

**Crusaders crowned**  
Notre Dame High School enjoyed a stellar weekend, as both the boys' baseball and girls' softball teams claimed titles in Section 4, Class C. Pages 12-13.



# CATHOLIC COURIER

Diocese of Rochester Thursday, June 7, 1990 50¢ 20 pages

## Diaconate weathers 20 years of changes

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

When Deacon Paul McArdle was ordained a permanent deacon on May 24, 1970, he faced a problem no other permanent deacon in the United States has since confronted.

He was the first layman ordained to the permanent diaconate in this country.

"I was the first one, I was breaking new ground," said Deacon McArdle, who currently serves in the Diocese of Brownsville, Texas. "I was trying to figure out what a deacon was supposed to do."

Since that day in 1970, the number of permanent deacons active in the United States has grown to more than 9,000, with an additional 2,000 candidates in formation. Of the more than 180 dioceses and archdioceses in the country, 155 now have some form of a permanent deacon program.

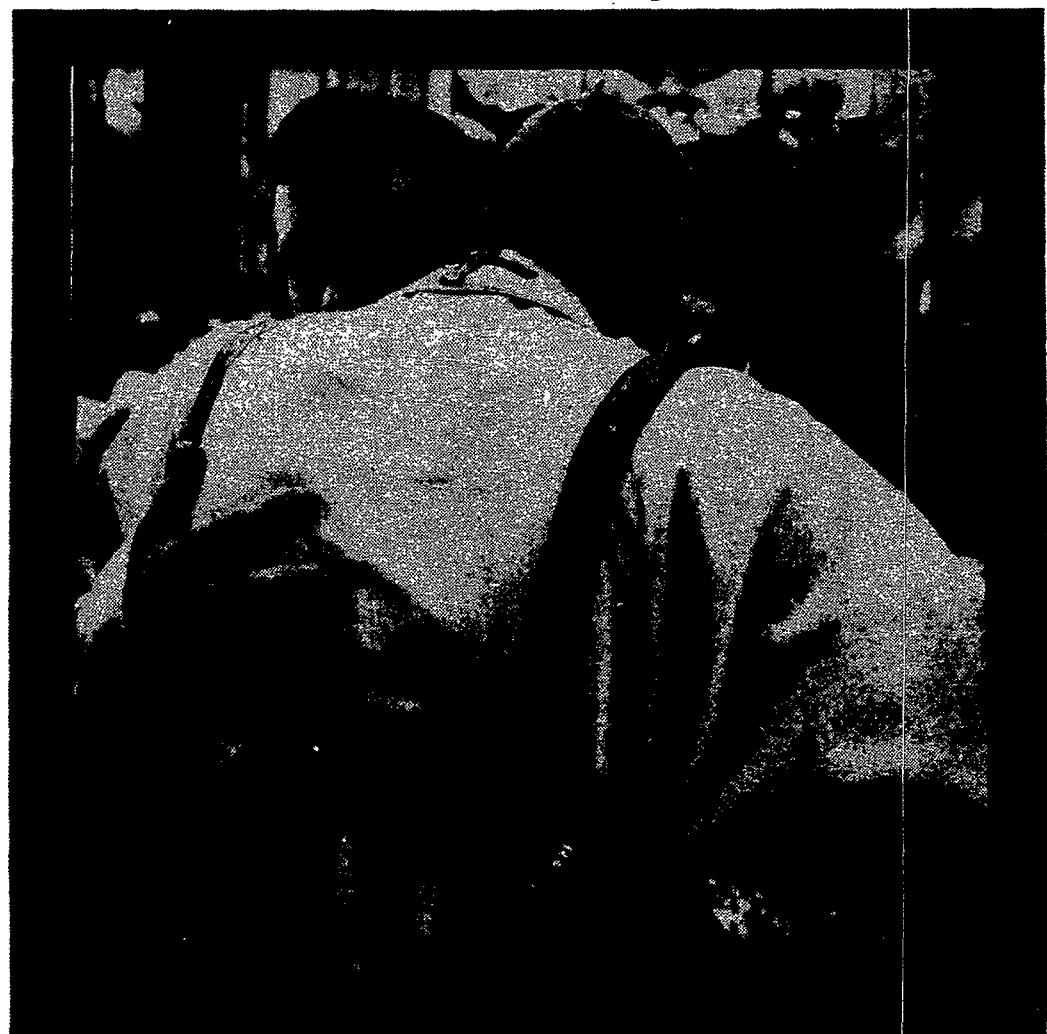
In the Diocese of Rochester, which ordained its first deacon class in 1982 and added nine new permanent deacons on June 2, 78 permanent deacons are now serving.

During the 20 years since Deacon McArdle's ordination, permanent deacons in this country have continued to discover and define just what they are "supposed to do."

Amid this process of discovery, the permanent diaconate has also been caught up in the currents affecting the U.S. Catholic Church, including declining numbers of priests, greater lay involvement in the church, and the call for women's ordination.

The latter issue was brought home in March of this year when Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen announced he would not form a new permanent deacon class in the Archdiocese of Seattle until the role of women in the church was more adequately addressed.

Despite such tensions and conflicts, however, the permanent diaconate in the United States is alive and healthy, pointed out Deacon Constantino Ferriola, executive director of the National Conference



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer  
**Deacon James Hankey and his wife, Dora, exchange the kiss of peace with Bishop Matthew H. Clark during the diaconal ordination June 2.**

of Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate. And deacons today have a much clearer idea of their role in the church than Deacon McArdle had when he was ordained.

"We started off in 1970 with no history, just a concept to start with," Deacon Ferriola observed. "I think there has been some very good maturing of our understanding of the permanent diaconate."

In the United States, deacons' ministry began primarily as liturgical, Deacon Ferriola said.

In the early days of U.S. diaconate pro-

grams, some deacons saw themselves as "mini priests" acknowledged Father Edward Salmon, director of the Archdiocese of Chicago's permanent deacon program. "They were very clerical," he noted.

The current emphasis is away from clericalism and the primacy of liturgical functions of the diaconate, Deacon Ferriola said. "The ministry of liturgy now takes its meaning from the ministry of service," he remarked.

Deacons' ministry of service includes caring for the sick, the elderly, and those in prison. These were, in fact, among the reasons the diaconate was first created in

the early days of the church.

This shifting of focus from liturgy to service over the years has lengthened formation programs to offer deacons more training, Deacon Ferriola noted. The curriculum includes not only courses on liturgy and Scripture, but also on interpersonal skills, basic counseling skills, and ministry to such groups as youths and the elderly.

Deacon Ferriola pointed out that the emphasis on the ministry of service includes the workplace. "We're focusing much more directly on what happens from Monday to Saturday," he said.

That particular understanding of the permanent diaconate resonates with Deacon Al Wilson, who directed Rochester's program from 1985-89.

"The deacon is an ordained person, but because he works in the secular world, people see him as a bridge between the priest and lay people," Deacon Wilson said.

"I have found there's a tremendous amount of ministry needed in the workplace," he observed. "People are hurting. Many of them would not go into a rectory or a church to talk to someone, but they know I'm a deacon, and they sometimes talk to me about their problems."

At the same time, the permanent deacon — through his multiple roles as husband, father, secular worker and ordained minister — can bring to the church insights that a priest might not be able to provide, particularly as a preacher, noted Deacon Stephen Graff, currently the director of Rochester's permanent deacon program.

"A deacon whose primary ministry would be working with street people may be living and serving a parish anywhere," Deacon Graff explained. "But part of the way the deacon interprets Scriptures would (come) out of working with the street people."

Deacon Graff pointed out that in the selection process for deacons today, the service aspect of the candidates' lives is given even greater weight. "We are look-

Continued on page 7

## Spouses urged to serve with deacons

By Leslie A. Baynes  
Frederick writer

Barbara Carroll still recalls a priest's words to her husband, Steve, after he was ordained to the Diocese of Rochester's first class of permanent deacons in 1982.

"Now you have a better vocation," the priest said. "That statement hurt," recalled Barbara Carroll. "We thought our marriage was our first vocation — and we still do."

Nevertheless, the wives of most newly ordained and incardinated deacons agree that the process leading up to their husbands' ordinations has served to strengthen their existing vocations to married life.

"We have a much greater sensitivity to each other," observed Julianne Palma, whose husband, David, was ordained in this year's deacon class June 2.

"We're both very much individuals," Julianne Palma said. Yet "the program has taught us that our relationship is more important than our individual successes. We work well as a team; neither one of us would have done as well in the academic (course work) without each other."

The wives of deacon candidates are encouraged to take part in their husbands' studies, although neither husband nor wife is required to earn a master's degree. Several deacons' wives — including Julianne Palma — have gone on to earn master's degrees from St. Bernard's Institute.

The time demands of diaconal training can put a strain on the family routine, the wives observed.

Dora Hankey of Ithaca, whose husband, James, was ordained at Sacred Heart Cathedral on June 2, also received a master's degree from SBI in May. "The kids missed out on the normal relaxation of family life," she said of her sons, aged 17 and 12. "We were gone one night a week and studying much of the rest of the time. But Eric and Michael had to mature, and they got much closer to one another."

Family circumstances prevent other women from participating in their husbands' diaconal preparation to any great degree. "There was no way we could both go," remarked Priscilla DiLallo of Union Springs. DiLallo sporadically attended classes with her husband, Gary, while caring for their three children, aged 11, eight and six.

Conflicting emotions concerning the role of women in the church can provide another strain for couples in diaconal formation.

"The number-one question people ask me is what am I going to do with my degree," Hankey said. "The second is 'Now that you're about to be ordained. This comes from both Catholics and non-Catholics. I have to explain to them that I am not being ordained.'"

"It never really bothered me before that I couldn't (be ordained) because I don't feel called," Hankey continued. "But I do empathize with women who do



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer  
**Deacon Paul F. Clement and his wife, Barbara, reflect on the recessional hymn 'Lord, You Give the Great Commission.'**

and I admire them for sticking with the church. One thing I can do is empower women who want a degree in theology to go for it. Women can't be ordained now, but changes come from the people."

Palma said she also had struggled with the issue of women's ordination. "When we first started in the program, I felt the hurt very strongly. But my understanding of myself has matured, and I don't feel called now. However, I've become even more convinced that other women should be ordained. The

Continued on page 7