

# Dcn. Peot Named New Continuing Formation for Clergy Coordinator

KAREN MAHONEY  
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

Ordained in September, Dcn. Kurt Peot was still adjusting to his new role serving St. Dominic Parish in Brookfield when a call came from Dcn. Michael Chmielewski, associate director of deacon services, asking him if he wanted to take on the role as coordinator of continuing formation for clergy for the retiring Dcn. Al Lazaga.

While he was admittedly surprised to be asked, Dcn. Peot said he was happy to take on the new responsibility.

“It will be a fun experience to do,” he said. “I think it will be a great learning process and I look forward to getting the program back on its feet after being closed down for a year due to the pandemic.”

Like any professional, deepening one’s understanding of his chosen vocation is essential for the integral formation of the priest and deacon. In his new role, Dcn. Peot will provide management of the Priests Sabbatical Program and will oversee retreat opportunities for deacons and priests, as well as providing access to ongoing formational programs in academic, spiritual, wellness and pastoral leadership areas.

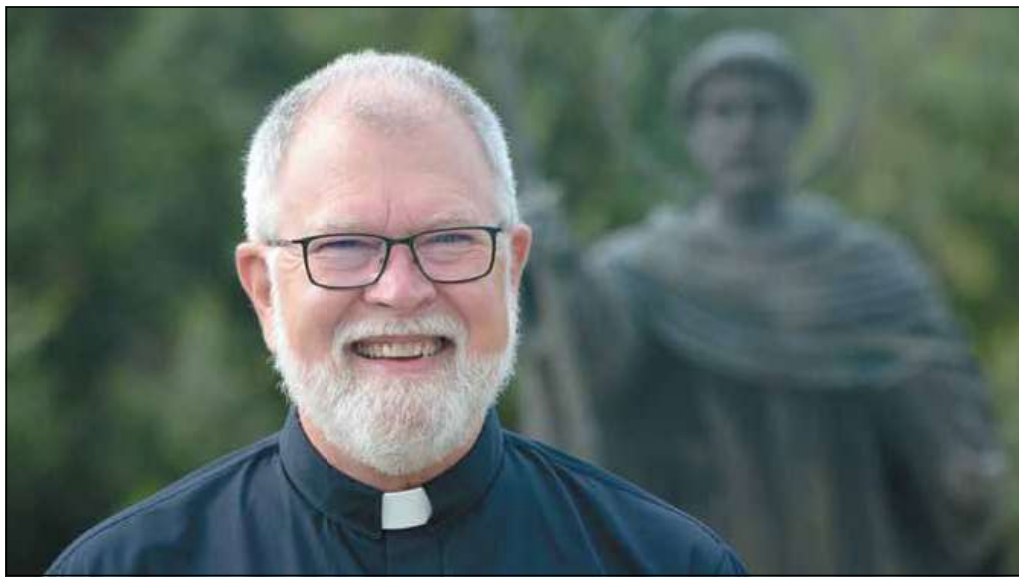
A retired civil engineer, Dcn Peot went through a dark time in his life and, though he was born and raised a Catholic, was not completely immersed in his faith. He felt one day as if his life had become very bleak.

“In that moment, I decided to engage my faith and try to really take it on and live it,” he said. “I had some experiences that told me to go deeper and deeper into my faith. I started with bible study, became a catechist and confirmation small group leader. I love high school kids and enjoyed doing that. I also went on work camps, mission trips and slowly but surely grew closer to God in the faith.”

At Mass on Holy Thursday one year, Dcn. Peot said he had a sense that God wanted him to go even deeper. Confused, he asked God what he meant, to go deeper.

“I didn’t get an answer,” he said. “I tried all I could and became pretty frantic. No matter what I did, it didn’t answer the questions. I tried harder and nothing worked.”

One day he had lunch with his pastor, Fr. David Reith, who at the time served St. Dominic Parish. After telling him the story, Fr. Reith suggested the diaconate, but then cautioned, he might be too old.



▲ Dcn. Kurt Peot has been named the new coordinator of continuing formation of clergy for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. (Submitted photo)

“He cushioned me either way,” said Dcn. Peot. “I met with Dcn. John Ebel (the former director of the Office for Diaconate Formation) and attended some inquiry sessions. I kept thinking that it was not for me. However, I just kept showing up and at the next thing and, though I felt hard to convince, I just trusted the process and listened to a friend who told me to treat it like a great spiritual adventure. I got to the end of Aspirancy and God did not say this is it or not it.”

Since he did not hear a direct no from above, Dcn. Peot applied for candidacy and soon it became clear to him that this was it. He said that it was a tremendous weight off his shoulders to know that was where God wanted him.

“It was hectic but peaceful and Dcn. John kept saying to trust the process and with time I would be able to trust more and more,” the 67-year-old said. “I have only been a deacon for about seven months. It has been fun, and I realized after my first Easter Triduum that it is a lot and wonderful. You don’t get a lot of sleep during that time. I got home, changed my shoes and fell asleep in my chair.”

Stepping into his new role will be a complete clean slate as not only did Dcn. Lazaga retire, but so did his

assistant and those who served in finance.

There is one deacon retreat each year and one priest retreat, said Dcn. Peot. In the past, three smaller programs also were held. Dcn Peot said he hopes to bring that programming back again.

“I want to accomplish a formation program that meets the needs of priests and deacons, and covers things they want to learn about and be involved in,” he said. “I hope they tell me what they need so we are not doing the same webinars year after year. I want them to be very interactive, so they feel they are getting what they need. My role is to learn what they need and to find the programming. Because I am an engineer, I am detail oriented. I might be annoying and if I am it won’t be the first time someone rolled their eyes. If I see it, I will know I went too far.”

Dcn. Peot has four children who all live relatively close to him: Joanna lives in Wauwatosa with her husband Eric, and they have four children: Gram, 10; Henry, 8; Rose, 5; and Michael, 22 months. His son Matt lives in Brookfield with his wife, Andrea, and they have a son, Jacob Anton. His daughter Emily lives and works in Waukesha, and his youngest, Christine, is an RN and lives in Madison.