

Deacons

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"Jamaica really affected me, as far as what Church could mean," he said. "You find that there are different questions asked in the Third World or the inner city."

Schulz and his family have since left an affluent suburban parish and now belong to Our Lady of Perpetual Help on Rochester's north side, where he will serve as an intern during the coming year. He plans to concentrate on offering adult religious education, spiritual enrichment and retreats to fellow parishioners.

Dick Lombard, 48, attributes his call to the diaconate in part to the influence of his wife, who insisted early in their marriage that he attend church with her every week whether he believed or not.

"About five years ago, she asked, 'Have you ever thought about the permanent diaconate?'" he recalled. "The funny thing was, I had been thinking about it for several weeks before that... I knew right from the beginning that it was the right thing for me."

Lombard expects that life has got to be simpler after ordination. For him, the demands of the formation program were compounded when he lost his job with the Greece School District. He then enrolled at Empire State College, where he recently completed a bachelor's degree in religious studies.

Assigned to Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Rochester, Lombard will become one of the first men in the diocese to be employed full-time as a parish deacon.

"Everything's really coming together now," he sighed. "I know it just has to be easier."

Marriage brought Jim and Donna Fitch to the diaconate as well. For more than a decade, they have worked together in ministry to other married couples, both at the Church of the Resurrection in Fairport and at the diocesan level, where they served in the Office of Family



Michael N. Aydogan
Transitional deacons Paul Brown and Michael McHale kneel before Bishop Matthew H. Clark during the diaconal ordination held Saturday, May 30, at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Life from 1978 to 1985.

Jim Fitch, 51, was drawn to the permanent diaconate after a renewal experience, which demonstrated for him the Church's growing shortage of ministers able to meet outstanding needs.

Returning to a classroom after 33 years was a challenge for Jim Fitch. Yet he and Donna somehow managed full-time jobs and still maintained their work in marriage ministry.

"The stress that can put on a marriage relationship is really something," Jim Fitch said. "It took us four years to learn how to prioritize, and we're continuing to learn."

Their dream was and still is to work in a mission someday. In the meantime, Jim Fitch will serve his internship at Resurrection Parish, where Donna Fitch will serve as pastoral assistant beginning in July.

"You've got to have a dream," Jim explained, "but you also have to really look at what it takes to go from here to there."

The Marriage Encounter movement led Eugene Edwards not only to the permanent diaconate, but also to Catholicism. He and his wife, Karoly, were both active members of a Presbyterian church for nearly 25 years. Gradually, the influence of priests they met through their involvement in the renewal movement prompted them to explore Catholicism.

"Through them, we began to have an appreciation of the fullness and beauty of sacramental life of the (Catholic) Church," Eugene Edwards said. "Becoming Catholics at Good Shepherd was like coming home."

A communications professor at Monroe Community College, Edwards, 56, will serve in general parish ministry at Good Shepherd during the coming year.

While the Edwardses found the diaconal formation program demanding, they also believe it enriched their marriage. "It has to be worked out as a family," Karoly Edwards explained. "It takes continuous dialogue between husband and wife to make it work."

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