

REGION II NEWS

Volume 1 Issue 2

Winter 2006

Archdiocese of New York

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

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Region II Convocation Theme: The Deacon's Preferential Love for the Poor

**July 21, 22, 23, 2006
Mount Saint Mary College
Newburgh, New York**

By Deacon Anthony Cassaneto

As Ministers of Justice and Love, deacons dedicate themselves to serving human needs. This service is both love of God and love of neighbor. Our beloved Pope John Paul II pointed out to the deacons assembled in Detroit in 1987, "The Second Vatican Council reminds us that the Ministry of Charity . . . also obliges us to be a positive influence for change in the world in which we live . . . so that society may be renewed by Christ and transformed into the Family of God." This Ministry of Justice and Love means that deacons not only assist the powerless [the poor] and speak for the voiceless, but also help them to find their own voice and to assume power over their lives.

Accommodations will be in a new facility with an elevator. Suites are either two or three bedrooms with a common area for

relaxation. All suites are air-conditioned.

Meals will be provided in an air-conditioned Dining Room. The following meals will be provided: supper on Friday evening, three meals on Saturday, and breakfast and lunch on Sunday.

Registration materials will be mailed in early March 2006. Please complete the registration form and return it with your full payment no later than June 1, 2006. The conference fee, which includes meals and lodging, is \$150.00 per person. For deacons who do not sleep over, the cost for all activities and meals is \$110.00 per person.

Trips to local attractions are planned. You will have a choice of three excursions: a Riverboat ride on the Hudson with a meal; a tour of West Point Military Academy; or a tour of a local winery. Prices will be announced on the registration form.

Possible Keynote speakers: Mr. John Carr of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops; Fr. Drew Christiansen of *America Magazine*; Ms. Kathy Gallagher of the NYS Catholic Bishops Social Services Dept.

Bring your camera along. We look forward to your presence.

Archdiocese of Toronto

TORONTO NEWS

By Deacon Bert Cambre

The **TORONTO'S DIACONATE COMING TOGETHER** event took place at YMCA's Geneva Park in Orillia with the theme: *DISCIPLES OF JESUS ON THE ROAD OF PEACE AND JUSTICE*.

The Coming Together was started in 1989 to create an opportunity for all deacon couples to meet, re-acquaint themselves with one another and to facilitate the mutual continuing support in our ministry and at times of need. There were meetings in 1989, 1992, 1995 and after a hiatus due to administration difficulties, meetings were re-started in 2002 and this year.

The Coming Together is a gathering for Deacon couples incardinated in the Archdiocese of Toronto (wherever they may be) and also those active and resident in the Archdiocese.

This year, it was scheduled for **September 30, October 1 and 2, 2005**. The resource person was **Fr. John Dear S.J.** It took place at **YMCA's Geneva Park in Orillia**, by lake Couchiching. The lakeside hiking trails and the beauty and serenity of the surroundings, makes it an ideal place for rest, relaxation, prayer and reflection.

Some Toronto Statistics

Active deacons 110
We have 167 deacons in the database;

the maximum age is 94 and the minimum 38.	
Less than 50 years of age (<= 49)	10 5.99%
Between 50 and 65 years of age (>=50 and <=64)	69 41.32%
Between 65 and 75 years of age (>=65 and <=74)	56 33.53%
75 years and more (>=75)	32 19.16%
Total:	167 100%

3 deacons died in 2005, none retired.
5 deacons left the Archdiocese with the following dioceses: Alexandria-Cornwall, Hamilton, Keewatin-LePas, London and St. Catharines.
Deacon James Lee renewed his missionary assignment in South Korea where he and Theresa will be for another two years.

Continuing Education

We returned to the two yearly sessions in 2005, and on May 14 we discussed Ecumenism with Fr. Damian McPherson, S.A. Fr. Damian brought us to a much better understanding of our ecumenical progress and also practical "how-to's" when functioning in ecumenical settings. On November 19 Fr. Fred Scinto C.R. gave us an "introduction" to the book (or should I say three books?) of Isaiah since liturgical year B has most first readings from that book. The material he compiled (approximately 100 pages) will be of great help when preparing homilies.

Milestones

At our Coming Together, Deacons Bill Callahan, Gerry Godsoe, Cliff Greenaway and Henry Verschuren received their 25th anniversary commemorative stole from Cardinal Ambrozic. The 20 year-pins were also awarded to Deacons John Daigle, John Grieve and Bernie Legris. Deacon Robert Kinghorn could not attend but also received his 20-year pin.

Diocese of Ogdensburg

Notes from the North Country

The Diocese of Ogdensburg has begun its new Deacon Formation Program, implementing the policies and procedures described in the previous newsletter. The diocese entered into a partnership with the STEP (Satellite Theological Education Program) of the University of Notre Dame. The twenty aspirants have begun to register and complete some of their course requirements online.

Also, the Diocese of Ogdensburg contracted with Kelley Counseling and Consulting of Philadelphia, PA, to perform the psychological screening of the candidates. Four psychologists came to Ogdensburg in September and conducted the screening surveys and personal interviews with the aspirants and their spouses. Then, in October, two psychologists returned to spend about forty-five minutes with each aspirant and to give feedback from their observations. The aspirants found this to be a very helpful process.

In October, the deacon community of the diocese and their wives, as well as the aspirants and their wives, came to Ogdensburg for a weekend retreat led by Deacon William Ditewig. The theme of the retreat was "On Retreat with Pope John XXIII." This was a fantastic spiritual experience for all and was an excellent opportunity for the deacons and their wives to meet the aspirants and their wives. In addition, during the weekend there were some special sessions for the spouses.

Beginning in January, the screening process will continue for the twenty aspirants. Msgr. Robert H. Aucoin will administer the "Deacon Perceiver" instrument with each aspirant. The information gathered from the psychological screening, the "Deacon Perceiver," and the academic progress of each aspirant will be used by the advisory committee in making recommendations to Bishop Cunningham for each aspirant's continuation in the program and his advancing to candidate status in the fall of 2006.

Diocese of Syracuse

SUMMARY PRESENTATION BY BISHOP MOYNIHAN TO THE DEACON COMMUNITY October 30, 2005

By Deacon Les Distin

Bishop James M. Moynihan gathered the deacon community together for the Annual Fall Meeting on October 30 at Christ the King Retreat House. He congratulated the deacons

who were celebrating their 10, 15, 20 and 25 years of ordination and welcomed the men and their spouses in the 4th year of the Deacon Formation Program who will be ordained in May. The primary focus of the Bishop's comments was directed to the Life of Permanent Deacons as reflected in the National Directory.

The Bishop noted that undergirding the norms and guidelines for permanent deacons are the statements of doctrinal understanding of the diaconate as expressed in the Second

Vatican Council. Bishop Moynihan suggested that the Sacrament of Holy Orders is often not fully understood by the laity, especially the ordination to diakonia to serve God's people in communion with the Bishop and his body of priests. Further, the Bishop indicated that deacons have the special opportunity and obligation in their secular and private lives to boldly proclaim and witness to the gospel as taught by Jesus.

Bishop Moynihan emphasized the section in the Directory which outlines the Church's Ministry of the Word and the Church's Ministry of Charity and Justice. These ministries are not to be separated, he said, for deacons are ordained for all of them. Though individual gifts and skills vary, no one should be ordained who is not prepared to undertake each in some way.

After reviewing the four dimensions and norms for ordained life, the Ordinary reviewed the activities and requirements, which already exist in the Syracuse Diocese. He underscored the need for strengthening and expanding ministerial skills through continuing education and the need to grow spiritually through the annual retreat and an ordered prayer life.

Bishop Moynihan commented on the expanding role of deacons in the Syracuse Diocese and called upon them to prepare themselves spiritually and experientially for these changes. He urged regular attendance at the regional meetings of deacons throughout the Diocese, wherein the unique needs and concerns which arise from diaconal ministry can be shared and addressed.

The Ordinary indicated that one of the ongoing challenges is to continually improve the understanding and relationship between priest and deacon. As ordained clergy, permanent deacons exercise their ministry in communion not only with the Bishop but also with the priests with whom they serve. As collaborators in ministry, priests and deacons are two complementary participants in the one apostolic ministry.

Following a review of some of the other norms, the Bishop extended his deep appreciation for the many hours of ministry, which permanent deacons devote to the Syracuse Diocese. His closing focused on his recognition and gratitude for the generosity of the wives and families of deacons for their support and willingness to share their husbands with the Church of Syracuse.

Diocese of Kingston

Toward a Theology of the Diaconate

On Saturday, November 19, 2005, the deacons of the Archdiocese of Kingston gathered with Archbishop Meagher to begin the process of formulating a theology of the diaconate as it has unfolded since its inauguration in 1991 in Kingston and in the universal church since its restoration in 1968.

While there were many issues explored during this daylong dialogue, the closing prayer addressed to Mary provided an interesting ending to the conference since it contained many of the theological ideas discussed. Since our diocesan feast day, which commemorates the Immaculate Conception of Mary, coincides with the writing of this article for our regional news letter, it is only fitting to share with you this Marian prayer and to consider how Mary helps us to understand the vocation of a permanent deacon, who is dedi-

cated to the people of God in conjunction with the bishop and his body of priests, in service of liturgy, of the Gospel and of works of charity (Lumen Gentium 29). The prayer for Deacons to the Blessed Virgin Mary is as follows:

Mary, who as teacher of faith, by your obedience to the word of God, has co-operated in a remarkable way with the work of redemption, make the ministry of deacons effective by teaching them to hear the Word and to proclaim it faithfully.

Mary, teacher of charity, who by your total openness to God's call, has co-operated in bringing to birth all the Church's faithful, make the ministry and the life of deacons fruitful by teaching them to give themselves totally to the service of the People of God.

Mary, teacher of prayer, who through your maternal intercession has supported and helped the Church from her beginnings, make deacons always attentive to the needs of the faithful by teaching them to know the value of prayer.

Mary, teacher of humility, by constantly knowing yourself to be the servant of the Lord you were filled with the Holy Spirit, make deacons docile instruments in Christ's work of redemption by teaching them the greatness of being the least of all.

Mary, teacher of that service which is hidden, who by your everyday and ordinary life filled with love, knew how to cooperate with the salvific plan of God in an exemplary fashion, make deacons good and faithful servants, by teaching them the joy of serving the Church with an ardent love.

What this prayer reveals about the diaconate is that the deacon's tri-fold ministry of liturgy, gospel and charity is not about function but rather about whom they represent. The very title, dea-

con or servant, suggests that like servants in ancient times, they are sent as ambassadors and representatives of their Lord and Master, called to make known the good news. They do this by first of all being like Mary attentive to the word of God and responding to it by proclaiming it, not just through reading the gospel and preaching, but by incorporating the gospel message into their lives so that the good news may be transmitted beyond the Church's boundaries. By imitating Mary, deacons discover a model that helps them fulfill their mandate received at ordination when they bishop instructed them to become heralds of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel. It is for this reason that the deacon's presence at the Eucharist serves as a reminder to the gathered community of his ministry of charity and our shared responsibility in carrying the word of God to work, to homes, to the sick and elderly, to the hurting, to those celebrating new life, and to those who are dying. This connection is enhanced when the deacon at the beginning of the Eucharist invites the assembly to join with him in the penitential acclamation by acknowledging those times when we have failed to carry the Word of God to all those who are in need.

It is this integration of the gospel into their lives that animates and inspires deacons to give themselves totally to the service of the people of God; a motivation that springs not from a desire for greatness but rather to imitate Christ the Servant who is the animating principal of their sacred vocation. By placing Christ at the centre of their ministry deacons become like Mary who proclaimed the greatness of the Lord and gave thanks for the favour God has bestowed upon the lowly. In this way when the deacon, as a minister representing the servant Christ, prepares the gifts for the liturgy of the Eucharist his presence and his prayers over the chalice as the water is mingled with the wine remind the assembly that they are

called to share in the divinity of Christ the servant who came to share in our humanity and to enable a diverse body of saints and sinners to become one in the Body of Christ. An action that prepares the community to offer a sign of peace to one another, like the penitential rite, this call to extend the peace of Christ is both an invitation and a challenge since the deacon's direction is intended to go beyond the boundaries of the Church, into our work place, our homes, and our community.

While the deacons' participation in the Eucha-

rist only forms one part of his three-fold ministry, his ministry at the altar provides a venue for the deacon to be a teacher of faith, charity, prayer, humility and service, not in a prominent way, but rather in the manner of Mary whose quiet presence in the gospel provides a template for all Christians to live out their baptismal call.

Diaconate as a Prophetic Ministry in a Globalized World

***International Study Conference
Organized by the
International Diaconate Centre
Freising, Germany
September 22-25, 2005***

By Deacon Norberto (Bert) Cambre

If you ever have the opportunity to visit Germany, you will definitely wish to stop by the Town of Freising. On September 22, 153 participants from 34 different countries gathered at Kardinal Döpfner Haus international centre to reflect on the gospel, and primarily discuss the key issues that the diaconate and Church are facing today. Not only was the transportation extremely efficient, (it took us only 15 minutes to reach it by bus from the Munich airport but a little longer to walk up the hill from the bus terminal to Domberg 27, then a short walk back to the centre), but the town is kept immaculate. Though a modern town, Freising is rich in character with old world architecture and narrow cobblestone streets lending it a welcoming and charming personality. The latter combined with superb hospitality and facilities made it the ideal location for this year's conference.

The conference consisted of interesting lectures on matters crucial to the advancement of the diaconate. Exceptionally instructive and heart wrenching were the lecture and workshops led by Archbishop Pius Ncube from Zimbabwe and Bishop Alfredo Petit Vergel from Cuba. They offered first-hand accounts of the church's suffering and persecution in some parts of the world. Archbishop Ncube presides over the Archdiocese of Bulawayo, the second largest city in Zimbabwe and the centre of Matabeleland. During his presentation, he explained the life of his church in a climate of violence, torture and death under the regime of President Mugabe. Some death threats were directed at him personally. Solidarity and concern for his safety permeated the room as he spoke about the care of his people, his proclamation of the gospel, and his defence of social justice and denunciation of human rights violations within the threatening arena in which he lives. His personal commitment to the poor and persecuted in Zimbabwe was obvious and inspiring to us all. Particularly moving was his prayerful attitude of Gandhian non-violence, which he openly acknowledged in the face of these threats and severe difficulties. He must have

seen our concern for his safety because he reassured us that Internet communications and the ability to attend conferences like this one provide a great help to him and improve his safety.

During the workshops with Bishop Alfredo Petit Vergel, Deacon Juan Rios and Deacon José Walter Iglesias we learned about the difficulties of the Cuban church within discriminatory policies and the government-induced hostile culture towards the Catholic Church. Our eyes were opened further to the plight of the church serving Bolivian workers caught between the oil and gas companies' corporate ambitions and governments affected by self-interest and corruption. Another highlight of the conference occurred on the final day when Sr. Sandra María Pinheiro delivered a very perceptive and acute lecture identifying four areas that we all need to work on as a faith community.

The first area she identified is the need to recognize and praise those who dedicate themselves to charity and service. She observed that the church needs a warmer disposition to incorporate deacons in her ranks, and more demonstrated appreciation of diaconal service. Secondly, she observed that the church's tendencies to ritualism and hierarchical status are an obstacle to progress for the diaconate and church as a whole. Other obstacles include the absence of the father from the family and ignorance regarding the deacon's profile and identity.

She dedicated the third part of her lecture to exploring how to materialize the prophetic mission of deacons in a Globalized world, among which she included the promotion of peace, defense of human rights, heralding of hope and promotion of a better stewardship of our envi-

ronment. To complete her powerful talk, she left us to reflect on her recommendations to the International Centre to further promote the reflection and exchange of interfaith dialogue that is becoming ever more important if we are truly to function as a universal church.

After the business part of the conference had finished, there was a wonderful bus tour, which allowed us to view Munich and its historical and other important landmarks. We went to mass at the beautiful Munich Cathedral where a full-fledged orchestra played Mozart exquisitely. We also had the chance to have typical German fare at the "Augustiner Restaurant", and to top it all off, we celebrated and enjoyed the beer, food and festivities of Oktoberfest, another event definitely worth experiencing if you ever have the chance.

Ultimately, the conference was an unmitigated success, as it brought together deacons from all parts of the globe. The liturgies were well organized and allowed us to unite in prayer. Natural barriers like language differences became mere details and very often enhanced the unity of the celebration. The conference was organized in such a way that enabled a good understanding of the church and diaconate problems in different parts of the world. Not only did it offer a chance to learn and grow spiritually, but mealtimes and social breaks were enjoyable opportunities to meet and get to know deacons from other countries as they each shared their personal circumstances, and the joys and difficulties of their ministry. We enjoyed the conference, gained new insights and came home encouraged and inspired to focus with even more determination on being involved in the international diaconate.

Summary of the Region II Directors' Meeting of October 13-14, 2005:

- Representative's Report– Deacon Ted May reported on the NADD meeting held in Denver on September 15-17, 2005. There was a discussion regarding modifications to the NADD constitution. There was a proposal to amend the constitution. Copies of this proposal will be circulated to NADD members by January 2006. A new NADD logo was also discussed and proposed. Ted circulated the logos considered and explained the one with the best chances of approval. It is expected that a directors' workshop will take place on April 19, 2006, during the April NADD Convention. The Josephinum College will likely take charge of the design and delivery of the directors' workshop. Regarding regional governance, NADD officers recommended that our by-laws for election and term of representative be changed to two-year term twice renewable.
- Communications- Deacon Ted May circulated the updated list of Emails. Deacon David Palma led the discussion regarding our "Region II News". The directors agreed it had been well received. The next issue will go out in January. The project of a website for Region II was briefly discussed. All found it advantageous, and efforts will be made to find a person who can help with the design and implementation of the website. The Rev. Msgr. Bob Aucoin mentioned the advantages of the teleconferencing system offered by SKYPE.COM, which is available both for PC and Apple through Internet.
- Convocation– Deacon Anthony Cassaneto presented the proposed date, place and schedule for the 2006 convocation in New York. All the directors present support his proposal.
Region II Deacons' Convocation Friday, July 21 – Sunday, July 23, 2006, Mount Saint Mary's College Newburgh, New York.
- Presentation on the National Directory – Deacon Steve Graff was the presenter. Steve started his presentation by giving an overview of the important background information that is helpful in approaching the document. The major issues discussed centered on the formation section. Steve said that there are plans for directors' workshops at the Denver and Los Angeles NADD conferences that will develop the subjects of pre-admissions and aspirancy; candidacy and post candidacy will also be covered in the workshops. Steve finished his presentation and discussion with the exhortation to ask NADD to develop publications for dioceses as they implement the directory and to offer counsel on best practices.
- Next meeting will be July 20 & 21, 2006, at the Region II Convocation.



Deacon Steve Graff addresses Region II Directors.