

Deacon set to join 'ranks' of diocesan priests

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ELMIRA — Confirmation traditionally has been described as the sacrament that makes one a "soldier of Christ."

In the case of Deacon Michael J. Volino, the sacrament helped to recruit him to a specific rank in the Lord's "army."

On June 13, Deacon Volino will become a priest during a 10:30 a.m. ceremony at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park, Rochester.

Deacon Volino is one of three men Bishop Matthew H. Clark will ordain to the priesthood this year.

The other two — who will be ordained together at the cathedral Aug. 15 — are Deacons Brian Jeffers and John B. Huber. Deacon Jeffers will become a diocesan priest, and Deacon Huber will be ordained for the Basilian order.

But on June 13, the focus will be solely on Deacon Volino, who traces his path to ordination back to confirmation at Elmira's St. Anthony's Parish.

"My godfather, John DiStefano, started me thinking a lot about my faith," Deacon Volino recalled. "He got me to read the Bible."

DiStefano also introduced his godson to the Charismatic renewal. Although he did not become active in the movement, the deacon did attend some meetings. He said those meetings helped him focus more closely on his faith — and to see more facets of the faith than he had known as a child.

"I come from a very traditional Italian upbringing, a very traditional parish," Deacon Volino explained. "The stress (during my childhood) was always more on the traditional veneration of the saints and devotion to the Blessed Mother and the Eucharist."

His close-knit family instilled in him a sense of faith, the deacon noted. The family went to church together, said the stations together, attended devotions together. The Volino home was decorated with pictures of the Blessed Mother and the saints.

"The Catholic faith has always been held in high regard in my home," he observed.

Still, during his high-school years, the priesthood had to compete against another vocation. Volino was noted among his peers as an artist, and in particular, as a caricaturist.



Bishop Matthew H. Clark is scheduled to ordain Deacon Michael J. Volino to the priesthood at Sacred Heart Cathedral June 13.

Some of Deacon Volino's political cartoons were even published in local newspapers, and he considered a possible career as a cartoonist. "But I was not sure it was what I wanted to do with my life," he recalled.

After graduation from high school, he was still uncertain about his vocation and enrolled at Corning Community College. At the same time, he joined the Affiliate Program offered by the Diocese of Rochester for college-age men considering the priesthood.

After graduating from the community college, Deacon Volino enrolled at St. John Fisher College with the idea of eventually entering Becket Hall — the residential vocation program then located at the college.

But shortly after arriving at the Rochester campus, he was hospitalized for Crohn's disease, a chronic inflammation of the digestive system that had plagued him for years.

Looking back at that time, Deacon Volino said that it was difficult for him to leave school, but that it has helped him in the long run.

"I recall in my seminary training going into hospitals and knowing how the people in the beds felt," he said. "I think it strengthened my faith, and it helped me to think about Christ."

Once out of the hospital, Deacon Volino enrolled as a part-time student at Elmira College, earning a degree in

philosophy and theology in 1986. He continued his involvement with the Affiliate Program and, in the fall of 1986, entered the Becket Hall program, which had moved to St. Boniface Parish, 330 Gregory St.

After the year at Becket Hall, the deacon studied at the Theological College at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. During his seminary years, he undertook a summer internship at St. Pius X in Chili in 1988; did his clinical pastoral education at Binghamton's Lourdes Hospital in the summer of 1989; and served his pastoral internship year at St. Catherine's in Mendon from 1990 to 1991.

Bishop Clark ordained him to the transitional diaconate on June 1, 1991, at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Looking ahead to his priestly ministry, Deacon Volino noted that he especially would like to work with youths.

"I would like to help the youth see they are a part of the church," Deacon Volino said. "I want to try to get young people to be active. I think being involved with them may help to get more vocations."

He has already seen the effect of examples — not only on his own vocation, but also on the young people with whom he has worked.

"Kids would always ask me, 'You're going to be a priest?'" said the deacon, who has coached Little League baseball in Elmira for many years. "Just my being there, just my talking to them about it, that was a way of setting an example."

Deacon Volino is so conscious of the power of example that he has chosen for one of his ordination cards a depiction of St. Anthony of Padua with the quotation from the saint: "Let your words teach and your actions speak."

"That's what I hope to do," Deacon Volino concluded.

Bishop Clark ordains 13 deacons in Sacred Heart Cathedral liturgy

ROCHESTER — Bishop Matthew H. Clark ordained 13 transitional and permanent deacons during a May 30 service at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park.

Three of the six transitional deacons were ordained for the service in the Diocese of Rochester. They are Lance M. Gonyo of St. John the Evangelist, Greece; Lee P. Chase of St. Anthony's, Rochester; and Brian C. Cool of St. Mary's Auburn.

The other three transitional deacons — Richard A. Barker, John B. Huber and Kevin J. Storey — were ordained for service in the Congregation of St. Basil (the Basilian Fathers).

The seven permanent deacons ordained were: Thomas C. Cass of

St. Michael's, Newark; John C. Curtin of St. Michael's, Penn Yan; Gerald Hoerner of St. Pius V, Cohocton; David L. Paluskiewicz of Blessed Sacrament, Rochester; Gregory R. Sampson of St. Thomas the Apostle, Rochester; Daniel Patrick Slattery of St. Joseph's, Wayland; and Edward A. Smith of St. Dominic's, Shortsville.

Of the transitional deacons, Gonyo, Chase and Cool will continue their studies for the priesthood at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore.

Bishop Clark will ordain Huber — and fellow diocesan seminarian Brian E. Jeffers — to the priesthood on August 15.

Barker and Storey will be ordained by bishops in Houston and Toronto, respectively.

Kids' Chronicle Answer Key

S	T	A	M	A	R	T	U	V	E	M	K	O	P	S	T
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