

Deacons

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priests (and the people) to construct the Church."

Consequently, Martinez came away from Detroit feeling "confident and strong about (his) call of being a deacon."

Besides the encouragement they received from the pope's words, deacons and their wives felt confirmed in their ministry by the sheer numbers of those attending the meeting — believed to be the largest gathering of deacons ever. "We realized that we really are a part of a national group," said Catherine

Bergeron.

At a wine-and-cheese gathering on Friday evening, and while awaiting the pope's arrival on Saturday, deacons and their wives shared their common experiences and frustrations. "You had a lot in common with everybody there," Fuerst explained. "This created a lot of camaraderie."

Their conversations also produced "a feeling for what deacons across the country were doing," explained Deacon Al Bergeron. "It was reassuring that no matter where they were from, or what their training, they all felt strongly about their ministry of service."

Bergeron was pleased that the pope "seemed to have a good understanding of the calling of service. He mentioned specific

examples to show that he recognized the calling to the diaconate as a calling of service."

The combination of affirmation, camaraderie and sharing of common experiences and spirituality helped create a charged atmosphere in the auditorium. "You could almost touch and feel the love," Catherine

Bergeron recalled. She added that one of the Detroit newspapers called the event "probably the only love-in the pope experienced on his trip."

"It was a truly grace-filled meeting between the head of the Church and some of his ministers," Lombard concluded.

Diocese announces dates for training sessions

Leadership days for members of parish councils and various parish committees will take place at three locations this year.

Deacon Claude Lester, director of the diocesan Office of Parish Services, recently announced the annual training and enrichment days are planned this fall for October 10, at the Hilton in Corning; the Holiday Inn in Waterloo on October 24; and at the Mapledale Parth House in Rochester on November 7.

The theme of this year's gatherings is Parish Ministry: Sharing Faith, Call Service."

Workshops at the day-long sessions will include: "Effective Communication," "Just Treatment for Those Who Work for the Church," "Ecumenism," "Young Adults in the Church," and more.

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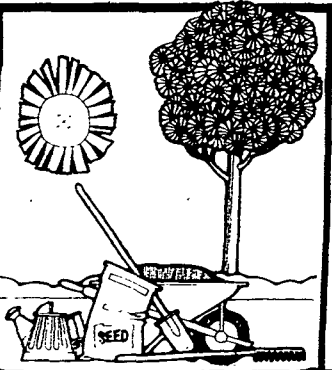
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