

REGION II NEWS

Volume 1 Issue 1

Summer 2005

Dioceses of Region II

New York State:

Buffalo
New York
Ogdensburg
Rochester
Rockville Center
Syracuse

Canada:

Hamilton
Kingston
London
Ottawa
St. Catharines
Sault Ste. Marie
Toronto

Buffalo Diocese

Highlights

by Deacon Ted May

This past June 11th, Bishop Edward U. Kmiec ordained 5 more men to the Order of Deacon. Four of the men are married, the last is single. Each deacon was given at least one parish to minister in along with a ministry of charity, usually outside the parish. With the ever noticeable shortage of priests, deacons are being used more in multiple parishes.

Due to the lack of priests, the Diocese of Buffalo recently placed two deacons as Parish Life Directors under a trial program. They are totally in charge of the parish, both administratively and spiritually, and are supervised by a priest moderator from a nearby parish. There are a few parishes that have deacons as temporary administrators awaiting the place-

ment of a pastor.

The formation program is set to grow considerably this fall, as the number of men completing their aspirancy come to enter their first year of candidacy. The interest in the diaconate continues to grow as more men seek to enter and discern their calling.

Bishop Edward U. Kmiec has announced the appointment of a strategic planning commission that will define the mission of the diocese and will provide direction for future ministry in the eight county Diocese of Buffalo. "The end result," said Bishop Kmiec, "will be a strategic plan that will lead to a revitalized Church, more vibrant parish life and schools that are known for their spiritual and academic excellence." The 25-member panel is made up of Bishop Kmiec, Aux. Bishop Grosz, 7 priests, 1 deacon, 4 women religious and 11 laity.

Some Important Information From the Region II Director's Meeting of March 10, 2005:

- Deacon Ted May of the diocese of Buffalo was elected to serve as the Region II Representative. Deacon Bert Cambre of the Archdiocese of Toronto was elected to be the alternate.
- The Region II Convocation will be activated. The Convocation will be held annually except when there is a National Convocation. The Convocation will be held between mid-June to August, avoiding the week of the NDICE gathering. A schedule was established:
2006 New York City; 2007 Toronto; 2008 National Convocation; 2009 Rochester;
2010 Hamilton; 2011 Buffalo; 2012 National Convocation
- Communications. A "Newsletter" will be established. Deacon David Palma of the Diocese of Rochester will develop and edit this for the present time. There will be two newsletters each year. It was suggested that a web site be developed for Region II. (Region Representative will look into this.)
- It was recommended that the Directors of Region II meet twice a year- once in the fall during October and just before the Region II convocation. Everyone present strongly supported this idea.

St. Catharines Diocese

A New Program

by Deacon George Newman

The Diocese of St. Catharines has just recently joined NADD with the inception of a diaconate formation program. We have 8 men who have just finished their first year of formation. Classes are held at the Mt. Carmel Spiritual Centre overlooking Niagara Falls each month. We have 3 deacons resident in the diocese and 2 who have faculties to assist with the formation program. I look forward to being more active with Region 2 as our program settles down.

Hamilton Diocese

First Class to be Ordained in 2006

by Deacon Bill Rankin

The Permanent Diaconate was established in September 2001. The first Formation class began in September 2002. We have 16 candidates and their wives who have completed the third year of Formation. If all are called they will be ordained June 10, 2006 for the Diocese of Hamilton. They will be the first class called to The Order of Diaconate. We have 7 candidates and wives who have completed the first year of Formation. Currently we are interviewing for the class of September 2006.

Ogdensburg Diocese

A New Beginning for Formation

After a hiatus of two years, the Diocese of Ogdensburg once again begins its Deacon Formation Program. The last deacon ordination class was in 2003 with the ordination of twelve deacons. Up until that time, the formation program was held at Wadhams Hall Seminary College in Ogdensburg. However, in 2002 Wadhams Hall ceased its seminary function which meant that the teaching staff was no longer available as up to that point. In addition, there was no other Catholic college in the diocese. Thus, a different format of formation was needed. Also, in the summer of 2003, Bishop Barbarito was transferred to the Diocese of Palm Beach. Since the new formation program would have to be

radically different than in the past, it was thought best to hold off on implementing a new program until a new bishop was installed.

After the spring of 2004 and the installation of Bishop Robert J. Cunningham, the diocese developed and began to implement a new program. Msgr. Robert H. Aucoin, Vicar of Education, is also director of Deacon Formation and the Permanent Diaconate. Along with focus groups and a formation advisory committee as required in the new Directory, Msgr. Aucoin has led this process. In the summer of 2005, 23 aspirants will receive an introduction to the new program which will have the four major aspects of deacon formation: academic, personal, spiritual, and pastoral.

A good portion of the academic formation will take place in online instruction through the STEP program offered through the University of Notre Dame (<http://step.nd.edu>). This instruction will be supplemented with regional seminar

gatherings of candidates. Given the large geographical expanse of the diocese, it would have been difficult for candidates to gather on a frequent basis for classes given in a traditional weekly format. Even a monthly format at Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg would have been difficult since most of the priest instructors are not available on weekends when the majority of the candidates are readily available.

Personal and spiritual formation will take place at Wadhams Hall on several weekends (Friday evenings and Saturdays) each year of the program. Also, during these sessions, courses not available online (homiletics, public speaking, liturgical practice, and canon law) will be taught. In addition, pastoral counseling courses will be taught through the auspices of Catholic Charities at the three regional offices of that agency in Watertown, Ogdensburg, and Plattsburgh.

Pastoral Formation will take place at the lo-

cal level of each candidate. It is expected that each candidate over the course of the formation program will have a structured experience in catechetics, social services, and ministry to the sick and bereaved. These experiences will also be supplemented with local theological and pastoral reflection sessions.

There is no doubt that this new program will place greater demands on the candidates. More independent learning, the requirement to be somewhat computer literate, and more academic requirements than in the past are just some of the challenges that candidates and directors will have to face. The local support of pastors and deacons will hopefully shepherd the candidates through the process.

Rochester Diocese

I Stand Here Rinsing (with apologies to Tillie Olsen)

by Julianne Palma

(Reprinted from the Rochester *Deacon News* with permission.)

Over the past year, I have had to reexamine my identity. I proudly defined myself as “Mercy High School English Teacher” for over 21 years, but a new career direction forced me to adopt a new persona.

Of course, one of the facets of my life which continues to shape my self-awareness is my role as a deacon’s wife. And that, too, has come under close scrutiny. I found myself asking: “Just what does it mean to be a deacon’s wife?” I’ve been mulling over this concept for several months now, and I’d like to share some musings. My hope is that some of you, gentle

readers, might care to add some of your own thoughts and observations.

An excellent clarifying note was offered to me by Walter Burkhardt at last Fall’s retreat. When he addressed us a “Deacons and Mrs. Deacons”, something in me resonated. At first, however, I was not certain if I liked the title. (I admit that sometimes I’m PREPARED to be offended by unsuspecting priests.) So I journaled about it during our Quiet Time and discovered that “Mrs. Deacon” has distinct possibilities. For one thing, it recognizes both sacraments in which David and I continue to participate as a couple.

I was Julianne Winter; now I am Julianne Palma. Most of us women accepted our husbands’ names as our own when we married. Our husbands sometimes struggle to understand that they are now the sacramental sign of the Gospel call to service. If we can recall *our* process of making our *gestalt*-shift, we might discover tools that are helpful in under-

standing the change of identity associated with ordination.

Because, we too underwent a change when the Bishop's hands rested on our husbands' heads. Whether or not our hand was resting on his shoulder at that moment; whether or not we are now active in our own forms of service to God's People; whether or not we share in our husband's ministry, we are now fundamentally different from the women we were when we processed into the cathedral two weeks or twenty years ago. We have public personas. (In my own case, this means that sometimes I have to choose my words with great care, or remain silent altogether.)

Another useful image was offered to me during an informal luncheon/discussion with the candidates' wives during the most recent canonical retreat. Kay Nelson proposed an excellent analogy. (The best teachers always use analogies.) She likened the relationship between the deacon and his ministry to that of a mother and child. Kay noted that no matter how nurturing and "present" a father is, there will always be some exclusivity in the mother/child bond. Nature has hard-wired us that way. She went on to suggest that the deacon's relationship to God's People might represent the male equivalent of that highly personal bond.

This comparison gave me tools for dealing with those "he's-on-the-altar-and-I'm-alone-in-the-pews" blues. Or, to return to my title, the "he's-at-a-meeting-and-I'm-left-with-the-supper-dishes" wishes.

If you've noticed, though, neither Kay's analogy, nor Fr. Burkhardt's greeting has led me to a definition of "deacon's wife". And although some of us have jokingly called ourselves "servants of those who come to serve", that precludes a partnership, so I must reject it as a definition.

By now, a number of you are thinking, "Why does there have to be a SINGLE definition? Obviously, marriage relationships vary widely; shouldn't that also be true of diaconal couples?"

Absolutely! But there are certain essen-

tial characteristics that define "wife" (as opposed to, say, "snuggle bunny".)

So, I turned to my long-time favorite discussion of relationships recorded by Anne Morrow Lindbergh in *Gift From the Sea*. Her dominant motif is balance, seen in ebb and flow, pull and release, solitude and companionship. I think this balance motif will serve me very well in my search.

Against my public persona, there is my private wrestling with God's Will. In the balance pan, neither David's work nor mine is more significant. When his burden grows, so must the amount that I contribute to the ministry; in that way we maintain the balance. Likewise, when my own need is great, I must not refuse to call on him out of some false sense of unworthiness; the balance will be ruined as easily from my side as from his.

And, perhaps most significantly, balance is a dynamic thing. It is not stasis. So, I'm coming to see that a definition of "deacon's wife" is flexible, as I noted is true about women's ability to reshape our identities in marriage and in motherhood.

A colleague just alerted me to a new book, *Wifework* by Susan Maushart. I think I'll see if what she has to say will shed further light on my journey. And I'm going to play with the balance motif some more.

In the meantime, for me, my role as a deacon's wife will continue to be doing whatever I perceive as necessary to keep David healthy, emotionally balanced and available for the service of God's People.

I'll end with an anecdote from our days in the parish in Marion. A little boy who had never seen a deacon before, arrived at the conclusion that my name was "Deac". Since we were always presented as a couple, and since this new phenomenon was clearly called "Deacon Dave", he reasoned that I was Deac 'n' he was Dave.

If you have any insight to share in this area, or authors to suggest for further study, please feel free to e-mail me at julep4@frontiernet.net. Thanks for listening.