

Deacon Data



**Newsletter for
the Diaconate
Community of
Northeast
Nebraska**

December 15, 2009

Series 4 Vol

Ordination 2009

Eight Ordained Permanent Deacons...Oct. 24th Ceremony by Lisa Maxson-Catholic Voice

Story and Bios Continued on Pages 2-6



Clockwise from top left: Michael and Valerie Conzett; Kathy and Bill Hecht; Francis and Patty Meiergerd, and Robert and Lisa Jergovic. Courtesy photos



Clockwise from top left: Theresa and Jack Miller; Donald and Janet Placke; Brian and Pat Thomas, and Craig and Catherine Steel. Courtesy photos.



**Message from the
President...Deacon Ernie
Abbott-St. Stephen The Martyr**

Merry Christmas!

By the time that you read this, we will be in full swing with the Advent Season. I hope that all of you have a very blessed Christmas Season. Also, as the year comes to a close it would be a good time to look back and reflect on the accomplishments of this past year.

At the beginning of this year I started my second term as your Deacon Council President. I am currently half-way through this term. It has been an interesting year with many changes. In February, the Council had our annual dinner with the then outgoing Archbishop

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The Archdiocese of Omaha welcomed eight men from the rural and urban areas to the permanent diaconate Oct. 24 at 10 a.m. at St. Cecilia Cathedral in Omaha.

Archbishop George J. Lucas ordained Michael Conzett, Bill Hecht, Robert Jergovic, Francis Meiergerd, Jack Miller, Donald Placke, Craig Steel and Brian Thomas to the permanent diaconate.

"Deacons and their wives are ordinary people called to do ordinary things in extraordinary ways," said Father Keith Rezac, director of the rural diaconate program for the Archdiocese of Omaha.

An ordained minister of the Catholic Church, a deacon's ministry is one of service to the archbishop, the community and his parish, he said.

Permanent deacons are one of three groups, or "orders," of ordained ministers in the Catholic Church.

They are ordained as a sacramental sign of Christ, who came "to serve and not to be served." Although the entire church is called by Christ to serve, the deacon, because of his **ordination** and through his ministries, is a servant to the church and the world.

Deacons preach, teach and proclaim the Gospel, baptize, lead the faithful in prayer, witness marriages, and conduct wake and funeral services. They also are leaders in identifying the needs of others and meeting those needs using church resources. In addition, deacons are dedicated to ending the injustices or inequities that cause such needs.

Father Rezac said deacons are needed in the church because priests can't do everything.

"Priests can't be everywhere and be everything for everyone, and deacons help fill the gaps that priests can't," he said. "They also touch people's lives in a unique way by their service, especially because they are married."

The qualities of a good deacon, Father Rezac said, are a spirit of giving and charity, and the desire to bring joy and happiness to other people, and support in times of sorrow.

For the past four years, these eight men and their wives studied intensively, worked on their personal prayer lives and participated in annual retreats. They also worked in their ministry of choice, such as jail ministry, teaching or hospital ministry.

Curtiss. It was a very good dinner and the Archbishop kept a very tight lip regarding his potential retirement and replacement.

In April we saw the appointment of our current Archbishop Lucas. I was not yet ordained when Archbishop Emeritus Curtiss took over from then Archbishop Sheehan so everything that was involved with the transition of power and the ability to participate in the festivities was a unique honor.

Last August our annual Anniversary Dinner was highlighted by the new Archbishop taking up residence at the buffet table and greeting every couple as they came through the line to get their dinner.

Look for several changes next year to the dinner based upon the feedback received from this year's affair.

September brought the beginning of the new academic year and we welcomed several new couples to the formation process. In October, we ordained another class of men to



MICHAEL CONZETT

Parish: St. Gerald, Ralston

Status: Married 26 years; wife, Valerie, director of the Archdiocesan Family Life Office and executive director of FOCCUS, Inc.; two sons and one daughter

Profession: Environmental engineering consultant for HDR, Inc.

Activities/Ministries: Assisted living Communion services, marriage preparation, FOCCUS, and faith sharing group facilitator, and adult education

Wife's ministries: Bereavement ministry, funeral team, lector, extraordinary minister of holy Communion, sacristan, and ENDOW

Couple's ministries: Vocation Committee and Serra Club

About the call to the diaconate or discernment: "I feel the permanent diaconate is a call in my life from God to serve others in a visible, public way. With the grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit, I am open to the path the Lord will take me. There will be ministries that Valerie and I will share, such as marriage preparation, and there will be those we undertake separately. It is important for both of us to realize that our vocation to marriage is first. With that as a firm foundation, the service that I will provide to others can be generously given."



BILL HECHT

Parish: St. James, Omaha

Status: Married for 41 years; wife, Kathy, a telecommunications systems administrator; two sons, one daughter and five grandchildren

Profession: Retired from education and training career

Activities/Ministries: Parish Communion services and perpetual adoration

Wife's ministries: Catholic Daughters of the Americas

Couple's ministries: Extraordinary ministers of holy Communion, homebound communion and FOCCUS

About the call to the diaconate or discernment: "Kathy and I are grateful to God for the many blessings he has bestowed on us throughout these last 41 years. The diaconate formation program has been a blessing and a gift to both of us. It has strengthened our marriage and our spiritual life."



ROBERT JERGOVIC

Parish: St. Robert Bellarmine, Omaha

Status: Married for 30 years; wife, Lisa, who home schools their children and was a former instructor at the Nebraska School for the Deaf; three sons and two daughters

Profession: Chief Investment Officer for CLS Investments, LLC and the AdvisorOne Funds

Activities/Ministries: Pastoral care volunteer at Nebraska Medical Center, jail ministry team at Washington County Detention Center, Communion services at Parson's House, and lector

Wife's ministries: High school youth group moderator for the Catholic Home School Association of Omaha

Couple's ministries: Mission Advancement Council for the Institute for Priestly Formation and extraordinary ministers of holy Communion

About the call to the diaconate or discernment: "The call to the diaconate came from our prayer life and it is that prayer life that will continue to strengthen and guide us in our vocation as husband and wife and my vocation as deacon."



FRANCIS MEIERGERD

Parish: St. Mary, West Point

Status: Married for 32 years; wife, Patty, a math teacher; two sons, two daughters and five grandchildren

Profession: Self-employed contractor

Activities/Ministries: Extraordinary minister of holy Communion, server at daily Mass, choir member, fourth degree member of the Knights of Columbus, and Communion services at the nursing home

Wife's ministries: Music coordinator, keyboardist, and organist for high school and adult choirs

Couple's ministries: Liturgy committee

About the call to the diaconate or discernment: "A little over six years ago, I was asked to attend a Christians Encounter Christ weekend. After that weekend I felt that God was calling me to do more with my life. I began to pray about what I should do and within a few weeks, three different people asked me if I had ever thought about being a deacon. Four and a half years later, with the help of all your prayers and support, I am ready to be ordained. Patty and I have grown so much in our faith and prayer life. I know it won't be easy and there will be times of hardship, but I am excited to help build God's kingdom and serve our parish."



JACK MILLER

Parish: St. Robert Bellarmine, Omaha

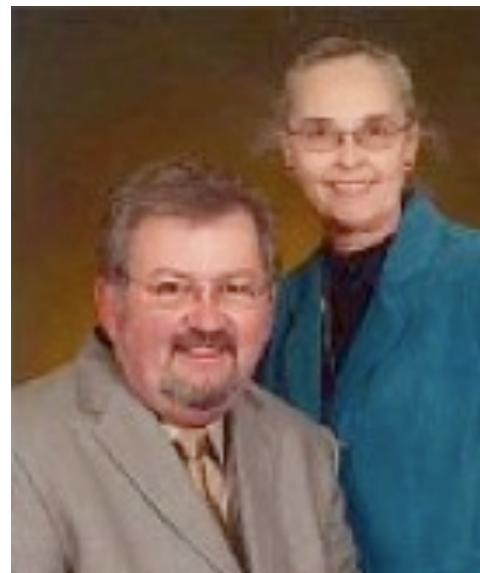
Status: Married for 22 years; wife, Theresa, a homemaker and volunteer; one daughter

Profession: Sales/food service distributor

Activities/Ministries: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, lector, Stephen's Center volunteer, jail ministry, and baptism preparation

Couple's ministries: Extraordinary ministers of holy Communion, FOCCUS facilitators, and nursing home ministry

About the call to the diaconate or discernment: "We would like to sincerely thank all of those who prayed for and supported us through the discernment of our vocation. We have been called to know the heart of God, and exemplify that through liturgy and service to God's people. We are looking forward to serving in the pastoral division of the diaconate formation team, to provide leadership, support and guidance to those in formation. We hope to be an outward sign of God's love in the church and community, dedicating ourselves to service."



DONALD PLACKE

Parish: St. Michael, Central City

Status: Married 37 years; wife, Janet, an assessor for Merrick County; one son, two daughters and three grandchildren

Profession: Semi-retired florist

Activities/Ministries: Choir member, soloist for funerals, cantor, religious education teacher, rosary leader, and community choir member

Couple's ministries: Lectors and extraordinary ministers of holy Communion

About the call to the diaconate or discernment: "I became stubborn to God calling me to the permanent diaconate until very late in my life - after our family was raised and on their own. It was by the grace of God and influenced by our pastor, Msgr. Nelson Newman, who closed a homily promoting the deacon program with words 'Out there is a future deacon.' I took those words seriously and decided it was God talking to me through monsignor. Over the four years of discernment, Msgr. Newman has given me encouragement and advice, 'Don't be stubborn - Don't hold back - Go for it.' I'm glad I did 'go for it' and look forward to serving my God and my church and my parish. After I am ordained, I hope to start Friday adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in our church."



CRAIG STEEL

Parish: St. Patrick, Fremont

Status: Married 37 years; wife, Catherine; two daughters, one son and five granddaughters

Profession: Fremont Department of Utilities

Activities/Ministries: Altar server trainer, fourth degree member of the Knights of Columbus, Christians Encounter Christ, Saturday morning rosary, Mother of Perpetual Help devotions, and prayer group

Wife's ministries: Catholic Daughters of the Americas and past president of Fremont area Right to Life

Couple's ministries: Extraordinary ministers of holy Communion, perpetual adoration coordinators, When Families Marry and FOCCUS facilitators, and past liturgical coordinators

About the call to the diaconate or discernment: "I am looking forward to where God is calling me to serve him in the future. I pray he'll let me be his feet, his hands and his voice."



BRIAN THOMAS

Parish: St. Columbkille, Papillion

Status: Married 23 years; wife, Pat, a registered nurse in the recovery room at the Nebraska Medical Center; one son

Profession: Service technician with Arjo Century

Activities/Ministries: Knights of Columbus and sacristan

Wife's ministries: Member of the M.O.M.S. group

Couple's ministries: Extraordinary ministers of holy Communion, lectors and baptismal preparation

About the call to the diaconate or discernment: "Over the past four years, I have come to realize that the Lord has truly called me. I have no idea where this will take me in my ministry, but I humbly look forward to serving him in any way he will lead me."

Formation News

Gary & Rhonda Bash



The Diaconate Formation staff continues to grow and evolve with the added gifts and talents of our new staff members. Fr. O'Donnell introduced Deacon and Mrs. Mruz, Deacon and Mrs. Bevan, Deacon and Mrs. Miller, and Kathy Schultz as the newest members of our staff aiding Deacon and Mrs. Staroski and Father O'Donnell with the formation groups this year. We are fortunate and thankful that they have volunteered their time to help and to share in our journey. Fr. O'Donnell opened the year with an informative look at the criteria used to evaluate an effective formation program. Some of the participant criteria, from the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States, are:

1. An increase in holiness of life.
2. An ability to clearly articulate the Catholic faith.
3. The capacity to apply church teaching and practice concrete societal issues and pastoral concerns.
4. A sensitivity to inculturate the Gospel within the communities in which he lives, works, and ministers.
5. To embrace the universal nature of the Church and its missionary-evangelical spirit.
6. A balanced capacity and commitment to the ministries of word, liturgy, and charity. Demonstrated in his words and deeds.
7. A commitment to ongoing growth in the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral dimensions of formation.
8. A capacity to foster the communion and mission of the lay faithful, in collaboration with the bishop and diocesan priests.
9. An obedient and humble service to all in the name of the Church.
10. His ability to celebrate, in accordance with the Church's legislation and with due reverence and devotion, those liturgical and sacramental acts that the Church entrusts to the deacon.

Father linked his discussion to the four dimensions of formation. Highlighting the necessity to know yourself and strive to grow in the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral dimensions.

This year's first instructor was a welcomed return from last year. Father Salanito of Holy Cross Parish, Omaha, returned to present Old Testament Theology II, which emphasized the study of the major prophets of the Old Testament. Father brought to life the Old Testament prophets and shared the understanding the scriptures by seeing eyes. Using scripture, he showed the class the importance of understanding going on in the lives of the Jewish people and what was the context and timeline of ministry as they spoke God's words to the Father's talks focused mainly on Isaiah, Ezekiel. Father Salanito's love of the his knowledge made for another formative and enjoyable experience.



prophets of the Old Testament importance in through their formation what was at that time the prophet's Jewish people. Jeremiah, and scriptures and

the diaconate. Our numbers continue to grow as we spread our ministries throughout the diocese.

November saw another lightly attended Memorial Mass. This mass is held annually to remember all those who have gone before us, both deacon and spouse, and who have passed away. This is the place where the deceased deacons are honored and their wives remembered. It would be nice for the attendance to rise.

As we look to the future, the strategic planning for the Diaconate in the Archdiocese of Omaha will gear up into full swing. There are many changes on the horizon as our understanding of Diakonia continues to evolve in the life of the church in Northeast Nebraska. Come, join us, and be a part of the exciting time ahead!



Deacon Data

Dec. '09

C/O Deacon Bud Simmonds

955 So. 205th St.

Elkhorn, NE. 68022



Calendar of Selected Events

- December:** 12/15--Class, 6:30pm, St. Rose
12/22--Class, "Integration Papers Due," 6:30pm, St. Rose
- January :** 1/5-- No Class
1/9--Deacon Council Meeting, 9:00am, St. Rose
1/12--Class"Church History I," 6:30pm, St. Rose
1/16--Third Saturday, 9:00am, St. Rose, (CE) "Growth in the Spiritual Life," Fr. Tom Greisen & Sr. Marie Micheletto
1/19- Class "Church I," 6:30pm, St. Rose
1/26- "Integration Papers Due," 6:30pm, St. Rose
- February:** 2/2- Class, 6:30pm, St. Rose
2/6- Deacon Council Meeting, 9:00am, St. Rose
2/9- Class, 6:30pm, St. Rose
2/11--Marriage Enrichment, 7:00pm, TBA
2/12, 13, 14--Couples Retreat, Schuyler, "Celebrate Your Love," John & Teri Bosio
2/16- Class, 6:30pm, St. Rose
2/20- Third Saturday, 9:00am, St. Rose--(CE) "Growth in the Spiritual Life," (cont'd), Fr. Tom Greisen & Sr. Marie Micheletto
2/23- Class, 6:30pm, St. Rose
- March:** 3/2-- Class, 6:30pm, St. Rose
3/6--Deacon Council Meeting, 9:00am, St. Rose
3/9-- Class, 6:30pm, St. Rose
3/16--Class, 6:30pm, St. Rose
3/20- Installation of Lector and Acolyte, 10:00am, Norfolk; (No Third Saturday Presentation)

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