

Lifting of Mass Dispensation



I am so grateful to God to see the average number of new cases of COVID-19 continue to decline due to all of you observing safety protocols and taking advantage of the vaccine. In response to the improving situation, I, along with many of the other bishops of the region, have decided to lift the dispensation and reinstate the Sunday and Holy Day Mass obligation, effective the weekend of June 19-20, 2021. Today, I [issued this letter explaining the decision](#). We are distributing it to our parishes for sharing with parishioners and will be posting it on our media platforms.

On Pentecost weekend, I was happy to remove all restrictions and successfully re-open our parishes to full capacity. I now welcome and encourage the Faithful to return to full in-person participation in the Sunday Eucharist, the source and summit of our Catholic faith.

Please understand that the obligation to attend Mass in-person does not apply to those who are ill; those who have reason to believe that they were recently exposed to the coronavirus or another contagious illness; those who are confined to their home, a hospital, or nursing facility; or those with serious underlying health conditions. Please consult your local pastor if questions arise about the obligation to attend Mass.

After a month of praying the Rosary with Pope Francis for the end of the pandemic and acknowledging there remains suffering and recovery from this crisis, I cannot help but note the beautiful timing of this next step in our moving forward.

Celebrating an Ordination

The priesthood is not a career or profession one chooses for themselves— it is a response to a call from God to the service of His people. God saw in Fr. Peter Scheffer's heart, mind, and soul, enough generosity to make him His faithful servant and shepherd of His people. Fr. Peter, and all the priests, are Apostles in a world hungry for God's mercy and compassion. They are [called to be like Christ in the world, shepherding all of God's people](#) entrusted to them and their pastoral care.

In his ordination to the transitional diaconate last year, upon receiving the Gospel, Fr. Peter heard the words, "Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach." Now, as a priest, he must do so in his life, even more than his words, to follow the teaching credited to St. Francis, "Preach the Gospel always, when necessary, use words."

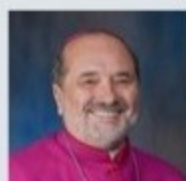


The ordination was livestreamed and can be viewed [here](#).

To go forth and to do what Christ has done—a priest must be a man of God, and he can only do so by becoming a great man of prayer. To do what Christ did, walk the path He walked, proclaim the Gospel, forgive sins, and celebrate His Mysteries—all require a life of dedication to the service of the church and to profound and purposeful prayer.

We welcome Fr. Peter R. Scheffer Jr as a Priest of the Fall River Diocese. As Fr. Peter shares [in his vocation story](#), he compares his journey to the priesthood to a "Long and Winding Road and A Road Less Traveled." The final "nudge" came from his radio as he listened to EWTN radio and heard Ken Watts, Recruitment Coordinator at Pope St. John XXIII Seminary (PSJS) and speak about 'late vocations' and (PSJS). We are indeed blessed by his accepting God's call to the priesthood and look forward to many years of his service to God and His people here in our diocese.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop da Cunha



The Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.

The Bishop of Fall River

FALL RIVER — Deacon Peter R. Scheffer, Jr., (in photo) will be ordained a priest for the Fall River Diocese by Bishop Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., in the context of an 11 a.m. Mass on Saturday, June 5, in St. Mary's Cathedral, Fall River.

A New Jersey native, Deacon Scheffer, who is 60, moved to the Fall River Diocese following a career in the military and diplomatic service, and shortly thereafter entered Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, Mass., to study for the priesthood.

For his first Mass, he will return to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Seekonk, where he has been serving as a deacon for the past year, to celebrate all of the parish's weekend Masses beginning with the 4:30 p.m. Vigil on the afternoon of his ordination day.

As that day approaches, Deacon Scheffer shared he feels "a total sense of calm and peace about my forthcoming Ordination. Despite all that I may not know about the Catholic Priesthood – I know that God has brought me to the edge of the vineyard – and as I am about to enter its gates as one of His priestly servants – I am not afraid. Why? Because He leadeth me..."

Deacon Scheffer is the son of Peter and Joan Scheffer of Brewster, Mass. He grew up with two sisters in Clifton, New Jersey, graduating from that city's Senior High School in 1979. He then entered the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, graduating from there and the U.S. Army Ranger School in 1983.

He later earned a master's degree from Boston College in administration and curriculum development.

Deacon Scheffer is a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and participated in other operational contingency missions aimed at peace keeping and providing humanitarian assistance in different parts of the world. For a time, he also served on the faculty at West Point and in its Admissions Office.

Following his retirement from the military as a lieutenant colonel in 2006 he served as a U.S. Diplomatic Peace Treaty Inspector in the Middle East and then as an assistant professor of Strategic and Operational Studies at the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College in Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.

He relocated to Cape Cod in 2016 upon leaving the college and became a member of St. Pius X Parish in South Yarmouth.

While in the seminary on summer breaks, he assisted at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in New Bedford and attended the Institute of Priestly Formation in Omaha.

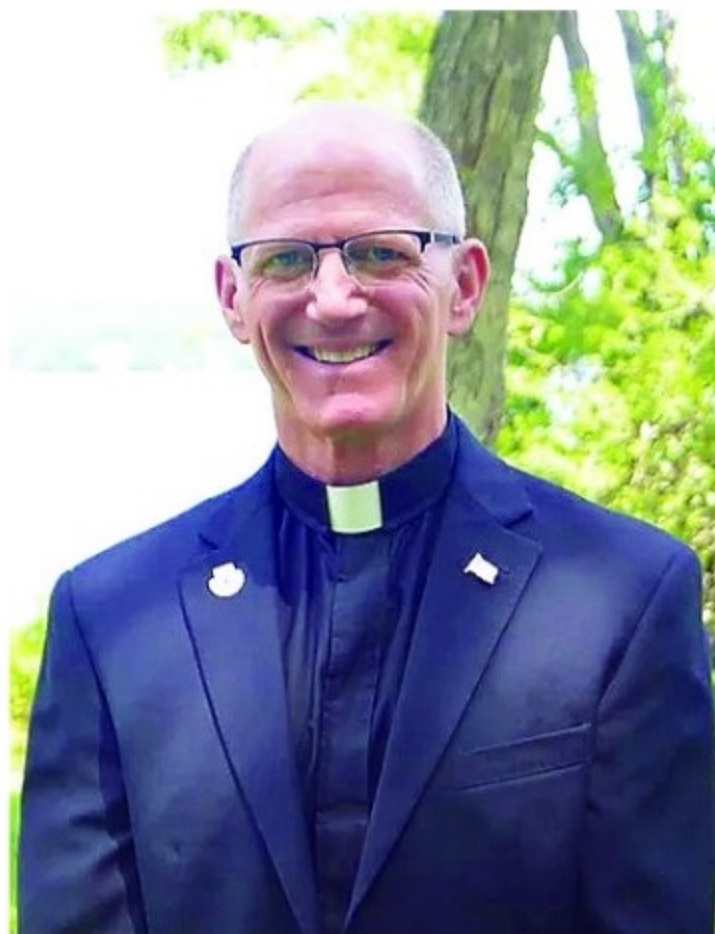
Bishop da Cunha ordained him a transitional deacon in St. Mary's Cathedral last June.

Scheffer is eager to begin his priestly ministry and to help bring those he serves closer to God.

"I look forward to being able to somehow bring others nearer to God in whatever way He sees fit – whether it's through the Sacraments or by virtue of my simple presence – that is my hope – that people can see me merely as a 'bridge to Him'," he said recently.

He is quick to express his gratitude "for the prayers and support of so many faithful parishioners all over the world" many of whom he acknowledges that he does not even know.

"They have lifted their hearts and minds to the Almighty on my behalf and their prayers have been the spiritual sustenance that have carried me to the starting line of my priestly ministry."





WELCOME

I am happy to welcome Fr. Peter Scheffer as the new pastor of St. Joan of Arc parish. We were in seminary at the same time and had many opportunities to get to know each other over the summers we spent back in the diocese. Fr. Scheffer is a prayerful and wise man with a true

pastor's heart. I'm happy for St. Joan of Arc. She's in good hands!

Fr. Scheffer comes to us from serving as Pastor of Our Lady of Grace, St. George, and St. John the Baptist Parishes in Westport. He is originally a native of Clifton, New Jersey. He is a graduate of West Point's Class of 1983 & US Army Ranger School, a retired Army Infantry Lieutenant Colonel, and a Combat Veteran of the Global War on Terror. Please prayer for him as he begins his service as your priest. God has sent you, Fr. Scheffer. God Bless you. I know you will grow to love this parish.