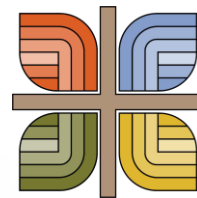




DIOCESE OF DES MOINES

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP



Dear Friends in Christ,

As we sow seeds of God's Spirit in our Des Moines Diocese, we know that vocational seeds to the priesthood and to the diaconate are two essential 'hybrids' composed of human and divine qualities that must take root and bear fruit so our local churches might flourish. This awareness prompts my outreach to you as we have adapted what was previously known as our Seminarian Appeal; we have extended this appeal to include the wealth of deacon candidates who are likewise in formation to join the ministerial ranks that Christ established to make disciples and draw all people to his heart. God is blessing our Diocese with men who are heeding the call to ordained ministry and is prompting us to provide the spiritual and material resources that will enable them to respond.

Recently, Pope Leo XIV spoke to seminarians by invoking the heart: "The seminary is meant to be a training ground to help a seminarian attend to his own heart. . . we need to learn to love and how to do so as Jesus did." "This involves every aspect of life, for 'nothing of your personal uniqueness should be put aside; rather, everything should be taken up and transformed, like the grain of wheat in the Gospel.'"

Most of us are aware of the scope of a priest's sacramental and pastoral ministry. We may be less familiar with the role and ministry of a deacon. The deacon is to assist the bishop and priests in the ministries of the Word, of the altar, and of charity. He also accompanies persons growing in their faith, including those who wish to join the Church. A deacon "presides over public prayer, administers baptism, assists and blesses marriages, attends to the dying, and conducts funeral rites." And, he helps the poor and marginalized in our communities.

In addition to the 13 young men in seminary formation to become priests, we are blessed to have 18 men who are engaged in the demanding process of academic, pastoral, spiritual and human formation to be ordained deacons in 2028. And for the first time in the history of our Diocese, another 17 men have applied and are accepted to compose a second cohort of diaconate formation. The generous heart of Jesus is reflected in the generous response of these candidates for ordination.

In order to support the average \$59,500 annual cost to form a seminarian, and the \$7,600 annual cost to support a deacon candidate, I invite you: Will you respond generously by supporting our newly titled '**Clergy Formation' Appeal**? Will you lend your prayers toward their dedication and growth in personal holiness and zeal to serve Christ's Body in the Diocese of Des Moines?

Thank you for opening your mind and heart to consider this request. God's blessings on all whom you hold in your own beautiful heart!

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.
Bishop of Des Moines