

REGION II NEWS

Volume 3 Issue 1

Fall 2007

Archdiocese of Toronto

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

The Diaconate in Toronto – 35 Years Young

By Deacon Dan Murphy '74

June 18, 2007, was the 40th anniversary of the Restoration of the Permanent Diaconate in the Latin Church and also the 35th anniversary of the Restoration of the Permanent Diaconate in the Archdiocese of Toronto.

However, Cardinal Roger Mahony Archbishop of Los Angeles, in addressing the National Catholic Diaconate Conference held in the Diocese of Oakland in the year 2000, reminded those present that “we are still in a period of discovery” regarding the permanent diaconate

It is nearly seven years since his address was given to the permanent deacons of the U.S.A. but I cannot think that there has been anything said since that has impressed me as much. Even now, when I read back over the address, I am drawn into reflection at the depth and meaning of some of his statements and it is my intention, in the next few paragraphs, to savour his words, and mull over them again, as I have done several times before.

Looking at the long term view he points out that, while there was a time when the diaconate was almost exclusively transitional and liturgical, we now have a clearer understanding

that the diaconate is a ministry in its own right, and that it has a threefold focus of Word, Liturgy, and Charity. “Word” is not just speech, but like Christ, it is Love become visible, tangible and audible. We see this Love. We touch this Love and are touched by it. We hear this Love in Christ the Servant and we are the heralds of this “Word of God”.

Central to any understanding of the order of deacon are the key words of “charity and service”. Contrary to popular connotations today, such as ‘giving to charity’ and ‘charity cases’, charity for the deacon is self –sacrificial love; “the love that pours itself forth in a concrete action that comes to the aid of another in need”. Charity is not a love that gives from its surplus, but a love that keeps on giving even when it hurts. Cardinal Mahony said that though the whole Church is called to the service of charity, it is through the charitable service of the deacon, that the Church’s service is ‘sacramentalized’ especially in its service “for the poor, the weak, the wounded, the last, the littlest, and the least.”

The permanent diaconate, a distinct order in the Church that Pope Paul VI described as a “driving force for the whole Church’s commitment to service”, witnesses to the centrality of charity. The deacon’s presence in the liturgy of the Church is a living reminder that worship is most fruitful when it flows from service, and it is

Inside this issue:

Toronto	1
Rochester	4
Directors’ Meeting	8

this fruitful worship that, in turn, helps us to return to lives of service.

Cardinal Mahony concluded with a reminder to deacons that they are ordained for the service of the entire Local Church, and to not allow themselves to be “co-opted” for the service of a particular parish. “The deacon should be free to respond to the immediate needs of the poor, the disenfranchised, those without work, the sick at home or in hospital, the many who are neglected, forgotten, or invisible in our neighbourhoods.” Moreover the deacon should bring to the attention of the pastor, the pastoral staff, and indeed the whole parish, an awareness of the needs of these various people.

I have skimmed the surface of the things that the Cardinal said and have not said them as well or as fully as he did, but I think I have captured the essence of his talk. I am sure that the Deacon community will resonate with his words and recognize that even though they were spoken a few years ago, they are as true today as they were then.

What is History?

By Deacon Tab Charbonneau '75

What is History? Funk and Wagnell describes it as, “That branch of knowledge concerned with past events, especially those involving human affairs.” It also says, “A history is a narrative that recounts events with attention to their importance, their mu-

tual relations, causes, and consequences....it is therefore highly selective.”

A number of years ago a national mutual fund had an ad that showed a man with field glasses looking backward and forward at the same time. It signified being aware of the past and using experience and selection to insure success in the future. As permanent deacons that is also what we must do.

The Permanent Diaconate was re-introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1967, and was implemented in Toronto by Archbishop Pocock in 1970. The documents described a deacon as participating in a three-fold ministry, of the Liturgy, of the Word, and of Charity. However, initially the emphasis was on his involvement in the administration of, and participation in, the sacramental rites assigned to him rather than on any specific ministry of charity. So, developing as we went along, the early years were spent in trying to reassess and identify the role of the deacon in our diocese, the primary focus on where he would serve, and in what capacity.

After much soul searching as problems arose it was hard to find specific solutions. Participation in the National Association in North America was initiated to seek input from other programs yet it soon became apparent that others were suffering some of the same problems and trials as we were. They were searching for their identity as well. But, eventually, as the program moved forward, further study suggested that the Toronto Program should shift its focus from “parish ministry” to a ministry to the “dis-



Deacon Bill Ditewig addresses the Deacons and wives of Region II

advantaged and marginalized' in the community at large. In other words, the deacon's ministry of charity would be identified and developed outside the parish arena, yet still allowing him to function in the liturgical and sacramental roles in the parish setting.

However, this meant changes to the formation program, initially it was two years in duration, after which the candidate was ordained. He then returned to his home parish to seek out and establish his "specific" ministry of charity in the community. But with the new "focus" the program was extended to three years and then to four to allow time for the candidate to explore and select a specific ministry where he would bring and represent the Church to the "dis-advantaged" and "marginalized". Initially the concentration was on hospital and prison ministries, but now permanent deacons also work in many other areas of ministry.

It also became apparent that the supervision of the ordained deacons should move from the seminary to the diocese. Bishop Robert Clune was appointed Vicar and a part-time associate director was selected from the deacon community. This latter position developed into a full-time director being appointed with responsibility for the supervision and co-ordination of the deacons in the field.

Further, as we grew, it became apparent that as the "new kids on the block" the community of deacons and their wives needed to create a support system allowing them to meet on a regular basis, both in small groups and full community. This would enable them to share their ministry experiences, to express any needs and concerns - and at times to lick their wounds! Eventually it was decided that this would be achieved through monthly group meetings, and tri-annual "Coming Together" events, and also through attending the annual Regional Convocations with deacons and wives from other dioceses here in Canada and the USA. Of course, we should remember that throughout this period, and up to today, the deacons and their wives have received the full support and guidance of our Toronto Archbishops and the Vicars.

Inevitably throughout any group's history, there are periods of struggle, of growth, of injury to others, of corrective action, and of healing and forgiving, and we are still very young (thirty four years old). But think about it! Are we any different from the early Christian community, when Paul and Peter struggled and argued about priorities in the early Church? We, like they, will continue to struggle, to seek and to grow. The years ahead will pre-

sent us with many new challenges as well as requiring us to examine our current guidelines, so there is a need to continually review how and who we recruit, and how we train, so that as new ministries call for our presence we may be able to respond with deacons who have the "life-skills" as well as the formal training.

Importantly, like the man in the national mutual fund ad, let us all continue to be selective about what we carry forward from our past insuring that whatever we bring will help to continue to build the ministry of the deacon, and our history from this day forward, in a constructive and loving way. And may we continue to be blessed by the guidance of the Holy Spirit who is always in our midst.

Tourist on the Street

By Deacon Rob Kinghorn '85

"What are you doing in this bad part of the city?"

I looked around and saw a young man bent over, out of breath, his roller blade wheels still spinning. He had seen my clerical collar and the "bad part of the city" he was referring to was what is known in Toronto as "the track", where prostitution is open and drugs are barely concealed.

I told him I came downtown every week to walk around and chat with the people on the street. He wished me the compliments of the Christmas season and breathlessly took off.

The question is haunting. Not in its simplicity, but in its challenge. Why are people surprised to see the church in the "bad parts of the city?" Where else should we be? The world would prefer to shunt us off into a siding marked, "religion" and tell us to play among ourselves, and yet Jesus was perhaps best known in the "bad parts of the city".

My ministry as a deacon is to be a presence on the streets of downtown Toronto. Thursday evenings from 9 pm to 1 am I can be found around Wellesley, Sherbourne, Church, Dundas, and walking through Allen Gardens, areas that some would consider the bad parts of the downtown core of Toronto.

The evening starts in Street Haven where at 5:30 I have supper with the residents and the drop-ins. Street Haven is one of those unsung

women's sanctuaries downtown, and it offers unconditional love to the women who enter its doors. Margaret Jeffrey, Executive Director, and her team have been welcoming, and allow me to join the women for a meal and to share stories. At 6:30 we have a spiritual group that meets, and the women talk of the deep experiences of God in their lives. The sharing is celebrated in song by Joyce Aldrich of St. Margaret of Scotland parish who brings her beautiful talent of music each week.

Then it is onto the street at 9 pm. In "Mr. Tasty's Homeburgers", a woman asks if she can receive communion. On the steps of a church on Jarvis street a prostitute cries for her father who has died. On Gerrard street a man who gave his life to Jesus when he was 5 years old is wrestling with the deci-

sion and schizophrenia and wants to pray. On Sherbourne street a prostitute on crack cocaine talks of how she knows there is a God who answered her prayer to let her 2 pound baby live and grow up to be healthy. On Dundas street a young lady asks me to pray with her that she can stay off crack long enough that her baby will not be born addicted. Don't let anyone say that the church is not respected on the streets. The clerical collar is a magnet for people who want to talk of their pain and of their experience of God.

What am I doing in the "bad part of the city"? I am there to meet Jesus. I go to find him among the people of the street, and so once again find him in my own heart where his light is too often dimmed.



Deacon Bert Cambre welcomes Region II to Toronto

Diocese of Rochester

Keeping the Promise

By Deacon George Welch

Last December we shared an article entitled *Transformation and Spirituality in the Diaconal Community*. The article was an invitation to consider the promises made at our ordination rite. They reflect what our relationship to God looks like and sounds like as a deacon. This relationship is our prayer. The experience of the deacon and his family as people who desire a closer relationship and are longing for more have been a part of the preparation for this article.

People in love with God want more time with God. The longing for this closeness is blocked by our anxiousness, busyness, noise, accumulation and hurt. Rolheiser describes the blocks to a deeper relationship as narcissism, pragmatism and unbridled restlessness. The promises we made that day of ordination give us hope in the face of these spiritual hurts. We have a source: Jesus. We promise to open to the Spirit of love, forgiveness and healing. The promise to deepen prayer brought a resounding "Yes," followed by "ok how do I do it? Where do I find the time? Who will help me?"

This article is a follow up, with a summary of three focus groups or spiritual café's that took place in the diocese throughout the winter and spring of 2007. These words hopefully will help us to be as the book of Wisdom (3:4-6) describes, "Sparks that dart about through the stubble." Each diaconal family is a spark. This article shares the reflections of the three conversations and invites us to be sparks. We recognize our source; the fire of God's love. We acknowledge the renewal of our strength through Jesus and our call to be transformed in Christ.

We are called to a ministry of service. We serve the people of God because we are in love with God. Our service comes out of this relationship. We are way beyond just acquaintance when we made our promises at ordination. We are in a close loving and intimate relationship with God. Jesus said "I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father." (John 15:15) What a powerful invitation to be Friend. We are the only part of the equation that is needed to make it work. We have to be open to the Holy Spirit like the first promise asked us in the ordination rite. We are in a relationship not with the master but with our friend. We are in relationship. What does that mean for you in your personal life of faith and ministry?

When you are in relationship you want to spend time with someone. You want to hear all about their day. You want to share your day. You celebrate the joys and you cry together over the hurts and pains. Your "heart burns within you" as you journey in faith, as you tell the stories and you walk by the light of God's love. Jesus gave us an example when he washed the feet of the disciples. He put our ministry of service into relationship with him. "I have given you an example so that you also may do." (John 13:15) We have a model. We are given an example. We are to serve by putting on Christ. That is the last promise. *Are you willing to shape your way of life always according to the example of Christ?* Being in love means that you are open to this example, you are alive because the spirit of Jesus is alive in you. We bear fruit only because we are connected. You can not water the garden if you are not connected to the source of the water. You can not water the garden of the Lord if you are not connected to the source of his love and grace. As St. Ignatius said "his love and his grace are enough for me." Yet without Christ's love and grace we do not keep the promise, and we simply can not do it.

In a ministry of service we need to be connected

to the source. The source is God's love. The source is Jesus. The source is being in relationship, being in love and focused on the source of our strength, comfort and peace. We can accomplish all things through Christ Jesus, Paul tells us. The deacon, serves Jesus the Christ. The deacon is able to serve and to be fruitful because as Jesus said "because you have been with me". (John 15:27) Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. Jesus is the source and the beginning and the end of our service.

It seems so simple yet so complex to state that our ministry will be dry, dysfunctional, self centered, egotistical, insincere, arrogant, self-righteous and self serving if it is not connected to the source which by our ordination promise is Jesus. The way we stay connected and centered on Christ is through prayer. Prayer is our relationship. Prayer is the source. Prayer is the way we keep the promise. Prayer is the way we are able to follow the promise we made both in the ordination rite and in the baptismal rite, to be holy. It might be good to look at your baptismal promises that you renew each Easter. They again remind us that we are in relationship. We are God's children. We have a Father who loves us and calls us to love one another. We are anointed priest, prophet and king. We are called child of God. Wow, we are in a loving relationship. We are loved unconditionally...

We held two focus groups in the winter on the promises made in the diaconate ordination rite. We specifically talked about transformation and spirituality in our ministry of service. How do we as the song from *Godspell* goes "love thee more dearly, follow thee more nearly day by day"? Our first meeting was in Waverly, and fifteen from the diaconal community joined together on a blustery day. Yet the sharing was warm and exciting as we all joined and shared our life with Christ. It was a joyful time.

The group shared that they were open to the Holy Spirit through their times of prayer. Some expressed that the Spirit was with us gathered open to change and ministry. The Bishop's call to renewed spirituality and the changes in formation to include stronger elements of spirituality were seen as the Spirit alive.

The group saw several ways that they deepen their prayer life. They included the following:

Bible Study	Homily preparation
Liturgy of the Hours	Quiet times
Liturgy of the Word	Rosary

Meditation Centering Prayer
 Praying with and for others
 Praying the Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*)
 Music

The spiritual resources used to strengthen and support them included Funeral ministry, gardening, third orders, Cursillio, disciples in Mission, visiting the sick, friendship with holy people and service. The group was hungry for a deep relationship with their God. There was a common understanding that our source is Christ.

In February we had a focus group at Sacred Heart Cathedral where a group of twenty gathered for a spirituality café around our Ordination Promises. Again a warm climate of sharing our journey in ministry and faith took place. Hope abounded in the group. Hope was seen because of the following:

- *support groups share faith and ministry
- *the order of diaconate united
- *holiness of the people in the parishes affirms us
- *Bishop's leadership in Spirituality and support
- *diversity of gifts in the order and communication and dialogue as we are having today
- *our seeking of spirituality and prayer
- *people more accepting the role the deacon
- *high number of couples in the diaconate still married
- * there is a hunger for prayer and deeper relationship, a longing for the Holy.

There was an explosion of ideas of how we keep our hearts open to the Word of God. The responses include the following but there was so much more:

- *Lectio Divina*, praying the scriptures
- Prayer shawls, quilting, iconography
- Time together as couples sharing the nuggets from our prayer and reflections.
- Preparing to preach
- Liturgy of the Hours
- Sacraments
- Internship Experiences such as Chaplaincy
- Daily Spiritual Reading and Meditation
- Funeral Preparation
- Baptismal Services and Preparation
- Papal Writings
- Time before the Blessed Sacrament
- Urban Monk seeking God in people
- Spiritual Direction
- Scripture institutes, reading of the scripture daily
- Finding stillness and silence

- Writing and journaling
- Rosaries
- Praying with the heart
- Prayer of consent
- I love the word "mystery." It gives me the permission not to worry but to believe

This sharing was rich, alive and full of many further examples of how we fill our hearts. It was hard to break to go to the final question which focused on what our prayer practices might be and where did we find out about them. While there is much overlap in these responses from the second question they created still a greater explosion of the ways that deacons feed themselves spiritually.

The thoughts on Spiritual Practices or Prayer practices were as follows:

- morning offering
- treadmill praying
- support group
- holy hour
- Diaconate retreat
- Convocation
- Mass
- Liturgy of the Hours
- Prison retreats
- Spiritual Exercises
- Mount Savior and Piffard
- Meditative websites
- Reconciliation
- Centering Prayer
- Legion of Mary
- Carmelite, Benedictine and Franciscan Third Orders
- Alternative retreats such as iconography
- Chanting
- Fasting
- Journaling and processing our experiences and relationship with God.
- Discipline in Prayer
- Spiritual Reading such as *Everything Belongs* by Richard Rohr.
- Stations of the cross
- Hispanic Spirituality and Deaf Spirituality
- Paschal Mystery

Finally the café shared how we can support each other in holiness. We attempted to answer the question of how do we keep these promises of our ordination and how we help each other in keeping the promises?

Time was limited, but the quality of the responses was tremendous. The need to have spiritual gathering with structure and guidance for the

time together was shared. Sponsoring greater conversations around a spiritual theme at retreats, convocations, support groups and other creative gatherings will support holiness by valuing holiness. We can share our positive experiences and places that have strengthened our spirituality such as retreat centers, retreats, speakers, workshops, days of recollection, local and national efforts in prayer, etc. What is nourishing you in your journey in faith?

Spiritual Direction and Guides were repeatedly spoken of as sources of support in the spiritual journey. Communication of what feeds us and what builds the community of faith was a high priority.

The last focus group took place at Phoebe's Friends retreat in March. The women of service and prayer offered their insights into the spiritual journey. The café question was why do you pray? The responses were for conversation, to ground me, guidance, gratitude, connectivity, peace, meditation, therapy, intercession, life out of control, relaxation and to be listened to and to listen.

The last question in the café was what can we do to help each other in our life of prayer? The responses were concrete. We can use email lists, snail mail publications, annual retreats, mentors, communication encouraged between the newly ordained and the older deacons and wives. Positive invitations to pray for one another such as the prayer cards make a difference.

A ministry of service involved feeding people. We must be sure that we are feed as well. The example of the emergency precaution in an airplane is apropos. You put the oxygen mask on first and then you help the child next to you. You can not help the child if you pass out. You can not help the people you serve if you are not connected to the source of all our strength, Jesus. We must feed ourselves with spiritual food and nourishment in our service to the people of God. We are called to be men and women of prayer. On April 28 we renewed our promises at the convocation. The question is put to you again, are you resolved to maintain and deepen a spirit of prayer? It is that spirit of prayer that we share. It is that spirit of prayer that gives us the strength to go forth in ministry. It is that spirit of prayer that energizes and brings us into the future. Prayer is the answer because prayer is a relationship with a loving Abba. Prayer is the acknowledgement that we are in love. And we echo John, God is love and those who abide in love, abide in God and God in them. Yes we are so much more alive and strengthened for service when

we pray.

Prayer is a difficult topic in our culture. We struggle with patience, stillness, silence and solitude. Our blood pressure rises, our pagers summon us and our attitude that we don't have to put up with anything abounds. We don't believe in *kenosis* or denying ourselves. We don't like to wait. We are restless and impatient. We forget Augustine who said of God, "we will not rest till we rest in you."

Our ordination promises used four powerful verbs that give us insight into keeping the promises. We promise to be open. We do not promise to be closed and cut off from God. We promise to be attentive to the present moment, open to the now. We promise to hold the mysteries of faith. It is a dance with God. We resolve to deepen our prayer. Prayer is the heart of the promises. Prayer is the source of our service. We resolve to shape our life as an active, Incarnational, spirit filled way of living. It is transformative.

There is one last step. Let us develop a powerful invitation to ourselves and to the diaconal community to live in the promises we made at our ordination, to put on Christ and be an order of prayer. This coming year let us develop a strong a communication tool of the prayer practices of our community and encourage one another with our stories of prayer. Let us share what has touched us and where our longings for holiness have taken us. Let us affirm our diversity and celebrate the Love of God for each of us just as we are. Let us live in the life of the Spirit. Let us dance. Let us pray.....

Bibliography (Great reading)

- The Shattered Lantern*, Ron Rolheiser, Crossroads Publishing Company c. 2001
The Holy Longing, Ron Rolheiser, Doubleday, NY c.1999
Intimacy with God, Thomas Keating, Crossroads Publishing Company c. 1994
The Contemplative Heart, James Finley, Sorin Book c. 2000



Minutes of NADD Region II Meeting
Held in Scarsborough, Ontario, Canada
July 27, 2007

Present: Deacon John & Jocelyn Ezard, Deacon Anthony & Gabriela Cassaneto, Deacon Norberto Cambre, Deacon David Palma, Deacon John & Susan Vallery, Deacon Nick & Teresa Cherri and Deacon Ted & Dorothy May

The meeting was opened with a prayer by Deacon Cassaneto.

The minutes for the April 20, 2007, meeting were distributed and discussed.

The treasures report was given. There are still some dioceses that are in need of hard copy invoices.

Deacon Cambre gave an update on the Toronto Convocation that is starting. He noted that the seed money for the next convocation will be sent in May or June 2008 to Rochester.

Deacon May spoke about the effects that the November gathering in LeRoy, New York, had on the Buffalo diocese in that it changed the format of the formation program. Deacon Cassaneto made the following motion:

We should set a goal of December 2007, for sending formation handbooks to each director in the region. Deacon Cambre seconded, and all approved.

Deacon May reported on an e-mail he received from NADD Chairman Sam Anzalone. The search for a new Executive Director is still ongoing. The location of the NADD office could change depending on who gets the job. The present secretary is due to retire after the next NADD conference.

Deacon May gave some updates on the NADD 2008 Conference which will be held in Orlando, Florida April 20 – 23. This will be a summit conference involving 6 national organization regarding ministry in the Church. Some of the gatherings will involve all the organizations, but there will be time for each organization to have its own meeting.

It was suggested that NADD try to get lower cost facilities for annual meeting. Deacon May will take this up with the Executive Committee in September.

Deacon Palma spoke about the next Region II Conference. Since the Eucharistic Conference is going to be held in Canada next year, it was suggested that the next Region II Conference in Rochester, New York, not be held till 2009. In discussions it was decided to hold the conference in August 2009, to get away from the NDICE meeting time. It was also decided to have our Region II Conferences every other year. This would put the one following Rochester in 2011 in Hamilton, Ontario.

Deacon Palma reminded all to get articles in for the Region II Newsletter by August 15.

Respectfully submitted,
Deacon Ted May