

EVENTS FOR YOUR CALENDAR

October 1, 2025: Continuing Formation Report due

September 11-13, 2026: Annual SSDCA Retreat, Notre Dame Retreat House, Canandaigua

Mea Culpa! In the last *Community Update*, when I noted the ministry of extern deacons in the Diocese of Rochester, I neglected to name Deacon Jeffrey Mierzejewski of the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, who generously serves at Immaculate Conception/St. Bridget's in Rochester. I apologize for the oversight.

On Sunday, December 14, 2025, Bishop Matano instituted Peter Sikora to the Ministry of Lector and Matthew Hall and Michael Schoene to the Ministry of Acolyte at Holy Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral. See the photo above. Kindly keep all of the members of the formation community and their families in your prayers.

Notre Dame Retreat House (<https://notredameretreat.org/>) recently sent an email highlighting retreats and special events for January and February 2026. If you are not on their distribution list, you may wish to check out their website for opportunities that might be of interest to you in the coming year.

Similarly, St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry just shared information on their discounted Spring audit offerings (<https://www.stbernards.edu/springaudit>), so you may wish to check their website for further information on those courses and the other events/programs at SBSTM.

I recently sent out reminders to deacons who are due/overdue to update the required "Preventing Sexual Harassment for Employees" training and to those deacons who are due to update their required background check. Thank you to those of you who have responded; if you have not yet done so, kindly attend to these important requirements at your earliest convenience lest your ministry be impacted. If you'd like to know your dates of record for compliance with the *Charter* requirements, just send me an email and I'll let you know. The automated training system generates reminders to your email for the PSHE and "Safe Environment" training.

You probably noted yesterday's appointment of the new Metropolitan Archbishop of New York, Archbishop-Designate Ronald Hicks. Kindly keep him, Cardinal Dolan, and all of the bishops of our Province in your prayers in this time of transition, with continuing prayers for the Diocese of Rochester as we await the appointment of our new diocesan bishop.

Following is a Christmas prayer from "*Ordained to Serve - Prayers and Blessings for Permanent Deacons*." Wishing you and your families, and the communities that you so generously serve, a most blessed Christmas Season...

Lord, in this holy season of prayer and song and laughter, we praise you for the great wonders you have sent us: for shining star and angel's song, for infant's cry in lowly manger. We praise you for the Word made flesh in a little Child. We behold his glory, and are bathed in its radiance.

Be with us as we sing the ironies of Christmas, the incomprehensible comprehended, the poetry made hard fact, the helpless Babe who cracks the world asunder. We kneel before you shepherds, innkeepers, wisemen. Help us to rise bigger than we are. Amen.