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NEWS

# Bishop Doerfler Ordains Two Priests

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by: Staff

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Bishop John F. Doerfler of the Catholic Diocese of Marquette ordained two men to the Order of Priesthood during a special liturgy on Friday, June 3, at St. Peter Cathedral in Marquette.

Father Aaron Nowicki's parish community is St. Peter Cathedral. Bishop Doerfler assigned him to serve as associate pastor there beginning July 1, 2016. Father Jernej Šuštar, is of the religious community, the Companions of the Christ the Lamb in Paradise. He was released for service by Bishop Doerfler to serve with his community. Father Nowicki is a Michigan native, while Father Šuštar, comes from Slovenia, the birthplace of Venerable Bishop Frederic Baraga, the first bishop of the Diocese of Marquette.

Father Nowicki, originally from Cheboygan, Mich., grew up playing priest or deacon, and had been asked to consider a vocation to the priesthood while he was in high school. However, he said he had his mind set on a career in technology and getting married. He attended Michigan Technological University in Houghton, and graduated in 2007.

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He took a job at Northern Michigan University after graduation and began to discern a vocation to the priesthood. In the fall of 2009, Deacon Nowicki began studying at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit and was ordained a “transitional” deacon last May.

Father Nowicki is the son of Richard Nowicki and the late Mary Kapalla. He also has a brother Benjamin, and sister-in-law Katie. He was able to officiate their wedding last year as a deacon, and is looking forward to becoming an uncle this fall. As he stated, “I’m going to be Fruncle Aaron pretty soon, I’m pretty excited about that!”

Father Nowicki celebrated Masses of thanksgiving in the diocese at St. Peter Cathedral, June 4; St. Mary, Norway, June 11 and 12; St. Barbara, Vulcan, June 11 and 12; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Bark River, June 18 and 19; and St. Joseph Mission, Foster City, June 19.

Deacon Šuštar’s journey to the priesthood began by him moving to the United States in 2000. A native of Videm-Dobrepolje in Slovenia, Father Šuštar was on a retreat in Slovenia when a priest he hadn’t met before came up to him and said, “The Lord told me to give you this application for a full time scholarship at Ave Marie College (in Ypsilanti, Mich.), including room and board, and the once a year airfare to go home.”

“I thought to myself, ‘that’s probably one of those things that looks too good to be true.’ But, I filled it out and a sure enough I got an email saying I was accepted. At that point I began to realize that the Lord was up to something.”

According to Father Šuštar, he was unsure what God was pointing him to, and after almost getting married, obtaining two degrees and trying several jobs he knew he needed to stop to listen closer to what God was telling him.

After moving to the United States, Father Šuštar attended a retreat at the Companions of Christ the Lamb (CCL) in Paradise, Mich., and found the answers he had been searching for.

“It just felt right, nothing else felt so right in my life. I thought about it for a year and moved up there for a year of discernment and I did my novitiate.”

CCL is currently in the process of becoming a religious order. It’s in the third step of the process which is a Public Clerical Association. During this stage, all priest candidates go through the diocese.

Father Šuštar credits much of his priesthood journey to Venerable Bishop Baraga. Deacon Šuštar’s hometown in Slovenia is just across the hill from Bishop Baraga’s native town.

After his ordination to the priesthood, Father Šuštar celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving on June 4 at in the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Oratory at Companions of Christ the Lamb Retreat Center in Paradise. He also celebrated Mass in his hometown in Slovenia on July 10.

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