

Bishop LeVoir ordains two priests June 6 at the Cathedral in New Ulm

by Christine Clancy
The Prairie Catholic

NEW ULM – Bishop John M. LeVoir ordained the Diocese of New Ulm’s two newest priests at a special Mass Saturday, June 6 at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm.

Fathers John Hayes and Shawn Polman were welcomed to the presbyterate by a limited congregation due to social distancing measures because of COVID-19. In-person participation at the ordination ceremony was limited from the cathedral’s standard capacity of 600 to approximately 130, which included families of the newly ordained and a small number of clergy. A video live-stream of the ceremony was offered for those unable to attend.

“It is a joyful day for the Diocese of New Ulm,” Bishop LeVoir told those gathered. “We have two very fine young men who will be ordained to the priesthood today. This is the first time I have ever had a double ordination of priests, so this is something new for me,” the bishop said.

The nearly two-hour Mass included the Rite of Ordination with a Litany of Supplication in which the Church invokes the intercession of the saints and martyrs in heaven to intercede for the candidates and the entire Church, asking for God to pour forth his grace and mercy.

Following the Gospel reading, Bishop LeVoir initiated the Rite. The diocese’s director of Vocations Fr. Matthew Wiering called and presented the candidates to the bishop as a sign of worthiness for ordination. This was followed by the consent of the people, as the congregation indicated with applause their acceptance of the bishop’s decision to ordain the two deacons.

In his homily, Bishop LeVoir began by saying that the formation of priestly ministry begins in families. Thanking the men’s parents Tom and Patty Hayes and Ron and Jean Polman, he said, “I am very grateful. These men would not be here today if it were not for you.”

Reflecting on the significance of the theme of the day’s readings – laying down one’s life for Jesus Christ and our brothers and sisters – the bishop encouraged the men to have self-sacrificing love, thinking of others for the sake of Christ above anything else. “We are all called to lay our lives down for Christ and others. That is what the Church is all about,” the bishop said. “We are brought to life by Christ and the Holy Spirit, and we need to be able to gain that strength that we need to be self-sacrificing in our love.”

Bishop LeVoir’s homily included a strong emphasis and connection between our Baptism and the work of the Church –

worshipping, evangelizing, and caring for the poor. He said we are all called to do this work through our Baptism, “in our own way, in our vocation, in our own place.”

The bishop stressed that there is nothing more important to a priest than the celebration of the Eucharist. “Without the priesthood, there is no Eucharist; and without the Eucharist, there is no priesthood,” he said.

Highlighting the importance of prayer, the bishop also encouraged the men to have a solid devotion to our Blessed Mother. “She loves you as she loves her son. She will help you,” he said.

Accepting the duties of the priestly office
Before entering the order of the priesthood, the two candidates declared their willingness to embrace the duties and obligations of the priestly office. Then, they each knelt before the bishop and vowed obedience to him and his successors. Everyone present was invited to pray for the men as they prostrated themselves before the altar as a sign of submission before God as the Litany of Saints was sung.

Rising to their feet, the men once again took their turn kneeling before the bishop for the Laying on of Hands. Together with the Prayer of Ordination, this is the outward sign of the ordination to the Order

of Priests. In a like manner, priests that were present repeated the motion as a sign of the oneness of the priesthood they share.

The newly ordained priests were then vested with a stole and chasuble. Fr. Hayes was vested by retired priest Monsignor John Richter, former rector of the cathedral. Fr. Polman was vested by Fr. Craig Timmerman, pastor of the Good Teacher Area Faith Community (Canby, Dawson, Ghent, St. Leo, and Minneota). Bishop LeVoir then anointed the men’s hands with sacred chrism in preparation for their sacred duty of presiding at the celebration of the Eucharist.

The ordination concluded with the bishop and clergy welcoming the new priests into the presbyteral order. The Mass continued with the celebration of the Eucharist.

When asked what it was like to hear his son speak the words of Consecration for the first time at a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated by each priest the following day, Ron Polman replied, “When Fr. Shawn spoke the words of Consecration it was really emotional for me, as Fr. Shawn was overcome with emotion, too. What I witnessed on the altar at Consecration on Sunday, was his heart is totally into his calling to be a priest. I am so happy for him as I truly believe it was at that moment he realized his lifelong dream was now a reality.”

Tom Hayes said he, too, was filled with emotion. “That image, those words from him (Fr. Hayes) created a powerful moment for me. Our son has reached the time to start the journey he has been called to do.”

Newly ordained assignments
Fr. John Hayes has been assigned to serve as parochial vicar in the St. John Paul II AFC (St. Pius X in Glencoe, Holy Family in Silver Lake, and Holy Trinity in Winsted).

Fr. Shawn Polman has been assigned to serve as parochial vicar in the Holy Cross AFC (Holy Trinity and St. Mary in New Ulm, St. George in West Newton Twp., St. Gregory the Great in Lafayette, and St. John the Baptist in Searles) as well as chaplain to the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus in New Ulm.

Editor’s note: A video of the priestly ordination of Fathers Hayes and Polman is available online. Visit www.dnu.org/ ordination. The Diocese of New Ulm currently has seven men preparing for the priesthood. To support priestly vocations in the diocese, visit www.dnu.org.



Fr. John Hayes, 26 (left), and Fr. Shawn Polman, 26, are the two newest priests of the Diocese of New Ulm. Fr. Hayes is from the Church of St. Gregory in Lafayette and Fr. Polman is from the Church of St. Mary in Cottonwood.

(Photos by Jeanine McMahon)



Following the laying on of hands by the bishop, some of the priests present also lay their hands on the candidates. Pictured praying over candidates are (l-r), Fr. Matthew Wiering, diocesan director of Vocations and Msgr. Douglas Grams, rector of the cathedral and vicar general of diocese.



Before entering the order of the priesthood, the candidates declared their willingness to embrace the duties and obligations of the priestly office. Deacon Polman promises his respect and obedience to Bishop LeVoir and his successors. Also pictured is Diocese of New Ulm seminarian Nathan Hansen of the Church of St. John in Darwin.



The candidates prostrate themselves before God as the congregation prays the Litany of the Saints on their behalf. Prostration is an ancient posture showing devotion to God and his Church, as well as asking God for the grace to live their life for God and his Church.



Bishop LeVoir lays his hands on Deacon Hayes in silence. The laying on of hands and the prayer of ordination which follows constitute the essential elements of the Sacrament of Holy Orders.



Father Hayes is vested by Monsignor John Richter, former rector of the Cathedral in New Ulm.