

Priests' ordination set for June 6 at cathedral

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will ordain three men to the priesthood at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Saturday, June 6, at 10:30 a.m.

The three men are all transitional deacons: Michael A. Mayer, 44; Timothy L. Niven, 36; and Eric C. Phillips, 28.

Deacon Mayer grew up attending St. Rita's Church in Webster, and St. Anne in Rochester. A 1971 graduate of McQuaid Jesuit High School, Deacon Mayer earned a bachelor's degree in English from LeMoyn College, Syracuse, in 1975, and joined the Paulist order in 1976.

Ordained as a deacon in the order, Deacon Mayer left the Paulists in 1982 and was laicized. He then pursued a high school teaching career in Washington, D.C., and later served as director of programs for the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

Deacon Mayer said he began reconsidering becoming a priest in the early 1990s.

"I was rethinking my vocation, and kept having a sense that God was calling me ... to the priesthood," he said.

He added that he decided to become a diocesan priest, in part, because he grew up in the Rochester area.

"I like the people up here, and I like the area," he said. "I'm comfortable here."

As part of his training for the priesthood, Deacon Mayer did pastoral work in 1996 and again in 1997 at Guardian Angels Church, Henrietta. While there, he helped organize programs for hospital visitors and eucharistic visitors, as well as a baptismal preparation program, he said. In May, Deacon Mayer received a doctor of ministry degree from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Following ordination, he will be a priest-intern at St. Pius the Tenth Church in Chili. In addition to his priestly duties, Deacon Mayer will continue to run a computer graphic design business he co-owns that makes religious notecards, as well as work on a Caribbean musical, he said.

Deacon Niven, the son of the late Frank and Eileen Niven, grew up attending St. Charles Borromeo Church in Greece. A 1980 graduate of Cardinal Mooney High School, Deacon Niven earned a bachelor's degree in physics at the State University of New York College at Geneseo.

After college, he worked in a Catholic rural mission in Pennsylvania for one year before teaching high school physics in Buffalo in the latter half of the 1980s. He also worked in youth ministry at a Williamsville parish. In 1991, he said, he decided he wanted to become a priest.

"I think as I got to know myself better and my gifts and talents, and as I got to

know the priesthood, the two just seemed to come together," he said. "If you look at (the priesthood) from a financial point of view, you don't make a ton of money, but there's a lot of advantages as well. It's more than a job. It's kind of who I am, or who I will be. It's taking all of who I am and putting it in service to God."

In the early 1990s, Deacon Niven studied philosophy at various Buffalo area colleges before beginning his training for the priesthood in 1993. While training, he spent his pastoral year at Most Precious Blood Church, Greece, from 1995 to 1996.

In May of this year, Deacon Niven received a master of divinity degree from Catholic University. Following ordination, he will be a priest-intern at the churches of St. John the Evangelist in Newark Valley; its mission, St. Francis of Assisi in Cata-tonk; and at St. Patrick's in Owego.

Deacon Phillips recently returned from Rome, Italy, where he is pursuing a license in sacred theology from Pontifical Angelicum University. He said he hopes to complete his studies next year.

The son of Anthony and Betty Ann Phillips of Fairport, Deacon Phillips grew up attending Church of the Assumption. A 1987 graduate of Fairport High School, Deacon Phillips has earned a bachelor's degree in math from Nazareth College, Rochester, as well as a bachelor's degree in sacred theology from Pontifical Angelicum University.

Deacon Phillips said he first thought of becoming a priest in high school, and made up his mind to become one in 1991, the same year he led a youth group at St. John of Rochester Church in Fairport.

"What got me into it was the thought of touching people's lives one-on-one," he said of the priesthood. He added that the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of reconciliation, will give him the opportunity to aid people on a personal basis.

"I find (the sacrament) to be a very powerful moment in my own life, and I have a great desire to share it with others," he said.

Deacon Phillips spent his pastoral year from 1995 to 1996 at the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community, which encompasses the churches of St. Mary's, St. Patrick's and St. Vincent de Paul's in Corning as well as Immaculate Heart of Mary in Painted Post. Following ordination, he will serve as a priest-intern at Sacred Heart Cathedral before returning to Rome this fall.

After completing his studies, Deacon Phillips said he would like to work in a diocesan parish.

"The parish is where the average Catholic Christian experiences God most frequently ...," he said. "That attracts me."



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Bishop ordains deacons

Diocese of Rochester Bishop Matthew H. Clark lays hands on Deacon Thomas Jewell of St. Helen's Church, Gates, one of five deacons ordained May 30 at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Rochester. Deacons Jewell, George S. Kozak of Immaculate Conception Church, Ithaca, Edward Mathis of St. Agnes Church, Avon, and Anthony J. Sciolino of Church of the Transfiguration, Pittsford, were ordained permanent deacons. Deacon Steve Lape of St. Theodore's Church, Gates, was ordained a transitional deacon in anticipation of his ordination to the diocesan priesthood in 1999. The bishop will ordain three priests June 6 at Sacred Heart.

Catholic Charities office expands

ITHACA — Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier officials say their agencies' Tompkins County office was designed not to exist as a separate entity, but to work in conjunction with existing churches and outreach agencies.

"We're very, very excited about the interaction and collaboration by the faith communities in the Ithaca area — and not just the Catholic parishes," said Anthony Barbaro, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier.

According to Paul Hesler, director of the Tompkins office, a \$50,000 grant from a private donor will enable Catholic Charities to greatly expand its collaborative efforts during the next few months. Allocation of the grant money will begin this summer and is expected to total \$120,000 over a three-year period.

The Catholic Charities office is located at 121 E. Buffalo St. in downtown Ithaca. It opened July 14, 1997, and has gradually laid the groundwork for the initiatives that

are due to begin shortly.

Later this year, Catholic Charities plans to establish a direct partnership with such agencies as the Red Cross and Economic Opportunity Corporation to form a comprehensive emergency services program.

In addition, Hesler said that his office hopes to hire a part-time justice and peace coordinator for the Tompkins area by this summer. Catholic Charities also plans to form a satellite office in Dryden — about 10 miles east of Ithaca — to serve the rural population of Tompkins County.

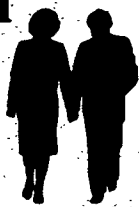
Barbaro noted that the Ithaca Catholic Charities office plans to expand its hours to be accessible on evenings and weekends, when emergency service coverage at other agencies isn't as plentiful.

Funding to open the Ithaca branch, as well as a similar office in Bath, Steuben County, was derived from Catholic Charities' Nellie Monroe Fund, which was established in 1996.

— Mike Latona

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