

Holy occasion: New Ulm trio ordained deacons June 5 at cathedral

by Christine Clancy
The Prairie Catholic

NEW ULM – They lined up near the altar, fervent to take the next step in committing their lives to serving the Church. Applause broke out inside the cathedral after the men presented themselves to the bishop to be ordained a deacon.

On Saturday, June 5, seminarians Joshua Bot and Tanner Thooft, both native sons of St. Edward parish in Minneota, and Nathan Hansen, a native son of St. John parish in Darwin, moved one step closer to becoming priests for the Diocese of New Ulm when they were ordained transitional deacons by Bishop Emeritus John M. LeVoi (2008-2020) at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm. Concelebrating the liturgy with Bishop LeVoi were approximately 45 priests.

“It has been a journey for you through the seminary, and now you are here, presenting yourself for the ordination of the diaconate,” Bishop LeVoi said. “. . . It has been my privilege to walk with you during these seven years.”

The bishop expressed his appreciation for those who have played a part in the formation of the new deacons – the seminaries, the diocesan vocation directors, the parents and families of the men, and the lay people of the diocese.

His homily talked about the importance of prayer in the lives of the new deacons. “The personal relationship with Jesus Christ is so critical,” he told the men. “Unless we spend time in prayer, that relationship will wither and fade.”

The bishop continued, “We should never be satisfied with our relationship with Jesus Christ,” he said. “We should always strive, with the help of God’s Grace, to strengthen that bond that we have with Our Lord. It’s critical . . . Nothing good is going to happen without prayer.”

The bishop addressed the ministry that the men will carry



Promise of respect and obedience

Candidate Nathan Hansen kneels before Bishop Emeritus John M. LeVoi during the Promise of the Elect. Assisting is Fr. Aaron Johanneck, director of the Office of Worship.

(Photo(s) by Jeanine McMahon Photography)

out as a deacon - proclaiming the Gospel, delivering Holy Communion, presiding over baptisms and marriages, visiting the sick, and presiding at funerals. “Let the Holy Spirit work in you and let your way of life touch the people,” the bishop advised. “Take every opportunity you can to teach and preach the Gospel.”

In his closing remarks, the bishop said, “Today is a great day, a day in which the Lord blesses you in a special way. He comes to meet you – it’s a personal meeting with Jesus Christ. Jesus is leading you today, and he is saying your name and is giving you the Holy Spirit to develop the gifts and the talents that God has given you – don’t be afraid. God always takes care of you, the Blessed Mother always takes care of you, they are always watching over you.”

After the homily, the ordinands approached the bishop one at a time, knelt, and promised to respect and obey the bishop and his successors. Next, the men laid face down in front of the altar as a cantor led the assembly in the Litany of Saints. This act of prostration is an ancient posture showing both the donation by the candidate of their life to God and his Church, as well as



Litany of Supplication

All three ordinands lie prostrate in front of the altar as a sign of their unworthiness and need for divine assistance while a cantor leads the assembly in the Litany of Saints.

the Book of the Gospels. “Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach,” the bishop instructed.

The men then individually came forward for the most sacred part of the ceremony, where the bishop imposed his hands on each man and recited the prayer of ordination.

After being vested with a stole and dalmatic, each deacon individually approached the bishop to receive

Fr. Garrett Ahlers, the diocese’s Office of Vocations director, first came to know the three new deacons when they all were in seminary formation together. “It is exciting to see how they have grown –not only in maturity with age but in their spiritual awareness

and their fatherly hearts,” he said.

“There is no man who comes out of the seminary “perfect,” we all have our own flaws and limitations,” Fr. Ahlers said. “But these three ordinandi [candidates for ordination] are truly remarkable young men: they are rooted in prayer; they are sincere in their interactions with others;

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Transitional diaconate vs. permanent diaconate: What’s the difference?

In the Catholic Church, the diaconate is the first of three ranks of ordained ministry.

From the fifth century until the Second Vatican Council the term “deacon” was used in the Latin rite almost exclusively to describe the final stage in preparation for ordination to the priesthood. The council decreed that the diaconate also could be restored as a permanent and separate rank in the Latin rite and that married men may be ordained to this rank. Pope Paul VI restored the permanent diaconate in 1967.

Those in the final stage of formation for the priesthood are “transitional” deacons. Those not planning to be ordained priests are called “permanent” deacons.

Since not all permanent deacons are married, married deacons is not a synonym for permanent deacons.

The role of the transitional deacon includes assisting priests in proclaiming the Gospel, preaching, baptizing, assisting at and blessing marriages, presiding at funerals, and dedicating themselves to any of a variety of ministries of charity.



Laying on of Hands

Tanner Thooft receives the strength of the Holy Spirit as the bishop silently imposes his hands upon him and prays the Prayer of Ordination.



Handing on the Book of Gospels

Vested as a deacon, Joshua Bot kneels before the bishop as he places the Book of Gospels in Bot’s hands and recites “Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.”



Fraternal Kiss

Bishop LeVoi and newly ordained Deacon Tanner Thooft are all smiles as they embrace prior to the preparation of the liturgy of the Eucharist.

(Photo by Christine Clancy)



Deacon Bruce Bot gives his newly ordained son Joshua a hug during the ordination liturgy. Deacon Bot is a permanent deacon serving the Good Teacher Area Faith Community (Ghent and Minneota). Deacon Nathan Hansen’s father, John Hansen is also a permanent deacon serving in the All Souls Area Faith Community (Darwin, Litchfield, Manannah, and the merged parish of St. Gertrude, Forest City).

(Photo by Christine Clancy)



Gathering for a group photo on the front steps of the cathedral in New Ulm after the ordination are: front, l-r, Rev. Mr. Nathan Hansen, Rev. Mr. Joshua Bot, and Rev. Mr. Tanner Thooft. Back row, Fr. Garrett Ahlers, diocesan director of Vocations, Fr. Joseph Taphorn, rector at the Saint Paul Seminary, Bishop LeVoi, Fr. Michael Skluzacek, director of Spiritual Formation at the Saint Paul Seminary, and Monsignor Douglas Grams, diocesan administrator.

Diaconate ordination

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they are honest and humble; they are incredibly eager to enter into service of our local Church by their ministry. I am already excited for their priestly ordination next summer!”

Prayer and preparation

Each candidate had two weeks to prepare for their diaconate ordination. Deacon Thooft used this opportunity to spend part of the time with family, helping

out on the farm. “I thought it was important to spend some time getting back to the roots of who I am and where God first began his work in my life and my formation to serve Him,” he said. The remaining four days he spent at the seminary for a time of rest and prayer with the Lord. “The seminary is a special place of formation where the Lord has done so much work,” Thooft said. “I found it important to return for a time to thank the Lord for the work he has done and the

confidence I have in him moving forward.”

Following their summer parish assignments, the deacons will continue their final year of studies at the Saint Paul Seminary in St. Paul in the fall. The men will be ordained to the priesthood tentatively set for 2022.

Editor’s note: A recording of the June 5 diaconate ordination can be viewed at www.dnu.org/live-stream.

Official appointments

Monsignor Douglas Grams, administrator for the Diocese of New Ulm, has made the following assignments of the newly ordained transitional deacons for the summer of 2021.

Effective June 7 through August 18.

Rev. Mr. Joshua Bot is assigned to the St. John Paul II Area Faith Community which includes the parishes in Glencoe, Winsted, and Silver Lake.

Rev. Mr. Nathan Hansen is assigned to the Apostles Peter and Paul Area Faith Community which includes the parishes in St. Peter and Nicollet.

Rev. Mr. Tanner Thooft is assigned to the Light of the World Area Faith Community which includes the parishes in Redwood Falls and Wabasso.