



Celebrating 25 Years as a Permanent Deacon - A Personal Reflection

By DNService

The ordination class of 1982 celebrates their 25th Anniversary this month. Out of the those men who were ordained February 13, 1982, Deacons Mike Frazier, Dennis Garber, Dick Groom, Bob Real and Bert Verstynen, still serve in the diocese today - and what great service they are giving and have given. Deacon Ben Hoefler serves nearby in the Diocese of Springfield, Deacons Eugene Boyes and Stan Szara have gone onto eternal rest.

The class of 1982 has quite a history. The class included some of the youngest ordinations to take place in the History of the Diaconate in the Diocese of Rockford. The class's ordination was also followed by a ten year hiatus in the program. Recalling this fact, Deacon Bert Verstynen said jokingly, "I kind of wondered what it meant that they stopped ordaining deacons right after our ordination. I was glad it turned out to be only a break for change in curriculum, not on account of us."

Conversations with members of the class of 1982 quickly become nostalgic. Among the memories are fond recollections of the deacon community gatherings in the early years. "Meeting together seemed to be more common in the early days," recalled Deacon Dick Groom. "There is support in meeting - not to solve problems necessarily, but listen to one another," Deacon Bert Verstynen added, "A woman once said seeing us gather how amazed she was that we hugged one another as true brothers."

While service is generally the main topic when discussing deacon tenures, community, building and participating, is a significant aspect of charism of the deacon. Deacon Moynihan added to Deacon's Groom and Verstynen's comments, "Building community within our community is a focus for the office. It is not a new focus, but one we want to give more attention. Not that we want to be an end in ourselves, deacons are the means to service, not an end, however, it is good for us to gather and strengthen our community from time to time. I am encouraged to put more resources in this area by the comments from the class of 1982."

Deacon Mike Frazier, as part of helping with this article on the Class of 1982, provided the following personal reflection.

I can look back at my journey through life and see how God has lead me. When Maria and I first moved to St. Monica, we were a

young couple trying to make ends meet. That first Sunday morning at our new-found parish was spent encouraging our 2-year-old daughter, Shannon, about going to church and how God would be there and how good it would be with other people singing and praying. I remember how cautious we were that Sunday at St.

Monica's, not knowing how our little one would react to a new church. We sat in the back of the church in case we needed to make a quick exit. As the

parishioners stood in silence, the priest began "Let us pray." At that time between "let us pray" and the words of the opening prayer, Shannon, standing on the kneeler and with her strongest possible 2-year-old voice blurted out, "All I can see are butts!" Everyone broke out in laughter. It seemed to take an hour for the priest to gain composure to begin opening prayer again. Needless to say, the next Sunday, we sat in front.

With my nearly shoulder length hair and full beard, our D.R.E., Sr. Marita approached me suggesting I could relate well with the kids in CCD class. I told her I'd think about it and get back to her. When we got home, I asked Maria what "CCD" meant! Thus began my ministry of service.

I soon became an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist and after a couple more years, I began to see men assisting the priest and reading the Gospel at mass. I asked Maria who they were.

Cont. on page 2



(Left) Deacon Dick Groom
(Right) Deacon Bert Verstynen

"My twenty-five years as a deacon has been a blessing." Deacon Dick Groom.
"I have a great love for the Eucharist, so serving at the altar is and has been important to me." Deacon Bert Verstynen.

Deacon Assembly Day - Call to Community: All deacons and their spouses are asked to attend Deacon Assembly Day, Saturday, February 24, 2007 at the Cathedral. Registration begins at 8:00 AM. Mass follows at 8:30. Please see the Assembly Day agenda below for topics and schedule for the day. Attendance for Assembly Day is mandatory for active deacons. If you have not already done so, please return the stamped postcard you received in the January newsletter to let us know you will attend and if your wife will also attend. Please send your RSVP postcard, attending or not, to the office by February 16, 2007.

Assembly Day Agenda:

8:00 a.m.	Registration and Sign-in
8:25	Gather in the Nave
8:30	Eucharist
9:30	Welcome and Remarks
10:00 – 10:30	Liturgy Update
11:00 – 12:00	Spirituality for the Community Servant
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 – 2:30	Stewardship and the Diocesan Deacon
2:30	Concluding Remarks

Ongoing Formation

Hours: All active deacons are required to complete 25 hours of ongoing formation hours annually.

If you have not already done so, please submit the completed form now as they were due by 12/31/06. Forms can be found at www.opdrfd.org in the members section or on page 110 of your Deacon Handbook.

Volunteers: We are looking for a few good men and women from our community of good deacons and spouses to participate on the following deacon community support committees: Advent Committee, Deacon News Committee, Deacon Retreat Committee, Deanery Community Organization Committee,

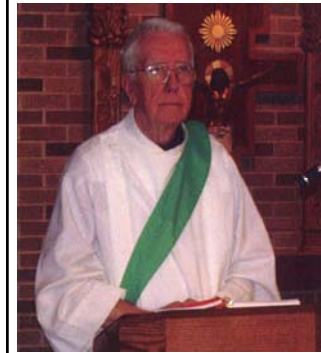
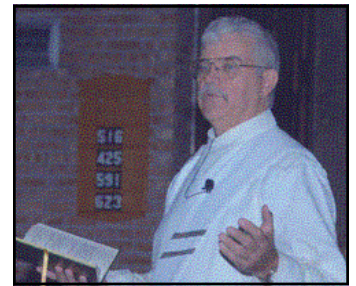
Continued on page 2

She said they were deacons. Having grown up a Protestant, I thought deacons only counted the weekly offering. I thought to myself that maybe I could read the gospel at mass. I had no idea what this ministry of service was really all about but I began to learn.

I was unaware of the age restriction when I first talked to my pastor in my late 20's. Fr. Mullane explained that I needed to continue to pray about it and come back in a few years. In 1979, at 30, Maria and I filled out the application to become a deacon. I remember the endless questions of the psychological inventory and the family information I needed to collect. That summer, we had our initial interview. We were asked why we had only one child and we replied, "God's will." We thought we blew it. In October, 1979 Maria and I saw Pope John Paul II during his visit to Chicago. I'll never forget receiving his Papal Blessing. The following week, I received the letter of acceptance to diaconal formation and found out that Maria was pregnant with our 2nd child. Papal Blessings are powerful!

Then, diaconal formation consisted of one weekend per month for 2 years. Weekend schedules included 7 class sessions per weekend along with spiritual conferences and homily practice. They were exhausting but rewarding weekends. The brotherly bonds we formed those two years with one another and our wives will last forever. I'm thankful for the wonderful and supportive priests I've been blessed with to assist and thankful for deacon brothers in the diocese. Mostly, I've been blessed with the love and support of my wife, Maria, who has sustained my journey through life as a deacon. I also thank my daughter for her 2-year-old observation at mass many years ago. I'm still sitting in front, often next to the presiding priest.

"I feel blessed that the Lord has allowed me to serve as a deacon for the last 25 years. I sincerely hope that the lives I have touched have benefited as much from my ministry as I have." Deacon Dennis Garber



"I'm second in charge of my life because God is first in charge." Deacon Bob Real



Birthday and Anniversary Wishes:

Sam Cassaro, Francis Groom, Pauline Hawksworth, Warren LaMont, Jim Newhouse, Jim Olson, Joleen Petit, Joe Phelan, Bobbie Ryan, Nancy Welch, Tom Welch, Bill Whitehead, and Ron "Willie" Williams. **Marriage:** Ted and Cynthia Kocol, Don and Connie Miller, Dick and Anna Mae Mulcahey and Dave and Sue Ann Wilbricht. A special anniversary blessing to Bob and Agatha Martin who celebrated 60 years of marriage February 2.

May they be touched by Jesus' healing hands ...

We pray for Tom Petit's daughter, Julie. Continue to pray for Tom O'Brien's wife, Maria and Bob Brandenburg's wife, Arlene. Pray also for our brother, Deacon Lee Deatherage. Please pray for our Bishop, Thomas G. Doran.

Necrology: We pray also for our brother deacons who have gone to eternal life: Anthony P. Naze [February 10, 1994] and John P. Eberts [February 14, 2000].

Volunteers: (cont. page 1) and the Annual Priest and Deacon Symposium Committee. These are a mixture to be formed and reformed committees. They will start-up as soon as we have sufficient members.

If you are interested, please contact the office by phone or email!

"We need the fullest participation of our members if we are going to strengthen our community, improve our newsletter, and lead each other to greater service," said Deacon Moynihan, Director.

Please note: Confirmation dates have been revised after March 18, 2007 due to Bishop Doran's illness and recuperation. As you read in the Observer, Monsignors Barr, Brady, Kagan and Nelson will act as delegates for Bishop Doran. This increases the possible number of confirmations on any one Sunday from 2 to 6 or 8. A new schedule reflecting these changes will appear in the next issue of Deacon News. To fill the new dates, the office will first contact deacons assigned to the parish having the confirmation. If parish's deacons are unavailable or insufficient in number, we will ask for volunteers by email. Due to the increase in frequency and number of confirmations per Sunday, we will need even greater cooperation than in the past.

Feb. 18	1:00 PM	St. Peter, Geneva	Rick Martin	Mike Zibrun	Hank Orlik
	4:00 PM	Holy Angels, Aurora	Tim White	Norb Szudarski	Tom Hawksworth
Mar. 4	1:00 PM	St. Mary, E. Dubuque	Vince Drees	Ted Kocol	Dave Wilbricht
Mar. 11	1:00 PM	St. Peter/Paul, Cary	Greg Duffey	Howard Ganschow	Mike Boyce
	4:00 PM	St. Thomas the Apostle, Cry. Lk.	Greg Duffey	Ed Morrison	Walter Freund
Mar. 18	1:00 PM	St. Monica, Carpentersville	Dennis Garber	John Bach	Mike Frazier
	4:00 PM	St. John Neumann, St. Charles	Paul Iwanski	Martin Hetzel	Norb Szudarski