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News 

Mary's Sons kneelers make their way around diocese

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Kneelers for the two men expected to be ordained to the priesthood next June are currently traveling to parishes around the Diocese of Charlotte. Pictured at left, the kneelers

CHARLOTTE — After visiting churches in the far western part of the Diocese of Charlotte this fall, the Mary's Sons kneelers for Deacon Darren Balkey and Deacon Aaron Huber are headed to the Charlotte area, where they will circulate among parishes until June.

In January, the kneelers will visit St. James the Greater Church in Concord, St. Joseph and Our Lady of Guadalupe churches in Charlotte, and St. Aloysius Church in Hickory. They will continue to circulate among parishes until June, when they will be given to the two new priests upon their ordination.

People are invited and encouraged to pray on the kneelers.

Father John Putnam, pastor of St. Mark Church in Huntersville, said the kneelers underscore the significant role people's prayers play in assisting the clergy.

"Choosing priestly ordination can bring many trials and spiritual struggles," Father Putnam said. "The devil is never happy with the ordination of new priests.

"Prayer is the surest means of shoring up and strengthening the spiritual armor," he said. "We pray for their vocational resolve, their personal holiness and an increase in their desire to serve the People of God with joy, love and peace."

Bishop Peter Jugis is scheduled to ordain Deacon Balkey and Deacon Huber to the priesthood on June 18, 2022, at St. Mark

recently visited **St. Andrew the Apostle Church in** Church.

Mars Hill. (Photo provided by Robyn Magyar)

Mary's Sons is a Charlotte-area lay apostolate dedicated to praying for priests. Since 2013, it has given 19 handmade

kneelers to the diocese's new priests through its "Kneelers for Priests Pilgrimage" program, according to Director Robyn Magyar. The priests also receive a hand-sewn confessional stole and a leather journal containing well wishes and messages written by people who prayed on the kneelers as they traveled around the diocese.

"The kneelers symbolize God's call to the laity to take these new priests into our hearts and to pray for them without ceasing," Magyar said. "Our hope is that the kneelers provide a beautiful way to connect the faithful to our new priests and, through the many prayers offered on the kneelers, these men will be strengthened in their journey to ordination and sustained in their holy priesthood."

The kneelers go to about half of the diocese's 92 parishes and missions annually, including each future priest's home parish and parishes where they served during their formation as seminarians.

The program expanded this year to reach 12 churches in the Smoky Mountain, Asheville and Gastonia vicariates that hosted the kneelers for the first time.

"Our goal this year has been to bring the kneelers to people in parishes and missions that have not had the opportunity to have the kneelers in the past, for whatever reason – be it distance or another circumstance," Magyar said.

Marie Cook and Bill Matthews, both parishioners at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Franklin, were instrumental in coordinating and moving the kneelers through the Smoky Mountain vicariate, with the help of members of Knights of Columbus Council 8363, Magyar said.

Matthews, who travels the region as a field agent with the Knights, said transporting the kneelers was a perfect blend of his work and his mission as a Knight.

"As Knights we are here to uphold and serve our priests and do whatever we can to support them," Matthews said. "These kneelers are something that the seminarians will have all of their lives, and they will remember that people all over the diocese knelt and prayed for them daily. I feel privileged to have been in a position to help."

Cook, who is also St. Francis' parish secretary, said she was honored to participate in the kneeler program.

"I was so happy the day that Robyn called and asked if we would like to have the kneelers at our church!" Cook said. "I think the kneeler program is brilliant – to

have a physical thing, like a kneeler, which goes from parish to parish that helps us to know we are all united in praying for these same young men.

"Many of us don't get to go to their ordination, but this is a very special way to be connected with them and to be a part of their journey to the priesthood," she said.

— Dina Wilson, Correspondent

Pray for new priests as Mary's Sons kneelers come to Charlotte area

Parishioners around the Diocese of Charlotte have the opportunity to pray for our two transitional deacons, Deacon Darren Balkey and Deacon

Aaron Huber, on the special Mary's Sons kneelers that they will receive when they are ordained June 18, 2022.

Here is the upcoming schedule for the kneelers as they are moved to parishes around the diocese this winter:

Dec. 27 - Jan. 3: St. John the Baptist, Tryon

Jan. 3 - 10: St. James the Greater, Concord

Jan. 10 -17: St. Joseph, Charlotte

Jan. 18-25: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Charlotte

Feb. 7-11: Charlotte Catholic High School, Charlotte
Feb. 14-21: St. John Neumann, Charlotte
Feb. 28 - March 7: St. Thomas Aquinas, Charlotte
March 14 - March 16: St. Ann, Charlotte
March 28 - April 4: Sacred Heart, Salisbury (Deacon Balkey's home parish)
April 11 - April 19: St. Dorothy, Lincolnton
June 10 - June 17: St. Patrick Cathedral, Charlotte

For more information about Mary's Sons kneelers, go online to www.MarysSons.org.

— Provided photos

Details online

At www.maryssons.org: See the complete schedule of kneeler locations and more information



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