

CELEBRATE!

A NEWSLETTER FOR VIEWERS AND FRIENDS OF THE SUNDAY TV MASS

**SPRING/
SUMMER
2025**

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of Ireland**

The Sunday TV Mass airs
every Sunday morning on
WDCW-50 at 10:30 a.m.

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The Roman Catholic
Archdiocese of
Washington

THROUGH THE LENS: Deacon O'Neill reflects on TV Mass participation

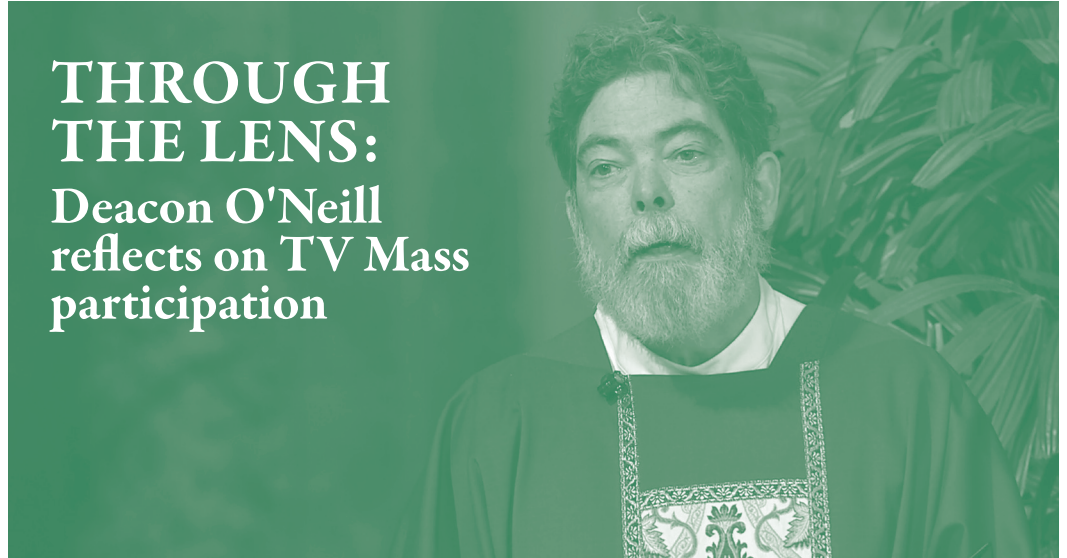


Photo courtesy of John Capobianco

Deacon O'Neill followed in his son's footsteps when he began serving the TV Mass 10 years ago.

BY MIGUEL GUILARTE

Deacon Stephen O'Neill, who has served the TV Mass for more than 10 years, cherishes serving at this Eucharistic celebration which is a great support for the faithful who cannot attend an in-person Mass. "I love knowing that this is an apostolate that helps so many people," he says.

Deacon O'Neill served four years in the Marine Corps and spent three years at the University of Maryland, where he met his wife Traci, and earned a degree in English. They have two sons, two daughters, and three grandchildren.

After being ordained a permanent deacon for The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington in 2013, Deacon O'Neill was assigned to serve in St. Andrew Apostle Catholic Church in Silver Spring, Md. About one year later, retired Deacon Michael Bond, who had been serving at the TV Mass, called him for a meeting with Deacon Richard Walker, who at that time was the coordinator of all deacons at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and for the TV Mass.

"I think after that first meeting, I was placed on the email list of servers for the TV Mass and they started giving me assignments," said Deacon O'Neill. "That was back in the day when the Masses were taped on Thursday evenings, and it was kind of up to a particular parish to provide the servers and the choir and the readers."

Every couple of weeks, a priest and a deacon, readers and servers, musicians, camera operators and technicians gather in the Crypt Church of the Basilica to record two Masses for later airing on the appropriate Sunday. "They bring some of the choir members, bring a couple of lectors, so it would be kind of a parish event for folks to come down and help with the taping of the TV Mass," Deacon O'Neill explained. Coincidentally, his oldest son, Robert, had already participated in TV Mass as an altar server representing St. Peter's Parish in Olney, Md., where his family have been parishioners for many years, and so, "I was following in my

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2 WELCOME CARDINAL MCELROY!

New Cardinal celebrates first TV Mass in Washington



Photo courtesy of John Capobianco

Cardinal Robert McElroy, who was installed as the Archbishop of Washington in March, celebrated his first Sunday TV Mass in the archdiocese on Easter Sunday. Below is an excerpt from the homily he gave during that Mass.

“ We live in the hands of a God who loves us deeply, has brought us into the world and will guide us into eternity; A God who stands by us and lifts us up and awaits us to welcome us at the end of our lives into the fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the beauty of Easter, of understanding we are in the hands of the God who loved us so deeply that he sent his only Son into the world to live and to suffer and die on our behalf, and to rise again showing the glory of God. The fact is that we live on this Earth as citizens of Heaven already pointed toward our eternal destiny. What we celebrate is God’s wonderful, tender care of us all through this life onto the next. Christ’s victory over death changes the orientation of our life here. It changes what is important and what our goals should be. Easter day changed human history for every man, woman, and child ever born, because it brings the joy of knowing the Heavenly banquet that awaits us, and it is what we look forward to even on this Earth.”

St. Brigid of Ireland, the fiery sunbeam of love

Catholic faithful who watch the Mass on television can often spot the beautiful works of art, especially the paintings of the saints that adorn the Crypt of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, where the TV Mass is broadcast.

Considered the heart of the Basilica, the Crypt honors 15 saints in glittering gold mosaic chapels, celebrating centuries of Catholic tradition through the lives of the faithful.

As the Basilica is also celebrated for the ethnic diversity of its numerous chapels, art, nationalities, and cultures that converge within it, in this edition we present St. Brigid of Ireland, as we continue exploring the lives of these female saints in our Women of the Crypt series.

St. Brigid of Ireland is one of the saints in the Crypt. She is the patron saint of Ireland, as well as babies, blacksmiths, midwives, and single mothers.

The feast of St. Brigid of Ireland is celebrated on February 1, and she is known as “fiery sunbeam of love” by historian Tom Cowan. Due to a lack of historical records, it is difficult to know very much about Brigid’s life. It is believed that she was born in A.D. 450 near Dundalk and raised by druids. She entered a convent at an early age and eventually became the founder of the “double monastery” system, combining men and women in one religious community. Some accounts hold that Brigid was baptized by Saint Patrick.

One of Brigid’s legends says that she provided 18 churches with beer from just one barrel, after the pattern of Jesus’ first miracle of turning water into wine. A hymn to Brigid declares, “Brigid, golden sparkling flame, lead us to eternal day, the fiery radiant sun.”

Legend holds that on one occasion after traveling through a



Photo courtesy of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. A mosaic of St. Brigid of Ireland in the Crypt Church at the Basilica.

rainstorm to the chapel for services, she hung her wet cloak on a sunbeam. When she founded a monastery at Kildare – meaning “church of the oak” – she established an eternal flame tended exclusively by women.

Because of her association with fire, she is considered the patron saint of those in cooking and the domestic arts. An enduring symbol grounded in her story, the traditional Brigid cross is still displayed in art and jewelry today, woven of dried grass in the pattern of an ancient sun wheel.

Information from nationalshrine.org

CELEBRATE!

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son's footsteps," he added.

"When I think about my first experience with the TV Mass, I remember just the professionalism of all the crew that was there – the wonderful direction provided by Deacon Richard and being able to serve with priests of our archdiocese and the Diocese of Arlington. It just provided a level of comfort," Deacon O'Neill said. Over the years, "I have found the only complication is to make sure in advance you know the preferences of the celebrant."

Deacon O'Neill says that he has been blessed to have many personal encounters with either people or families who have benefited and have felt so connected to Christ through His Church by being able to participate in the liturgy through the TV Mass. "I remember one time I went to Gate of Heaven Cemetery for a Rite of Commendation and the family looked at me and their eyes lit up, and they said, 'Oh, my gosh, you are on the TV Mass. Every Sunday before mom died, we would gather with her on Sunday mornings and we'd watch the TV Mass, and we recognize you,'" he revealed. "And so that was a kind of a nice thing for me to hear."

Last year, the Basilica received an award from YouTube for having reached 100,000 subscribers, a recognition that makes Deacon O'Neill proud for having

contributed to that huge achievement. During the coronavirus pandemic, many people naturally resorted to the TV Mass and other live stream services and digital resources, but even after churches opened again, the TV Mass continued to gain subscribers on YouTube.

"I think that what happened was that perhaps people became appreciative in a particular way of the availability of the Mass online, so they themselves continued with it even after it was available in-person and shared with other people," Deacon O'Neill pondered. "Perhaps it just became a kind of a bridge for some people who might be looking to return to the Church."

Deacon O'Neill appreciates that almost every time when he serves in a Mass, the celebrant will encourage people, "If you are at home and if you cannot get to church, please contact your parish and ask them to bring you the Eucharist," because, he adds, "that's obviously the most important thing that's missing from the TV Mass."

In fact, Deacon O'Neill recently traveled to California for the Eucharist, specifically to attend one of his grandchildren's First Communion. "It was absolutely wonderful. My grandson received his First Communion on Saturday and his second on Sunday," he said. "It was a good trip."

WDCW-50 local station guide

The TV Mass airs every Sunday at 10:30 - 11:00 a.m. ET on WDCW-50.

Use the chart below to determine the channel on your television.

TV Provider	Channel
Antenna/no cable	50
Comcast	
DC and Montgomery	23
PG and Southern MD	3
Dish or Direct TV	50
Cox	
Northern VA	3
Fredericksburg	15
RCN	15
Verizon	3

Do you need a Eucharistic Minister to visit you on Sundays?

Please call your local parish to request that a Eucharistic Minister visit you at home. If you live in The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington and are not sure which parish is closest to you, please call Claudia Cheek at 301-853-4516.

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