

A Sampler of Four

Leo Kester

When Leo Kester and his wife, Helen, met Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen during his tenure as ordinary of the Rochester diocese, he commented on Helen Kester's recent affliction with multiple sclerosis.

"Suffering is the hand of God.... You've been touched," said the late prelate. He then added, "You will have a vocation in your family."

With 13 children, the Kesters regarded it as a distinct possibility. But none of them expected the calling to be heard by their father.

Kester, 56, an engineering supervisor at Kodak Park, and his family live on Woodard Road in Webster and have been members of Holy Trinity parish for the past 21 years.

Since joining the diaconate program, Kester has gained

valuable field experience working with the Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministries, visiting prisoners at the Monroe County Jail. He has also assisted Father Lawrence Murphy, Genesee Hospital chaplain, with visitations and taking Holy Communion to patients, and also visiting patients from his own parish. Other experiences include working with Father Daniel O'Shea, St. Bridget's pastor, in organizing catechetical sessions, and visiting patients at Monroe Developmental Center.

His religious involvements prior to the diaconate include spending his high school years and one college year attending St. Andrew's Seminary; organizing and serving on the Holy Trinity Parish Council and Spiritual Action Committee; teaching religious education; and planning men's retreats at his parish.



Julio Vazquez is surrounded by members of his family (from left) Maria Rosa, Rosali, Maria, his wife; and Reynaldo.

Julio Vazquez

Even though Julio Vazquez moved his family to a charming split-level home in Henrietta three years ago, he is still very much a part of St. Michael's Parish, "for the Spanish community," he says.

The 56-year-old Puerto Rico native, husband of Maria Rosa Vazquez, father of 13 and grandfather of 17, immigrated here in 1959, seeking better employment opportunities for himself and better educational facilities for his children.

The Kodak employee's middle son, Rosali, has just taken a degree from Cornell University. Older children have gone through college, younger ones are still in high school.

Four years ago, Fathers Paul Freemesser and Anthony Valente, then co-pastors at St. Michael's, encouraged Vazquez to enter the Permanent Diaconate Program, an invitation-based on his presence in the Spanish community as a religious leader, first with the Cursillo movement and later as head

of a charismatic prayer group. "I said yes," Vazquez said simply.

Vazquez anticipates two fields of ministry: with the Spanish community and with those in hospitals.

That hospital ministry, he said, will lead to further service through learning other problems people have at home.

The children are proud of their father. Maria is proud of her husband. Rosali said that the children think the upcoming ordination is "great."

He also said the children were most impressed that their father studied for four years until this moment. He said they intend to throw a big dinner party for him after the ordination.

For himself, Vazquez has said, "I feel I will be making a special commitment with our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the community at large. I am looking forward to being ordained and continue serving the community and Jesus Christ."

Helen has teamed with him to work on Teen Seminar, and the two have also been very active in Family Renewal Retreats and the Cursillo Movement.

"Helen has been extremely supportive in encouraging me to go on and in giving me the time I need to study," Kester said. "The program has been an enabler to give me the confidence to go into these ministries and bring Christ's love to the people."

Because of his job, Kester's

will be a part-time ministry, but he admits looking forward to the time when it will be full-time.

Of his co-workers at Kodak, Kester says, "There are those who are Catholics that can appreciate the significance of this. All have been quite supportive."

Six of Kester's 13 children are married. They are: Mary Kester Quant, 31; Timothy, 30; Therese Kester Christo, 28; Margaret Kester Heissenberger, 26; Joan Kester DuRocher, 25; and Monica Kester Whittington, 22. Seven are at home: Frances, 24; Patrick, 21; Ruth, 20; Ann, 19; Elizabeth, 18; Daniel, 17; and Helen, 14. The couple also has four grandchildren.



Leo Kester with his granddaughter, Emily Quant.

Dan Abballe

After four years of training for the Permanent Diaconate Dan Abballe said, "It is a significant program we went through."

Dan Abballe is an unassuming, confident man who has a sense of humor, and who is openly excited about the upcoming ordination which will be both an ending and a beginning for him. It will finish the intensive training that included theology and scriptural classes, pastoral counseling, and field ministries; it will be the beginning of his active ministry through which he will work toward his goal of getting other people to minister to one another.

"Christians," he said, "are unique in their baptism and if that gospel message is to be real and active, then Christians need to be for one another. That message has to come alive."

This sensitivity to community is the mainstay of his commitment as a deacon. His interest in formal service within the Church, he said, began through his participation in the Cursillo

Movement. He did not, however, make the decision alone. His joining the Permanent Diaconate Program was a family decision as well as a family commitment and that, explained Mrs. Joan Abballe, is the way it has to be.

"The husband and wife have to agree or it probably won't work," she said.

Wives are encouraged to involve themselves in the program along with their husbands and Mrs. Abballe opted to do so. She spent a weekend a month at St. Bernard's Seminary for the program courses, and aided her husband in his field experiences, which included a hospital ministry at Genesee Hospital.

The Abbales agreed that it hadn't been a difficult decision. "We knew it was right for us," said Mrs. Abballe and she added that the Permanent Diaconate years had been a growth process for both of them.

Their sense of community was strengthened by the enormous support they



Dan Abballe and his wife, Joan.

received from others such as their daughters, Michele and Beth, and their neighbors. But the support didn't end there. Encouragement came from their pastor, Father Raymond Booth of St. Christopher's in Chili; Abballe's spiritual director, Father Gerald Connor of Pius Tenth, classmates, and the people at Neil Armstrong Elementary School in Gates where Abballe has been principal for 13 years.

A Rochester native, Abballe was graduated from Geneseo State College with an MA in education and has been in that field for 22 years. Previously he was principal at the Florence Brasser School, and served as administrative assistant to the Gates-Chili superintendent of schools.

Patrick Graybill

It isn't a boast at all when Patrick Graybill casually asserts, "I can hear the Word with my heart." Rather it is a response to what some consider an irony, that Graybill, who is shortly to be charged with preaching the Word of God, is deaf.

And he will bring to that service not only hearing with the heart, but the skills of an actor and a teacher. He fills both capacities at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology.

The 42-year-old Graybill is being ordained a year earlier than the diocesan Permanent Diaconate Program ordinarily allows because of his prior theological training. He once studied for the priesthood at Catholic University of America.

The native of Shawnee, Kan., has also schooled at Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C. and worked for the National Theater for the Deaf also there.

He arrived in Rochester three years ago from Nor-

wich, Conn., and, at the invitation of Father Thomas Erdle, applied for the diaconate program here.

He has words of high praise for the Rochester program, and he would encourage other deaf persons interested in pursuing ordained ministry to investigate it.

The process he has undergone, he said, brought him to appreciate his faith much more, and has deepened his understanding of the Church.

Graybill is single and intends to remain so. The pressures of work and time he devotes to his professional life preclude marriage, he said. The celibate discipline will enhance his ministry, he said.

These days are busier than usual for him. Not only is he about to be ordained, but his close friend, Rev. Mr. Raymond Fleming will soon be ordained a priest, and also, he is mounting a signed production of Neil Simon's "The Odd Couple" at the school.



Patrick Graybill shares a joke with his class.

interpreter Robert Barrett, "I see that God has plans for my life," he said through

here. Of course, we'll see what He wants with me."