

New deacons juggle home, church roles

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

Last year at a meeting of deacon candidates, Owen Bowers stood up and jokingly described himself and his two fellow candidates in the deacon class of 1989 — Ken Morin and Dan Hurley — as “Daryl, Daryl and Daryl.”

The nickname, a reference to the comic brothers Larry, Daryl and Daryl from the “Newhart Show,” stuck to the three future deacons with one minor change: they became “Daryl, Daryl and Dad,” in tribute to Bowers being older than the other two.

According to Deacon Stephen Graff, interim director of the permanent diaconate program for the Diocese of Rochester, the nickname was also a tribute to the “the deep, personal care they had for each other.”

On June 3, the three were ordained permanent deacons. The class of 1989, the diocese’s eighth, was the smallest in the history of Rochester’s permanent deacon program. It was also an unusual class in that, for the first time, all of the new deacons live outside Rochester and its suburbs.

Deacon Bowers, 55, is a retired state trooper and a member of the parish staff at St. Agnes, Avon; Deacon Hurley, 35, is principal of St. Mary Our Mother School, Horseheads; and Deacon Morin, 41, is director of finance for a research company in Ithaca and is active in that city’s St. Catherine of Siena Parish. The three men reveal a diversity of occupations, education and backgrounds, yet they share attributes that both attracted them to and made them likely candidates for the diaconate.

“They all have a very dedicated interest in service and in serving people,” explained Deacon Al Wilson, who directed the permanent diaconate program in the diocese during the years that the trio were in formation. “It seems to be a common bond.”

Deacon Bowers acknowledged that he chose to work full-time in a parish after he retired from the state police because “I like being with the people. I like serving them in any way I can. It means being there for whoever has a need in whatever way they are in need.”

An important part of desire to be with people is this sense of being called to serve, each of the three deacons noted. Deacon Hurley, for example, pointed to his 14 years of teaching in Catholic schools — 10 at Notre Dame High School in Elmira and four as principal at St. Mary’s. He felt such a strong calling to serve as a deacon that he applied for the program when he became eligible at age 31. “I’ve felt called to this ministry long before I applied...” he remarked.

Deacon Morin, too, felt a call to the diaconate long before he entered the program. “I’d always felt in my life what I thought a legitimate call to service, with God looming in the background calling me,” he said.

At the time Deacon Morin felt this call, he and his family were living in Massachusetts, where he was active in his parish and in prayer groups. He came in contact with several deacons through his activities, and in talking to them recognized his own desire to become a deacon.

Because of work and family commitments and the nature of the diaconate program in the Archdiocese of Boston, however, he was unable to begin his studies there. When the Morins moved to Ithaca six years ago, he discovered the diaconate program in the Diocese of Rochester, applied and was accepted.

Unlike Deacons Morin and Hurley, Deacon Bowers said that although he wanted to serve the church, he actually avoided entering the diaconate. He first became interested in working more directly for the church in 1982 after a parish renewal weekend. “I’d been involved,” he said, “but never with a real sense of commitment. I had the experience of a change of heart that they talk about. I had a sense of



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier
Deacon Kenneth Morin and altar server Jennifer Gabriel sing from a hymnal during Mass Sunday morning, June 18, at St. Catherine of Siena Church in Ithaca.



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier
Deacon Owen Bowers (left) assists Monsignor John Maney by filling the chalice during an early morning weekday Mass at St. Agnes in Avon.



Tom Weber
Parents Scott and Patty Pautz and godmother Geraldine Shultz look on as Deacon Dan Hurley anoints the head of Mary Elizabeth Pautz during the infant’s baptism at St. Mary our Mother Church in Horseheads.

being called to a fuller and more active ministry in the church.”

After retiring from the state police in 1983, Deacon Bowers began working part time, then full time at the parish beginning in 1985. Although people had begun to suggest that he would make a good deacon, he put off applying for the program. “Coming out of a semi-military organization,” he explained, “I didn’t want to get involved in something that was structured.”

Through contact with deacons, however, he discovered that the diaconate is “opened,” and that the call to service “was a calling that made sense to me as a person.”

All three deacons acknowledged that entering the program forced some juggling of their lives and schedules. The course work, the monthly weekend sessions and the ministry placements, on top of work, family and parish involvements, forced the trio to find a sense of balance in their lives.

Both Deacon Morin, with six children

between the ages of 10 and 16, and Deacon Hurley, with two children born while he was in the program (and another due in July), were particularly hard pressed.

In trying to maintain a sense of balance in his life, Deacon Morin said he was forced to look at his life more realistically, and to establish priorities. Family came first, then his job, then the diaconate — a hierarchy of priorities he has tried to maintain. “I think I’m consciously trying to keep that balance and learning to say, ‘No,’ and not feel guilty about it,” he said.

The juggling also required the full support of their wives. Deacon Wilson said this support is vital both during the period of formation, and after ordination. “The wives of deacons participate in everything from support at home to enabling the deacon to go out and minister to working with their husbands in ministry,” he said. He pointed out that the wives are encouraged to participate in every aspect of the forma-

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