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‘A very blessed day’: two priests, one deacon ordained

Welcome, Fathers Doucette and Nguyen and Deacon Dickinson



Anne Marie Amacher

Bishop Thomas Zinkula prays the Eucharistic Prayer during the ordination Mass June 3 at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Davenport. Also pictured are the newly ordained clergy, from left: Deacon Dane Dickinson, Father Dominic Nguyen and Father Isaac Doucette.

By Barb Arland-Fye
The Catholic Messenger

DAVENPORT — Hundreds of the faithful, including more than 60 priests and 24 deacons, welcomed Fathers Isaac Doucette and Duoc (Dominic) Nguyen to the priesthood and Deacon Dane Dickinson to the diaconate June 3 at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Bishop Thomas Zinkula presided at the Liturgy of Ordination. Afterwards, Deacon Dickinson’s father Ed summed up the experience succinctly: “It was a very blessed day,” a sentiment echoed by many others in attendance.

The liturgy included a prelude and the second reading in Vietnamese, Father Nguyen’s native language. His parents, who live in Vietnam, could not be present in person. “I know they love me and are here in spirit,” he said afterwards. The Mass was livestreamed, which gave his parents an opportunity to watch it.

A family of faith, seated in the pews, expressed their love as well, in heartfelt singing, prayers and embraces afterwards. Their thunderous applause during the Election of the Candidates to their respective orders — deacon and priesthood — brought smiles to the faces of each one.

In his homily that followed the candidates’ election, Bishop Zinkula reflected on a shepherd’s role in walking with his people, using as the framework a passage from a speech Pope Francis gave in 2021. “The flock knows we are shepherds, (walking) in front to show the way, in the middle to sense how people feel, behind to help the stragglers, letting people sniff out where the best pastures are found,” the bishop said.

A synodal path

He examined each aspect — walking in front, in the middle and behind the flock — within the context of priests and deacons as leaders today. “Without good leaders, sheep get lost (stray), devoured by predators or may not find the best pastures... Priests and deacons are to be pastoral leaders, servant leaders, vulnerable, humble, and selfless.”

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Apartment disaster compounds affordable housing crisis

By Barb Arland-Fye
The Catholic Messenger

DAVENPORT — Toriana Hill was cooking “neck bones and potatoes” for soup in her apartment’s kitchen when her dog started barking and she felt the building shake. “I was thinking, ‘Is this really happening?’” Then she heard screaming. One of her neighbors, whose window she could see from her own window, yelled, “Get your baby out of the building ... the building is collapsing!”

It was 4:47 p.m. Sunday, May 28, according to a text message she sent to a friend, stating “I think something happened to my building. I think my building is collapsing.” She grabbed her 3-year-old son, Nasir Ayaan Gladney, who was sleeping, and ran down the hallway of the C-shaped building, but a fallen ceiling blocked the exit. “I was scared to take the back stairs.” She had no choice. The stairwell was pitch black. Debris fell all around her and the cement dust created a cloud. She was sure that she and her son were going to die.

By the grace of God, she believes, they made it to the first floor where they finally saw light — from the gaping hole created by



Barb Arland-Fye

Toriana Hill and her son, Nasir Ayaan Gladney, 3, attend a Multi-Agency Resource Center at the Bittner YMCA in downtown Davenport. They lived in The Davenport building when it collapsed May 28.

the partially collapsed building. As she and Nasir emerged from the building, they heard first responders screaming, “Get out of the building!” They escorted mother and son to safety.

Toriana shared her story with *The Catholic*

Messenger June 3, while attending a Multi-Agency Resource Center inside the Bittner YMCA in downtown Davenport. The American Red Cross led the event for tenants displaced by the partial collapse of The Davenport.



Lindsay Steele

Community members participate in a prayer vigil at the site of The Davenport building collapse in Davenport June 4. Three men perished in the May 28 collapse.

Altogether, 53 tenants lived in The Davenport, an 80-unit apartment building that also housed businesses on the first floor. First responders rescued nine people from the building, one of whom required a leg amputation to be freed from the wreckage. Searchers later recovered the bodies of three missing tenants — Branden Colvin Sr. on June 3, Ryan Hitchcock on June 4 and Daniel Prien on June 5 — in the rubble of the collapsed section of the building. Fencing, draped in blue tarp, barricades the

apartment building, which has a gaping hole, six stories high. Recovery work continues. The city will demolish the building and notified the property owner last week.

Repair issues

Toriana, a U.S. Postal Service employee, and her son moved into the apartment building last October. She had been wanting to move out because of repair challenges that went unfixed and after discovering feces in the hallway, she said. However, her credit rating

caused her to stay put. Davenport city records show numerous complaints filed against The Davenport regarding repair issues and violations over the last several years.

The Red Cross placed Toriana and her son in a temporary emergency shelter and she has applied for an apartment elsewhere in Davenport. “I’m mad about it (the apartment building collapse) but I feel like it’s a new start,” she said.

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Dancing imagery inspires the faithful at diocesan Synod Mass

By Barb Arland-Fye
The Catholic Messenger

DAVENPORT — Bishop Thomas Zinkula wondered why Pope Francis chose the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary for a moment of

prayer in support of the upcoming Synod of Bishops in Rome in October. “Probably because the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth had synodal dimensions,” he said in a homily during a diocesan Mass on the feast day (May 31) at St. Paul the Apostle Church. In

the joyful encounter of the two cousins “there was communion, participation and mission,” the three dimensions of the Synod’s theme.

Mary and Elizabeth “are in communion with one another.

They are journeying together. They participate in God’s saving plan, which involves the sons in their wombs. They say ‘yes’ to the role each of them will play in the story being told by God,” Bishop Zinkula said. “They embrace the mission of Jesus, they recognize Jesus as the Savior. Mary travels in haste to see Elizabeth; that was her mission.”

The bishop recalled a painting of the Visitation displayed in the rectory dining room of the parish he served in his second assignment as a priest. The painting “portrayed the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth as a dance, a bit abstract. There was a sense of movement, graceful touching and flowing and twirling.”

“Let’s envision the Synod as a dance,” he suggested, sharing this definition: “The movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music and in a given space, for the purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy, or simply taking delight

in the movement itself.”

He compared the movement of the body to the movement of the Church at the diocesan, national, continental and universal stages of the Synod. Its rhythm is reflected in the paced, managed structured flow of the documents, listening sessions and the syntheses of those sessions, of which he was a part from the diocesan to the continental stage. His experience of the listening sessions further fit the description of dance.

A balancing act

“Using dance imagery, these are three of my takeaways on the Synod thus far: first, dancing, especially styles like ballroom dancing, involve give and take, partners joyfully encountering one another and synchronizing their movement. I observed this in the listening sessions and I am observing it now in our ongoing diocesan synodal process.”

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Barb Arland-Fye

Bishop Thomas Zinkula sprinkles holy water on those attending the diocesan Synod Mass May 31 at St. Paul the Apostle Church-Davenport.

Newly ordained share highlights of Mass

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“Priests and deacons are to encounter and accompany the people they serve, walk alongside them, listen carefully to them and love all of them, including and especially those they may not like. If clergy follow the synodal path, they will be aware of the joys, sorrows, hopes, dreams, fears and anxieties of the faithful. They will be one with them ... they will take on the smell of sheep.”

Walking behind the flock, “there needs to be greater collaboration among clergy and laity, greater co-responsibility,” the bishop said. “Clergy don’t have it all figured out and they don’t have all the gifts that are to be had. I know I don’t. I am learning, trying to step back more and watch and listen. Others often have a better sense of smell than I do, and not simply because I lost my sense of smell due to COVID! By the way, it’s much more palatable to be among the sheep and to take on the smell of the sheep when you have lost your sense of smell!”

“Leading from behind isn’t about hanging back and failing to lead. It is about empowering others to lead in addition to oneself,” Bishop Zinkula said. One way to encapsulate a shepherd who walks with people — at times in front, at times in the middle and at times behind — is the bishop’s favorite definition of a preacher, substituting shepherd for preacher. “A shepherd is one poor beggar telling other poor beggars where he found food.”

Ordination rituals

Following the bishop’s homily, the candidates sealed their election with promises. Deacon-

elect Dickinson promised faithful service, obedience and lifelong celibacy as an ordained minister of the Catholic Church. Priests-elect Doucette and Nguyen promised faithful service in caring for the Lord’s flock and obedience to the bishop as ordained ministers of the Catholic Church.

Afterwards, the elect lay prostrate, face to the ground, for the Litany of Supplication. The laying on of hands and prayer of ordination to the diaconate followed for Deacon-elect Dickinson. Father James Flattery assisted with vesting the new deacon with stole and dalmatic, finishing with a bear hug. Bishop Zinkula handed the Book of the Gospels to Deacon Dickinson and said “Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.”

Priests-elect Doucette and Nguyen received the Prayer of Supplication and the Laying on of Hands as the choir led the congregation in the stirring song to the Holy Spirit, “Veni Sancte Spiritus.” One by one, Bishop Zinkula and the other priests laid hands on the two clergymen and prayed for them. Deacon David Montgomery, one of three Masters of Ceremony, offered a hand to some of the diocese’s oldest priests as they carefully climbed the steps to the altar afterwards.

In the Prayer of Ordination that followed, Bishop Zinkula asked that the Spirit of holiness be renewed deep within the two men called to the dignity of the priesthood. Then, Father Ken Kuntz assisted with vesting Father Doucette with stole and chasuble and Father Quan

Nguyen assisted with vesting Father Nguyen. Hugs followed their vesting as well.

Bishop Zinkula anointed the new priests with the sacred Chrism and then handed them the bread and wine, saying: “Receive the oblation of the holy people, to be offered to God. Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord’s Cross.”

The bishop shared the sign of peace with the newly ordained, then the deacons exchanged the sign of peace with their brother deacons and the new priests shared the sign of peace with their brother priests. Fathers Doucette and Nguyen and Deacon Dickinson joined the bishop at the altar for Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Newly ordained

At the altar, concelebrating with Bishop Zinkula, Father Nguyen said he thought to himself, “From now on, I can consecrate the host.” During the Litany of the Saints, “I was able to ask the angels and the saints to intercede for me and to be with me in my priesthood.” Throughout the Mass, he felt “peace, calm and excitement.”

“The Laying on of Hands was a highlight for me,” Father Doucette said. The ritual gave him the sense of “the broader presbyterate of the diocese and fraternity with the rest of my brother priests.” It also gave him a deeper awareness of being more closely configured to Christ.

Deacon Dickinson described being “completely overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit’s presence in the entirety of this liturgy today.”



Anne Marie Amacher

Bishop Thomas Zinkula stands with the newly ordained Father Dominic Nguyen, left, Father Isaac Doucette and Deacon Dan Dickinson after Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Davenport June 3.

He was deeply moved by “all of the people who have come to support me, so many people I haven’t seen in years.” The new deacon became a little teary-eyed thinking about his journey toward a vocation to the priesthood. “I think I felt God tugging in that direction” but resisted. “I’ve spent the last five years wrestling with God.” However, “coming into today was truly a blessing and leading up to today was peace-filled.”

“He’s prepared for this,” Deacon Dickinson’s mother, Teri, said after Mass. “He’s really excited. I can see it on his face,” added Teri, who could be seen wiping tears of joy from her eyes during the liturgy. “I cry at everything,” she laughed.

Father Doucette’s dad, Bill Doucette, said he and his family were feeling full of joy after witnessing the newly ordained clergymen commit to serving the Lord. So many people have been a part of the journey supporting Father Doucette’s vocation to the priesthood, Bill said. Many of them were present at the Mass. “We’re feeling uplifted by the community,” he added. “It’s humbling, joyful, I’m feeling blessed,” his wife, Jane, said as she watched her son give his first blessing after Mass to his aunt Jude Stevenson.

Greta Doucette, Father Doucette’s sister, said, “I’m excited to celebrate with him and with family and with the whole diocese.”

More safe, affordable housing is needed in Iowa

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Anthony Hopkins pulled out his wallet and flipped it open to show a reporter proof of his address: 324 N. Main St., Davenport. It is an address now etched in the minds of people living far beyond Davenport because of the unthinkable disaster.

Hopkins and his wife, Sherri, stood June 1 in the parking lot of St. Anthony Parish in downtown Davenport, which operates its McAnthony Window ministry for people in need of food, groceries, clothing, bus tokens and more. The parish served as a temporary reunification center the night of the disaster for tenants and loved ones searching for missing family members. St. Anthony’s is just a block-and-half away from The Davenport. John Blunk, a St. Anthony parishioner, tweeted that daily Masses have included prayers for those impacted by the building collapse.

Sherri Hicks was among the tenants who fled the building after its partial collapse. She remembers hearing a strange cracking sound. She decided to take out the trash and after doing that, she turned around to see part of the building gone. “I thought I was in a movie,” she said. “It shook me so bad.” She called her husband, who was at a friend’s house, and said, “Babe, the building is gone!” Anthony couldn’t believe it, “so I sent him a video of it,” Sherri said.

Housing crisis

The couple said they had been staying on the streets because they didn’t want to stay at separate emergency shelters. “We’ve been dealing with this beautiful woman here,” he said, referring to Lois Loeffler, a homeless outreach coordinator. “This lady has been a great help to us.” She was working to help the couple find a place to stay. However, they eventually need permanent, affordable housing, which could be challenging. Anthony works at a fast-food restaurant and Sherri works as a care provider.

“This tragedy underscores the need for more affordable housing in communities like ours nationwide,” said John Cooper, pastoral associate and business manager for St. Anthony Parish. “Alcohol, drugs, and mental illness contribute to homelessness, but the lack of affordable housing is the root cause. The best thing we can do is work with our government and business leaders to create more affordable and safe places for people to live.”

Leslie Kilgannon, Quad Cities Housing Council director, said the tragedy exacerbates the housing crisis for people with limited incomes who struggle to find homes that are affordable, decent and safe. Just two summers ago, the City of Davenport condemned an apartment



Barb Arland-Fye

Anthony Hopkins and his wife, Sherri, talk with a homeless outreach coordinator in the parking lot of St. Anthony Parish in downtown Davenport after their apartment building partially collapsed.

building that left a number of households wondering how they would find affordable housing. That same year, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds signed a law “ensuring landlords can turn away renters who receive assistance through the federal housing choice voucher program.... Voucher recipients are more likely to be disabled or people of color” (*Des Moines Register*, April 30, 2021).

Some 15,455 Quad-City households (12.1% of total Quad-City households) live with extremely low incomes, earning just 30% of the Area Median Income, according to the Quad Cities Housing Cluster’s “Silos to Solutions” long-term vision to address affordable housing needs (2020). In addition, the Quad Cities has lost 30.5% of fair market units in both units that have become dilapidated and closed, and units whose rent has risen above the fair market rate.

“We have this desperate need for housing rental units that are safe, decent and affordable for folks with extremely low income levels,” Kilgannon said. “My hope is that this (tragedy) will serve as a catalyst. We need the sustained support of (the Quad Cities’ governing bodies) toward creating affordable housing units. They need to

Vigil unites community

As the sun set June 4, community members gathered near the site of The Davenport to remember Branden Colvin Sr., whose body had been found in the rubble the previous day. Those gathered lit candles, prayed and sang “We Shall Not be Moved.” “Branden matters. He’s got people who love him,” said his cousin, Mike Collier.

At the time, city officials had not yet confirmed the deaths of the other two men, who also perished in the rubble: Ryan Hitchcock and Daniel Prien. But one family member told the crowd the vigil “isn’t just for Branden, but for all of them.” The crowd chanted the names of all three men.

Collier and other loved ones asked the community to honor Colvin’s memory by staying strong and working for change. “Give us the strength, Lord, to fight for them,” he said. “We’ve got to stand together” by holding those responsible accountable, and by organizing to fight for tenants’ rights.

—Lindsay Steele

contribute to the solution.”

Human rights

Tyrannie Thomas, director of quality improvement for Humility Homes and Services (HHSI) in Davenport, said the agency’s service coordinators have been working diligently to relocate the 12 households it served at The Davenport. Long before the disaster, HHSI heard from households it had served regarding complaints of unresolved repairs, lack of heat in the winter and other issues. “We sent some people to hotels because it was too cold (in their apartments).”

Some tenants do not complain because “they’re afraid of losing their housing,” she said. She tried to explain that tenants have a right a home that is livable, safe and affordable. “Your heat should work, your water should work.” Tenants should not be treated poorly because they have limited income, she said.

Among the legislative principles of the Iowa Catholic Conference (ICC) is this one: “Every person has basic human rights and is entitled to basic human necessities, such as food, housing, clean water and air, education, health care, and productive work for fair wages.” The U.S. bishops say, “[E]very person has a fundamental right to life and right to those things required for human decency.”

Diocesan Synodal Summit to address welcoming and belonging

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“Second, when dancers move together as one body — whether it is ballroom dancing, ballet, Irish dancing or tap dancing — it is a beautiful sight. Arguably, even hip hop dancing is a work of art — but probably not the chicken dance!” he said, to laughter. “I have experienced much beauty in the synodal process as well — when people come together, listen respectfully to each other and work together to accomplish the mission Jesus entrusted to his disciples.”

Citing a passage from the first reading (Romans 12:9-16), Bishop Zinkula said it “brought to mind the first phase of our ongoing diocesan synodal process involving welcoming and belonging — ‘exercise hospitality’ ... ‘love one

another with mutual affection’ ... ‘rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep’ ... ‘associate with the lowly’ ... Our efforts during the next year can be a beautiful dance in our local Church — in our parishes and in our schools.”

“Third, sometimes, dancing is messy. Someone might make a wrong move or step on someone’s toes. The synodal process can also be messy, with some advocating for major changes in the Church while others worry about changes in Church doctrine. This tension can be healthy,” the bishop said. “I think the Lord of the Dance is calling the Church to be more welcoming of people on the margins while at the same time upholding the teachings of the Church.

Balancing this may be messy at times and we make some mistakes along the way.”

He asked for continuing prayers for the Synod of Bishops and for “our local synodal journey here in the Diocese of Davenport. In our journey together, may we be open to the Holy Spirit leading us in this dance, leading us deeper and deeper in our missionary discipleship and into the mystery of the Kingdom of God.”

Our responsibility

The bishop’s dancing metaphor wove its way throughout the Mass, celebrated by Fathers Bruce DeRammelaere, Rich Adam, David Steinle and David Paintsil. For example, five individuals with active roles in the syn-

odal process led the procession. One at a time, they processed to the sanctuary, holding up a booklet representing each stage of the synodal process as diocesan Evangelization Director Patrick Schmadke read a description.

Retired professor Corinne Winter carried the Diocesan Synod report; Jean Dickson of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish-Bettendorf, carried the Regional Synod report; diocesan Multicultural Ministry Director Miguel Moreno carried the U.S. National Synthesis report; Diocesan Social Media Coordinator Sarah Adams carried the Continental report; and Diocesan Pastoral Council member Colleen Burke carried the North American Final Document for the

Continental Stage.

Dickson became involved early on in the diocesan synodal process as parish council president for Our Lady of Lourdes. She took delight in seeing it all come together at the May 31 Mass. “This was awesome ... one door opens and then another one opens.” As a convert to Catholicism, she is amazed at the journey she has traveled.

Burke said she has been reflecting on the next day’s meeting for diocesan Synodal Summit representatives. The theme of the June 17 summit is welcoming and belonging. “For people to have a sense of belonging, we need to be joyful and love people.” That point “really came through in the bishop’s homily,” she said, as did

the music. “The songs were well chosen.”

“Spirt-led: that’s how all the synodal events I’ve been involved with have felt!” Adams said. She appreciated Bishop Zinkula’s homily, particularly his references to joyfully encountering one another and being OK with tension, the gray areas.

Winter, the author of the Diocesan Synod report, said she is grateful for all of the steps in the process, “which keep the Synod in front of our eyes. It’s easy for us to get busy and stop thinking about it but we can’t afford to do that. This is the transformation the Synod intended to bring about in the Church, that all of us are aware of our responsibility for the mission of the Church.”