Dawid Kwiatkowski and Chris Ortega were called to orders by Bishop Boland and ordained as transitional deacons for the Diocese of Savannah, in a powerful and inspiring liturgy, at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, on Saturday June 5, 2010, the Memorial of St. Boniface, Bishop and Martyr.

This transitional stage between layman and priest has been the custom in the church for several centuries. A man preparing for the priesthood is ordained as a transitional deacon, for a period of less than a year, after he completes his third year of seminary and is subsequently ordained a priest. Before his ordination, a deacon...
completes extensive studies in both philosophy and theology. The Greek word for “Deacon” is diakonos, which means servant, minister or server. Ordained, not to the priesthood but to service, a deacon fulfills a three-fold role of service: Charity, Word and Liturgy. They are called to work with the Bishop and the priests with whom they serve as heralds of Christ’s kingdom, proclaiming the gospel in word and deed, as agents of God’s purposes of love. They serve the community to which they are sent, bringing to the Church the needs and hopes of all the people. Deacons share in the pastoral ministry of the Church and in leading God’s people in worship. They preach the word and bring the needs of the world before the Church in intercession. They also accompany those searching for faith and bring them to baptism, assist in administering the sacraments, distribute communion and minister to the sick and housebound.

During the ceremony, Fr. Tim McKeown, Director of Vocations, presented the candidates to Bishop Boland for ordination. “Do you know these men to be worthy?” asked Bishop Boland. Fr. Tim acknowledged their worthiness for the Order of the Diaconate. Then Bishop Boland examined them individually as to their intentions regarding the undertaking of the diaconal ministry. They each promised respect and obedience to Bishop Boland and his successors. Then by the laying on of hands and the Prayer of Consecration, each of them was formally vested as a transitional deacon.

Bishop Boland exhorted each of the candidates to “Grow in holiness, so that you will be able to lead those to whom you minister on the same path of holiness along which you have grown first.” And also to “Receive the Gospel of Christ whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe and practice what you teach.”

Many family members and friends were in attendance to witness this blessed event, including over 35 priests and deacons from all over the diocese and nearly 20 Serrans from both the Savannah and Augusta clubs. Both Dawid and Chris, who have been pursuing their studies at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, have worked very hard to get to this stage in their discernment. They will be assigned to the Cathedral and St. Peter the Apostle respectively for the summer. We appreciate their efforts, congratulate them and wish them well. Please pray for these men as they prepare for their final year of study and their ministry within our diocese. God willing, they will be ordained priests in June 2011.

All photos this page by Paul H. Camp
In order to answer this question, Fr. Tim McKeown, Vocation Director for the Diocese of Savannah, recently conducted a detailed study that looked at the growth of the diocese, retirement trends in the presbyterate, ordination rates, and the retention rate of seminarians.

The major finding was an affirmation of the efforts within the diocese over the past 15 years that the current rate of ordination, of 2.25 priests per year, is sufficient to provide pastoral care for the people of the diocese. However, although the number of parishes is projected to remain the same, the size of parishes is growing larger, hence a goal of ordaining three men per year, is prudent to effectively serve the growing number of faithful.

One of the underlying forces at work in our diocese is the continued increase in the number of Catholics. In 1958, there were only 25,000 Catholics in the Diocese of Savannah and it took 24 years for the diocese to double in size, reaching 50,000 Catholics by 1981. Over the past 20 years, the number of Catholics has increased by nearly 2 percent per year. At the current rate of growth, the diocese will reach 100,000 registered Catholics in 2020, making up a larger percentage of the total population than they did 60 years ago. In 1958, Catholics were approximately 1.5 percent of the total population and by 2008, that number had doubled to 3 percent. This trend will continue, as the number of Hispanic Catholics moving into in the Diocese will further accelerate the population growth.

The study also looked at the ratio of Priests to Laity. The ratio of diocesan priests to lay people increased sharply throughout the 80s and 90s and reached a peak in 2001 at almost 1:1,800. The current ratio in our diocese is one diocesan priest per 1,338 Catholics, substantially better than the ratio of diocesan priests to Catholics for the entire U.S., which is approximately 1:1,900. To maintain the current ratio of diocesan priests to people through 2030, there would need to be 2.25 ordinations per year, which is the current average. Three ordinations per year would improve the ratio of diocesan priests to people from 1:1338 to slightly better than 1:1200 which would allow more parishes to have associate pastors.

“We would like to reach an average of three ordinations per year beginning in 2016,” said Fr. Tim. “This requires a continuation of the current trend of accepting five new seminarians for study each year. An average of about 5 new seminarians have been accepted annually over the past ten years. If this trend persists, the ordination rate will improve the ratio of priests to people to better than 1:1,200.” He continued, “I urge everyone to focus their prayers on meeting the challenge of having enough priests to serve the growing number of faithful in the Diocese of Savannah for the 21st century.”
The Twin Spires

The opening words to the song from the musical *Cabaret* invoke the spirit of hospitality and cordiality. When Monsignor O’Neill arrived at the Cathedral in 1996, it had a reputation of being a cold, unwelcoming place. “It’s not a neighborhood parish; people just come to Mass to get their ticket punched. I want to make it a friendly place, more like a family,” he said. So the Parish Life Committee instituted monthly coffees and suppers and a greeting ministry was also initiated. Although we have come a long way during the past 14 years, the Cathedral can still be an intimidating, unwelcoming place to new parishioners. But if you ask some of the newer members of the parish, you might begin to hear a different story.

Recently, the Christian Service Committee received approval from the Parish Council to initiate a program to welcome our new parishioners. Tom Stack developed a Welcoming Protocol and worked with our Office Assistant Brenda Price to put together a “Cathedral Welcome Packet” containing information about how to get involved in the Cathedral Parish. It contains a welcoming letter from the Rector, a list and description of the 24 — yep count ’em, 24 — ministries our parish supports, a parish census form and a copy of a recent bulletin which provides names and contact numbers as well as parish news.

A procedure for making calls to personally welcome new members is now in place. After the package is mailed, a member of the Christian Services Committee follows up with a telephone call welcoming our new parishioners. We invite them to an upcoming parish function such as Coffee and Doughnuts or the monthly Parish Potluck Dinner. We also arrange to meet them after Mass to get acquainted and introduce them to other parishioners.

I think you know that our parish is growing. After the restoration was completed in December of 2000, there were about 500 registered households or 1000 members. Now we have 976 registered households and just over 2000 members. In today’s world, where we hear concerns about declining congregations, we are part of a growing parish. Everyone needs to be part of this vibrant faith community.

It’s a fine thing to send out mailings and follow up with telephone calls, but we all need to do more and get involved. The Easter Season readings, especially those from Acts, tell us of the evangelization activities of Paul and Barnabas and others — growing the early church. They grew the community of faith then and we have no lesser task today.

Our church is more than a building — beautiful though it is. It is more than the elegant, traditional form of worship service we use, fulfilling though that is. Our church is made up of each and every one of us, the Body of Christ. We all have a hand in ensuring that everyone feels part of the body. Make it your business to meet and welcome new parishioners.

If you want a specific task, contact Bill or Deborah Wade or anyone on the Christian Services Committee. On the other hand, just introduce yourself to someone at Mass that you do not recognize. It might be a tourist — no loss there. On the other hand, it might be a new member of our parish! And you would be helping that person feel at home here at the Cathedral.
Wrong Way of the Cross

Which way should the Stations of the Cross go?

If we look at the way the Stations are hung in the Cathedral, they begin on the left hand side of the church, when facing the front, flow back down the left aisle, across to the other side and then up the right hand side. In other words, they go counter-clockwise.

Shortly after becoming Rector of the Cathedral, when conducting a Stations of the Cross service downstairs in the Blessed Virgin Chapel, Monsignor O’Neill automatically went over to the left hand side of the church to begin the devotion. It was not until he got to the Third Station, Jesus Falls the First Time, that he looked up and saw Jesus on the cross and realized that he was actually at Station # 12, Jesus Dies on the Cross.

Therefore, he went across to the right side of the chapel to Station # 3 and continued the service without losing a beat. He noticed that the people in attendance hardly seemed to notice anything was amiss.

When the restoration was done back in 2000, he had them hung the opposite way but viewing them afterwards, he said, “They did not look right.” So he looked closely at them and tried to figure out why. It took awhile but he finally realized that the figures in some of the Stations, particularly those where Jesus is carrying His cross, were pointing from left to right. When you looked up at one of those Stations, Jesus was in fact going in a backward direction. So he had them rehung the way they were before, beginning on the right hand side of the chapel so they would flow correctly to the left.

In addressing which side of the church the Stations should begin, the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences has said that although nothing was ordered on this point, beginning on the Gospel side of the altar seemed to be more appropriate. (The Gospel side refers to the side of the altar on which the Gospel was read. During the Tridentine Mass or Latin Mass, the missal stand was moved from the Epistle side of the altar to the Gospel side after the reading of the Epistle. Facing the altar, the Gospel side is the left-hand side.)

In deciding the matter however, the arrangement and form of a church may make it more convenient for the Stations to go the other way. The position of the figures in the tableaux, too, may sometimes determine the direction of the route. It seems more in accordance with the spirit of the devotion that the procession, in passing from Station to Station, should follow Christ rather than meet Him.

Here at the Cathedral we have them going both ways.
The Greater Savannah Athletic Hall of Fame inducted its Class of 2010 at the banquet held on May 3, 2010 in the Savannah Civic Center Ballroom.

Among the athletes being honored this year, for his accomplishments as an amateur boxer, was none other than our own Otto Aliffi. A founding member and past president of the Italian Society of Savannah, Otto is a longtime Cathedral parishioner. He has served as a member of the Parish Council, chairman of the Cathedral Heritage Ball Committee and is currently an usher and collection counter.

Octavio “Otto” Aliffi, so named because he was the eighth child in his family, fought as a bantamweight, a featherweight and a lightweight during his boxing career.

He started boxing in Savannah in 1946 with the Catholic Young People’s Association Team and then with the Union Bag Athletic Club. In 1948, Aliffi won the 118-pound bantam weight championship at the Golden Gloves Tournament in Jacksonville, which pitted the best young boxers in the Southeast against each other. Aliffi enlisted in the Marine Corps and later in the Army, where he served for 24 years and continued his boxing career.

As an amateur boxer for more than 20 years, he fought in 138 amateur bouts compiling a record of 132 wins, 5 losses and 1 draw.

Otto served with distinction for more than 20 years in the United States Marine Corps and the Army. He rose to the rank of chief warrant officer 3 while serving tours of duty in Korea, Europe and Vietnam and was also awarded the Bronze Star for bravery, acts of merit or meritorious service.

Reflecting on his induction, Otto observed “Boxing taught me that if you worked hard and practiced, you could be successful. I’ve used that to guide me in my life.”
Thank you, Cathedral parishioners, for hosting the third annual Baby Bottles for Life Campaign in support of the Savannah Care Center! With your help, the 2010 Mother’s Day campaign raised nearly $4,200.00. Since the entire budget and program of this nonprofit agency depend upon the generosity and good will of individuals such as our parishioners, we believe you deserve to know about the manner in which your dollars will be spent and why it is so important to support this cause.

The facility you are supporting occupies an aging building at 105 E. 34th Street. The facility was donated to Savannah Care Center about 25 years ago and requires frequent repairs and upgrades. While many Christian churches in our community donate time and resources to improving the physical plant, the Center must pay for insurance, utilities, phone lines and other costs associated with maintaining the building.

The Savannah Care Center supports just one employee, Gwen Jenkins, who has served as Center Director for 20 years. Because of the many needs in our community, Gwen works long days and even on her days off. She relies heavily on volunteers to assist with clerical duties such as maintaining records, counseling clients, manning the clothes closet, assisting with programs such as parenting classes and abstinence instruction, and serving on the board of directors.

In a given year, a bare bones budget for the Center runs about $65,000, all of which must be raised by the Center for the work of the Care Center to proceed. To fund additional services, such as GED or scripture classes, or volunteer and director training, additional funds are required for computers, books, paper and supplies, travel expenses and fees. There are also annual costs associated with Care Net, the umbrella organization of which the Care Center is an affiliate.

In spite of financial constraints, in 2009 the Center served over 1,000 women, 75% of which professed Christianity. Roughly 87% of this population is single and 40% are unemployed. About 26% are 15–19 years of age and 61% are 20–29. The Center provides clients with services including pregnancy tests, peer counseling, parenting and abstinence education, GED classes, material assistance (clothing, baby supplies such as diapers and formula), scripture studies, referrals for medical care, housing and adoption, as well as satellite services, one day per week, at Savannah State University.

Savannah Care Center is a safe place for women to go when they need help. It is a place where their emotional and spiritual needs are met by caring staff who talk about Christ, redemption and hope.

Continued ➤
Recently, an article appeared in the diocesan newspaper, *The Southern Cross*, about the annual Walk for Life, a community-wide fundraiser for the Savannah Care Center. The annual Walk in Forsyth Park and baby bottle campaigns, such as the one recently held at the Cathedral, are the lifeblood of the Care Center. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generosity, and we invite you to support the projects of Cathedral’s Christian Service Committee for the Center, visit, volunteer and become involved in the Savannah Care Center.

Judy Farabaugh, 2010 Cathedral Heritage Ball Chairman, helps Gretchen Reese collect Baby Bottles, and a visitor supports our campaign.