



The Roman Catholic
Diocese of Helena

NEWSLETTER

June 2018

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Bishop Thomas Installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Las Vegas

Dan Bartleson
Director of Communications

On May 15th, at the Shrine of the Most Holy Redeemer in Las Vegas, Nev., Bishop George Leo Thomas was installed as the third bishop of the Diocese of Las Vegas. With 750,000 Catholics, Las Vegas is 15 times larger in population than the Diocese of Helena and has 32 parishes, six missions and 19 priests in active ministry.

During his 14 years as shepherd of the Diocese of Helena, Bishop Thomas was well known for his pastoral presence in parish and mission communities racking up 30,000 miles a year on his Jeep. He served many Catholic organizations outside the diocese, Catholic Extension's Board of Governors, the Catholic Health Association's governance and executive committees, and Mt. Angel and St. John Vianney Seminaries to name a few. Yet, he remained committed to Pope Francis' encouragement for good shepherds, to "know the smell of the sheep".

Following confirmations, church dedications, the installation of pastors and historical celebrations, he could be found talking, and listening, to the faithful at gatherings and receptions. In Western Montana, where distance is measured in hours behind the wheel, Bishop Thomas inspired and united the faithful where a mere ecclesial functionary would have missed the mark.

He prioritized caring for the needy through the diocese's Guatemala Mission and made personal visits to those served by the mission during his annual pastoral trips to the clinic, parish and school there. He, along with his late mother, Mary, had a close friendship with the Blackfeet People who gave him the name "Holy Warrior". He was most visible celebrating Mass at the annual North American Indian Days Celebration in Browning, Mont. that draws 10,000 people from the Western U.S. and Canada.



Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S., Archbishop Christoffe Pierre presented Bishop Thomas with Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter appointing him the third Bishop of the Diocese of Las Vegas.

Bishop Thomas' invitation to men to serve as clergy has borne much fruit. There are 20 active and 20 senior status deacons. There are 69 Diocese of Helena priests both active and senior status. We have 36 diocesan priests assigned; 2 assigned outside the Diocese; 31 on senior status. Additionally, we have 11 priests

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servicing from other dioceses and religious communities.

He took a personal and pastoral approach to the formation of seminarians including visits to the seminaries and time with each of the men during their annual retreat together. Six men are currently in seminary for the Diocese of Helena with Deacon Nathan Scheidecker en route to priestly ordination in 2019.

Bishop Thomas fostered a relationship with college students at his alma mater, Carroll College, and made regular visits to the campus ministries at Montana State, the University of Montana and Montana Techni-



Greeted with applause, Bishop Thomas carried the Apostolic Letter of his appointment through the Shrine of the Most Holy Redeemer. Over 2,000 people attended his installation.

Guatemala Mission Sees Earthquake Relief, Greets New Director

Cody Tredik
Communications Staff

A group of 7 Montana State University students visited our diocesan mission in Guatemala this May. Alongside them, the newly appointed Director of the Guatemala Mission, Deacon Michael Seipp, joined to visit the mission for a second time, his trip as Director. Deacon Seipp is also the Director of Program Management, Permanent Deacons, and Safe Environment for the Diocese of Helena, and serves as deacon at St. Mary's Catholic Community in Helena. Ashleigh Buckner, trip chaperone was also part of the group visiting the diocesan mission.

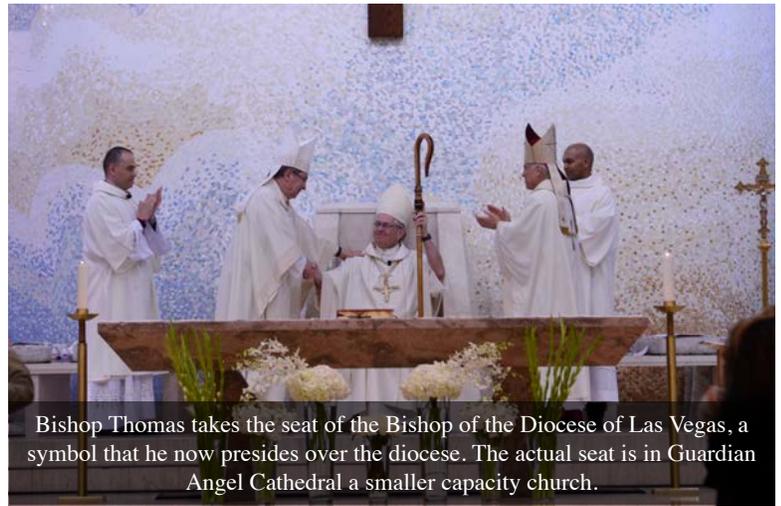


The group of students and chaperones with the staff of Clinica Maxeña

cal University. With dynamic and frequent diocesan youth events, Catholic camps at Legendary Lodge and a consistent call to discipleship, he established one of the most vibrant diocesan youth programs in the U.S.

His leadership garnered national attention as he

shepherded the diocese through a wave of over 300 clergy sex abuse claims and the ensuing diocesan bankruptcy. His pastoral approach included personal meetings with victims and adopting a language of "mediation versus litigation." His approach is often considered a model for dioceses that face the challenge of past abuse.



Bishop Thomas takes the seat of the Bishop of the Diocese of Las Vegas, a symbol that he now presides over the diocese. The actual seat is in Guardian Angel Cathedral a smaller capacity church.

The mediation and settlement that followed required mere hours in the courtroom with the bankruptcy judge characterizing it as a "singular achievement", and "enlightened" during his ruling.

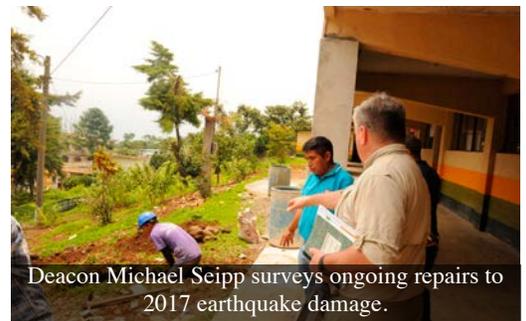
For these reasons and more, Bishop Thomas will always have the gratitude of the Diocese of Helena. At the same time, the Diocese of Las Vegas is now richly blessed to have his energy, acumen for leadership and pastoral heart.

La Asunción School sustained considerable damage from a September 2017 earthquake.

The school, started through the efforts of Fr. Jim Hazleton in 1996, now enrolls close to 300 junior high and high school students, many of whom receive financial aid and scholarships to attend. Lenten fundraising efforts have helped add sewing machines and computers to offer new vocational programs for the students. Plans include a course in auto mechanics and welding.

The damage to the school created weakened infrastructure which posed great risk to the students and staff. Many classrooms and corridors, as well as the chapel and dormitories required reinforcement of existing walls or the construction of new ones. The quarters for resident women religious who serve the school was left too dangerous to occupy.

To address these concerns, Bishop Thomas called upon the faithful of the diocese to raise money for repairs through a Lenten Appeal. By the end of the campaign, just over \$140,000 was raised. The school administration went straight to work, and some of the repair projects were already complete when the group arrived. Deacon Seipp viewed the site to assess the progress and become more familiar with the school's operation. Walls have been



Deacon Michael Seipp surveys ongoing repairs to 2017 earthquake damage.

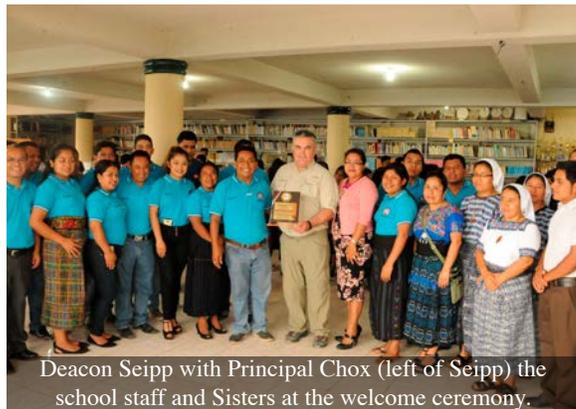
reinforced, the sister's living area has been fixed, and a new entrance is under construction to ensure a faster and safer exit for students in the event of another earthquake.

Deacon Seipp also joined school Principal, Miguel Chox, to walk through ideas for new projects which the school hopes to begin soon. One of these projects includes replacing the roof above the student housing with lighter and more durable material.

The school administration expressed great appreciation for the generosity of the Helena Diocese's donors, and shared their plans to use the funds as wisely as possible for necessary projects and to serve their number one priority: the students.

After surveying the school grounds, the Montana group was invited to a special welcome

ceremony for Deacon Seipp, prepared by the students and staff. The celebration included performances by the students, a thank you from the teachers, and a special plaque created to honor the induction of the new director. The final part of the celebration saw the school soccer team challenge the visitors from Montana State University to a match. The game was cut short by a rain storm, one of many during the group's stay at the mission during Guatemala's rainy season.



Deacon Seipp with Principal Chox (left of Seipp) the school staff and Sisters at the welcome ceremony.

The group toured the medical clinic, Clinica Maxeña, which is located about 3 blocks from the center of the village of Santo Tomás la Unión, where Santo Tomás Apóstol Parish lies. Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen commissioned a group to start the clinic in 1966. Of this group of clergy and lay volunteers who arrived in 1964, only the Clinic Specialist, Sheila McShane, remains active at the mission. McShane oversees many processes and functions of the mission and organizes volunteers and visitors, such as biannual visits from Ophthalmology specialists from the United States who provide consultation and eye surgeries at little to no cost.

Over the years, the clinic has expanded its services to offer diagnostic tests, monitor acute symptoms, give transfusions, tend a traditional medicinal garden, and operate a

small emergency room. The clinic has also partnered with other health organizations in the country to transport patients with more complex diagnoses, such as cancer and AIDS, to receive advanced treatment.

While the clinic is no longer one of the only medical facilities in the area, McShane noted that it still sees a steady stream of patients, and promotes other important health initiatives. The MSU group witnessed one of these initiatives, called First Childhood, in action, attending a gathering of mothers and children in a nearby village. Sponsored by the government but administered by the clinic, the families received health and nutritional information and tips for parenting, along with the

opportunity to weigh their infants and toddlers.

The Santo Tomás Apóstol parish community lovingly welcomed the group and invited them to join a procession to celebrate Our Lady of Fatima. Over 100 members of the community processed from the parish in the center of the village to a shrine two kilometers away.



Ophthalmology specialists visit the clinic to provide eye care including cataract surgery. Clinic Specialist Sheila McShane coordinates the effort.



A child is weighed at the clinic as part of the First Childhood initiative that promotes family wellness.

chaperone for the Resurrection Parish Campus Ministry Group; second as the recently appointed Director of the Guatemala Mission. The mission, clinic and school continue to thrive and meet many of the unmet needs of Santo Tomás La Unión and the surrounding area. I found the staff dedicated to the operations and undertaking of their respective areas of responsibility. Critical repairs to earthquake damage at the school and the



Photo from the last evening of the trip during a procession celebrating Our Lady of Fatima.

Participants carried candles, flowers and a Marian statue, while singing the decades of the Rosary. For the students, it was a moving and prayerful conclusion to their stay.

Following his first visit as director, Deacon Seipp noted: "I was honored to be able to visit our Mission in Guatemala – first as a

mission are underway with some projects already complete. The smiling faces of the students and those who benefit from the care offered at the clinic reflect their deep gratitude and assure me that our efforts are appreciated beyond measure. Sadly, the needs of the people in the mountains of southwest Guatemala continue to grow – poverty is on the rise and the gap between those who have access to daily basic resources and those who don't is growing. I look forward to fulfilling my role as Director of the Guatemala Missions through continued interaction with the staff and people served by the Mission as well as by providing timely communication to our many donors whose generosity is transformative for those who are served by the Mission."



Monsignor Kevin O'Neill Elected Diocesan Administrator for Diocese of Helena

Cody Tredik
Communications Staff

On May 17, two days after Bishop George Leo Thomas was installed as the third bishop of the Diocese of Las Vegas, the College of Consultors elected Monsignor Kevin O'Neill as the Diocesan Administrator for the Diocese of Helena.

In this role, Monsignor O'Neill will collaborate with the College of Consultors to perform the duties generally associated with the office of the bishop, with the exception of some limitations of nature and law, until a new bishop is appointed to the diocese.

"The Administrator's basic and main charge is to maintain holy order," Monsignor O'Neill said. "So that there is continuity from the ministry of our prior bishop, that the ministerial goals would continue where the law allows them to continue, and then when the

new bishop joins us and we with him, he will find that there aren't a lot of loose threads."

During the inter regnum period between bishops, the law states that there can be no innovations, but the work of the diocese can be conclusive and continuous. Many functions and ministries of the church continue on as normal.

"The inter regnum is not a dam, it's a bridge," Monsignor O'Neill said. "So it's not holding everything back waiting for the spill gates to open when the new bishop arrives. It's to bridge the space between Bishop Thomas and whomever comes next, and no Administrator in their right mind would walk that bridge alone! You do it through consultation and always in prayer."

Monsignor O'Neill brings many years of experience to his role, not only in serving as Vicar General for the diocese for the last eighteen years, but also serving as the previous Administrator from 2003-2004, bridging the period between Bishop Robert Morlino and Bishop Thomas.

"Being the Vicar General placed me within much of that consultation process, and being the Administrator once before along with my time as Vicar General has helped me stay well informed and contribute to the process, learning the ebb and flow of things, and to listen well to others' sound advice."

The role of Vicar General concluded with the announcement of Bishop Thomas' departure, as the title must have an ordinary — an appointed bishop — to function. Once Bishop

Thomas was appointed as the Apostolic Administrator, he was no longer an ordinary in the diocese, and appointed Monsignor O'Neill as the Apostolic Administrator's Delegate, which held all the same responsibilities as the Vicar General that canon law allows. That role ceased with Bishop Thomas' installation in Las Vegas. The role which has remained constant through all of the transition and change has been his duties as the pastor of the Cathedral of St. Helena, which will continue through his term as Diocesan Administrator.

"This is part of that continuity, and thank God for it, because it's the pastoral care that is first, foremost, and primary. In the ministries of Administrator and pastor, one is wed to the other, but no matter which title you hold, you are always first and foremost called to be a pastor. Being the pastor of the Cathedral is not just a reminder, but an assurance and affirmation of that."

The time until a new bishop is appointed by decree of Rome is never certain, historically, our diocese has experienced 6-12 months inter regnum. Monsignor O'Neill will serve as Administrator for the diocese throughout this period, but is joyfully anticipating the announcement of our next bishop.

"We have such a good story to tell to our new bishop. The hard part for any bishop in a new appointment is that we're not shiny and new. We are who we are, and still growing, but we have such a marvelous story that's been written over many years that he gets to read and take to heart. Then we can begin the exciting work of writing the new chapters together."

Diocese Announces Personnel Assignments

Following consultation with the Delegate for Clergy and the Diocesan Personnel Board, Monsignor Kevin S. O'Neill, diocesan Administrator, is making the following appointments, effective July 2, 2018.

Father Brian Bergeron — Relieved of assignment as Pastor of St. Michael Parish in Conrad and of St. William-Guardian Angel Parish in Dutton-Power; continues assignment as Pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Choteau and of St. John Parish in Fairfield with St. Matthias Mission in Augusta

Father Pascal Kasanziki — second three-year term as Administrator of St. Rose of Lima Parish, Dillon, with St. John Mission in Melrose and the Lima Mission

Victoria Burgmeier — third three-year term as Pastoral Administrator, Flint Creek Catholic Community (St. Michael Parish, Drummond with St. Mary Mission in Gold Creek, and St. Philip Parish, Philipsburg)

Father Timothy Moriarty — Canonical Administrator of St. Michael Parish in Conrad and of St. William-Guardian Angel Parish in Dutton-Power [in addition to his current assignment as Pastor of the Parishes in Shelby-Sunburst, Cut Bank, and Valier]

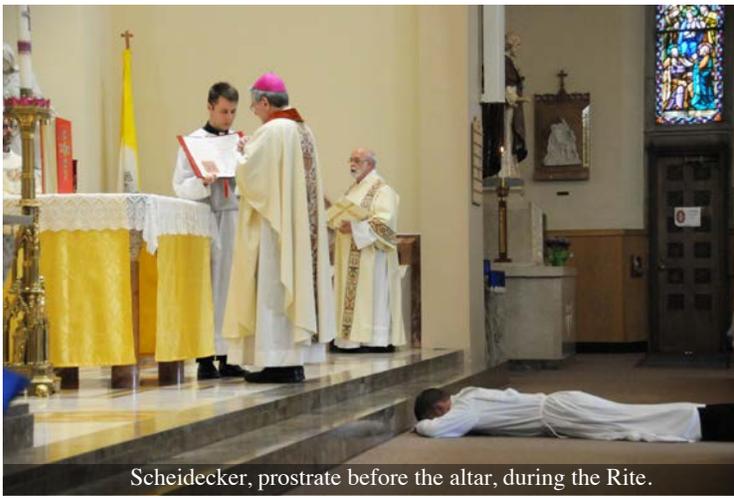
Father Joseph Paddock — Parochial Vicar, Little Flower, Browning with St. Mary Mission in Babb, Sacred Heart Mission at Star School, and Chapel of the Ascension at East Glacier; and of St. Anne Parish in Heart Butte with Holy Family Mission on the Blackfeet Reservation [currently: Parochial Vicar for St. Matthew Parish, Kalispell]

Father Stanislaw Róg — third three-year term as Administrator of Risen Christ Parish, Kalispell

Deacon Nathan Scheidecker — Deacon at the Cathedral of St. Helena (summer of 2018), and then return to St. John Vianney Theological Seminary to complete theological formation

Father Frank Wright, SMA — Parochial Vicar for St. Ann and Holy Spirit Parishes, Butte

Note: Two priests from the Apostolic Life Community of Priests in the Opus Spiritus Sancti, a missionary Society of Apostolic Life recognized as such by the Bishop of Moshi, Tanzania, will arrive in the Diocese in the fall. At that time, the assignments for Father Peter Mikwabe, ALCP/OSS and Father Yovin Shayo, ALCP/OSS will be announced.



Scheidecker, prostrate before the altar, during the Rite.

Nathan Scheidecker Ordained into Transitional Diaconate

Cody Tredik
Communication Staff

On April 21st at St. Patrick's parish in Butte, Nathan Scheidecker was ordained by Bishop George Leo Thomas into the transitional diaconate.

A Butte native and Carroll College graduate, Scheidecker entered St. John Vianney Seminary in Denver in 2013.

Diocese of Las Vegas on May 15th.

In addition to Scheidecker's ordination, the Rite of Admission to Candidacy was celebrated for fellow seminarian, Tyler Frohlich. The rite recognizes Frohlich's good standing in the Diocese of Helena as a candidate for ordination. Tyler will enter his second year of theology studies in the 2018-2019 school year at St. John Vianney Seminary.

After the laying on of hands and a special litany of saints, Scheidecker was vested a deacon and celebrated the liturgy of the Eucharist

"Having the Ordination in my hometown of Butte was very special for me," Scheidecker said. "And it was wonderful to be ordained by Bishop Thomas before his departure, since he had been my bishop for nearly 15 years." The ordination Mass was Bishop Thomas' final Sacramental celebration in the the diocese before being installed in the

with Bishop Thomas, priests and deacons from around the diocese. The reception was held in the Butte Central High School gymnasium.

On his experience of being ordained, Scheidecker concluded: "It was a great joy to be ordained a deacon. Since being ordained I have had a month of many graces - graces that echo the graces around my coming to seminary in the first place - most especially the peace that followed making a commitment of my life to the Lord."



Dcn. Scheidecker, Bp. Thomas and Tyler Frohlich

Deacon Scheidecker will spend his first summer as an ordained minister at the Cathedral of St. Helena, and return to Denver for a final year of study and formation prior to priestly ordination.

Kateri
A SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
Carroll College

June 18-24

contact Eric Hall at:
ehall@carroll.edu

Women's Retreat 2018
at **Legendary Lodge**

GIVING LIFE, HOPE AND LOVE
IN THE SPIRIT OF POPE FRANCIS

With: Sr. Noreen Walter, SCL
July 13, 4 p.m. to July 14, 5 p.m.

80 person limit
women 21 and over

register/info at:
www.showmyevent.com

Justice Outreach Project

Invites high school youth, volunteers and adult chaperones to the town of Browning, MT at the center of the Blackfeet Nation, for a week of labor, cultural exchange and fellowship, as we explore the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

J.O.P.
July 10-15, 2018 - Browning, MT
Register through dohyouth.org

Legendary Lodge Catholic Camps

H.S. Leadership Camp - June 24-29 **FULL** (waitlist)
 Jr. High Camp #1 - July 8-13
 Jr. High Camp #2 July 15-20 **FULL** (waitlist)
 High School Camp - July 22-27
 Boys 5th & 6th Grade - July 29 - Aug 3
 Girls 5th & 6th Grade - Aug 5-10 **FULL** (waitlist)

Registration/Waitlist Question?
 Contact Lois Synness at:
lsynness@diocesehelena.org
 406-389-7068



legendarylodge.org



The Roman Catholic
Diocese of Helena

NEWSLETTER

June 2018

PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Father, you call each one of us by name and ask us to follow you.

*Bless your church by raising up dedicated and generous leaders
from our families and friends who will serve your people as Sisters,
Priests, Brothers, Deacons, and Lay Ministers.*

*Inspire us as we grow to know you,
and open our hearts to hear your call.*

*We ask this in Jesus' name
Amen.*

Please Continue to Pray for Our Seminarians



From Left: Matthew Christiaens, Tyler Frohlich, Dcn. Nathan Scheidecker,
Bishop Thomas, Shannon Augare, Kyle Tannehill, Codi Krueger, Fr. Marc
Lenneman.