

Living Stones: Stories of People Who Helped Build Up Our Church

The following stories are part of a series that appear during our Jubilee 150 Year to help us appreciate how richly the grace of God has been working in our midst. The restoration of the Order of Deacon brought new life to the church. Its impact has been felt for many years at Saint John's. True to the biblical word diakonia, these men have been dedicated servants of Christ and our church. Here are three who stand out among those who have served us.

Three Stories: Lives of Faith + Service



Deacon Leo Martin seems to many long time parishioners to be as much the face and voice of Saint John's as any of our priests. Even in his years now as a 'senior deacon' he loves to preach and baptize. He was among the first of those men to serve our local church as deacon. Deacon Leo has served St. John's and other parishes for many years. When it comes to the history of Saint John's few people can tell you names and details better than he! His memory which shines through in the tales he tells in his homilies is legendary. But what endears him to so many of us is his readiness to do the necessary thing for others, often working busily behind the scenes. We all know how well he prepares what is needed for liturgy, anything great or small. His colorful, story laden homilies have been welcomed by our collaborating parish of St. Thomas.



Deacon Valentin Rivera brought this newly restored role of ministry to our Hispanic community in 1988 as it was expanding. His kind, quiet, gentle approach to people, along with his deep devotion to the Lord in the Eucharist, made him a man whom people in both our Hispanic and American community admired very much. He served the pastors of Saint John's with the utmost spirit of respect and cooperation. He was an invaluable member of the first group of parishioners to visit our sister parish in the Dominican Republic. His battle with cancer did not deter him from giving himself to our community but impressed us all with the way he faced life and death as a man of great faith and compassion.



Deacon Carlos Simon Valentin grew close to God and was drawn to this ministry by the service and devotion he saw in his beloved mentor, Deacon Valentin, whose first name was his last! Best known simply as Deacon Simon, he responded to the call to ordained ministry as he was beginning a family with his wonderful wife Angelica. Going to classes at night was a challenge but there he was more than an eager student; he was much loved and admired by his peers. Given his bright outlook and his evangelical outreach, few people may have known that Deacon Simon struggled with kidney disease. His prayers and ours for a kidney donor were answered by Dawn Alves when she came to our parishes as a new pastoral associate. Her gift of life enabled him to become even more active and involved with both the Hispanic and American communities. His sudden death as a young husband and father in April 2018, just after Easter, shocked and saddened everyone. Yet the legacy of his faith, his smile, and his zeal to serve lives on as a light to all of us!



"As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:4-5)