

# Vocations

## Deacons

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be present, however, "we are not intended to be mini-priests or a backfill for priestly ministry."

Deacon Graff said that some of the discussion of permanent deacons substituting for priests is actually "an insult to priests."

"Most of what priests do is not perform sacraments," Deacon Graff contended. "They are a living presence in the community."

Moreover, there are practical limits to permanent deacons' availability.

The majority of deacons have non-ministerial jobs — like Deacon Coccia — thus their deacon ministry is carried out on top of their regular work and family responsibilities. Deacon Cass estimated the typical deacon spends 10 to 15 hours per week in deacon ministry. Those hours are

spent in a combination of unpaid service jobs and parish liturgical ministries.

Deacon Coccia, for example, spends six to eight hours a week working with St. Francis House alone. Much of that work consists in picking up, storing and delivering goods. The garage of his Gates home is full of materials — as is a storage unit donated by Scottsville Storage.

He distributes the materials through established social service agencies or fellow deacons.

In addition, he spends several hours as parish minister at Rochester's Holy Family Parish. And he is married with two children.

It's a lot of work, he acknowledged, but, "It gives you spiritual satisfaction." And although lay people can perform some of the tasks he does, Deacon Coccia pointed out that the diaconate brings with it a sense of commitment.

"It brings a tremendous value to me of its importance to know that I'm respon-

sible and I can't take it for granted," he said.

Deacon Kiley, meanwhile, finds himself involved with three parishes above and beyond his full-time jail ministry jail.

He serves as parish deacon in his home parish, St. John the Evangelist, Clyde. Since June 1997, he has also been preaching at St. Patrick's, Moravia, and St. Bernard's, Scipio Center, two parishes in transition after the retirement of their pastor.

Despite the added load, he enjoys the opportunities.

"Each one of the ministry opportunities is almost embarrassingly rewarding," Deacon Kiley commented.

He also recognizes that because of the priest shortage, deacons might be called into increasing parish ministry. But he sees that as just part of the deacons' ministry.

"If we are dealing with people who are falling into the gaps, the gaps vary from age to age," he observed. "One of the gaps may be at the parish level."

Deacon Cass pointed out that the Vatican is currently preparing a document on the diaconate, and indications are that it emphasizes the deacon's role of service.

Likewise, Deacon Graff said that the document will apparently also emphasize the deacon's role in promoting social issues in the church — something the Diocese of Rochester program already does.

Thus, both acknowledged, the document is unlikely to require any major changes in this diocese.

One possible source of change for Rochester deacons may come through the strategic planning process the diocese is undergoing to assess ministerial needs, Deacon Cass conceded.

But he does not anticipate major changes even there.

"I think the leadership in the diocese is intent on keeping faithful to that original purpose of service," he concluded.

## Br. Robeson enters order

Brother Robert Robeson, the son of Daniel C. and Ruthanne Robeson of St. Mary's Parish, Canandaigua, is in the midst of his postulant year with the Third Order Regular of St. Francis of Penance, Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.


Brother Robeson entered the congregation's postulant program at St. Elizabeth Friary, Loretto, Pa., in August 1997 with seven other men. He will remain at the friary for approximately one year as a postulant and one year as a novice before beginning four years of major seminary studies.

As a postulant, Brother Robeson will study Franciscan devotional practices, as well as engage in ministry to the elderly, children and the poor, and to students at Loretto's St. Francis College.

He is also completing his dissertation for a doctorate in education from the University of Indiana, Bloomington.

Brother Robeson moved with his family around the country before they settled in Pittsford when he was in eighth grade. He graduated from Pittsford-Mendon High School while attending St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Mendon.


He holds a bachelor's degree in history from Washington University in St. Louis, Mo., and a master's degree in education from the University of North Carolina. He served as assistant dean of students at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa., for five years, then began his doctoral studies at the University of Indiana in 1994.



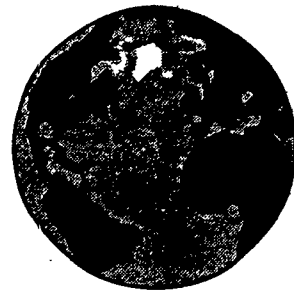
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