillespie

**FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED**

For the repose of the soul of Delia Feeney, mother-in-law of Deacon Bob Brunton, who passed away Nov 13, 2014
For the repose of the soul of Donald Dorner, father of Deacon Dennis Dorner and grandfather of Fr. Dennis Dorner Jr. Nov 1, 2014
For the repose of the soul of Mary Korte, Wife of Deacon Jerry Korte, who passed away Dec 3, 2014
For the repose of the soul of Phyllis Reimer, wife of Deacon Cecil Reimer, who passed away Oct 27, 2014
For the soul of Phyllis Reimer, wife of Deacon Cecil Reimer, who passed away on October 27, 2014
For the soul of Lila Griffin, mother of Deacon Chester Griffin, who passed away Oct 7, 2014

*May the Souls of all the Faithful Departed Through the Mercy of God Rest in Peace*
Prayer Requests:

Please pray for the men as they prepare for their Ordination to the Permanent Diaconate on February 7, 2015. They will be on their Conical Retreat January 11 to January 16, 2015.

Please pray for the men who will be Admitted to Candidacy on January 21, 2015, as well as the men looking for Institution as Lector and Institution as Acolyte at Our Lady of the Americas Catholic Church on January 21, 2015.

Please pray for those who will begin a year of Aspirancy on January 24, 2015.

Please pray for Instructors ending the 2014 Diaconate Formation Year and the Instructors who will be teaching in the 2015 Diaconate Formation Year.

Please pray for all who work in the Diaconate Formation Process around the world.

Please pray for Deacons and all who have said ‘Yes’ to serving the people of God.