

Deacons Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Ordination

Deacon Philip Carney

On September 2, 1995, Bill Gervais, John Ezard, Bill Heasley, Ralph O'Brien, and Keith Dorschner were ordained by Archbishop Francis Spence to the Permanent Diaconate for the Archdiocese of Kingston. As they celebrate their 25th anniversary of ordination, we offer sincere congratulations to Deacon Gervais and his wife, Ellen; Deacon Ezard and his wife, Jocelyn; Deacon Heasley and his wife, Dorothy; and Deacon O'Brien and his wife, Elaine. Deacon Dorschner passed away in 2014, and we also remember him and his wife, Christine, at this time.

These deacons and their wives were the first to complete all of their formation in the Archdiocese of Kingston's Permanent Diaconate Program. Before that program was established in Kingston, Terry Lynch, Bob McDonald, and I were given permission by Archbishop Spence to enrol in the formation program offered by Wadhams Hall in Ogdensburg, New York. Terry Lynch and I were ordained to the Diaconate by Archbishop Spence in 1993. After his wife passed away, Terry Lynch entered the seminary and became a priest. Bob McDonald was ordained to the Diaconate in the Diocese of Pembroke.

The Archdiocese of Kingston's Permanent Diaconate Program was first conceived in 1985, in discussions at the Advisory Board of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. Six years later, in 1991, the first candidates were accepted, and classes began that same year. Monsignor Don Clement was the first Director of the program, and Sister Theresa Shannon was its first Coordinator. For many years, Sister Shannon shepherded her little flock through their training, including prayer, classes, and homework. It is fair to say that, as their avid supporter and valued taskmaster, Sister Shannon holds a special place in the hearts of all of the candidates she guided through the program.

The wives of the deacon candidates are included in the program, and are encouraged to attend all of the formation sessions. In Kingston, the Permanent Diaconate Program has benefited greatly from the support of spouses and from their participation in liturgies, sacramental preparation, and their lived witness to the gospel. What is "lived witness"? It is a response to the call that all of us share as baptized followers of Jesus. The difference for deacons is that this living out is made permanent, public, and committed through ordination. Spouses are integral to that witness, and, as we celebrate the deacons who are marking this special anniversary of ordination, we express our gratitude to their spouses for twenty-five years of dedicated contribution to the life of the Catholic Christian community in the Archdiocese of Kingston.



Let's look at the deacons themselves, beginning with **Deacon Bill Gervais**, who has been serving as Director of the Permanent Diaconate Program since 2005. Deacon Gervais is a retired York Regional Police officer and teacher at Loyalist College. He and his wife, Ellen, live in Kingston and have two children and five grandchildren. After ordination, Deacon Gervais was assigned to St. Gregory Parish in Picton, where he and his family were then residing. Following their move to Kingston in 2008, he served as deacon at St. Mary's Cathedral before being assigned in 2013 to Blessed Sacrament Parish in Amherstview. He served as Director of Pastoral Care at Hotel Dieu Hospital from 2007 to 2013, and, for the past seven years, he has been the Archbishop's Delegate for Professional Standards. As Director of the Permanent Diaconate Program and Coordinator of Formation for Deacon Candidates, Deacon Gervais oversees the selection process for new candidates and has evolved the training program itself through relationships with St. Francis Xavier University and Notre Dame University.



Deacon John Ezard and his wife, Jocelyn, have three children and live in Kingston. In 1985, John was involved in the initial discussions of the Diocesan Pastoral Council Advisory Board to establish the Permanent Diaconate in Kingston, and, when the program was approved, he found himself on the implementation committee. In 1991, when the Program began to recruit candidates, John was asked if he would like to apply. He had had a full career in the military, and, at the time he entered the program, was working in human resources for the provincial Ministry of Health. After he was ordained in 1995, he was assigned to Blessed Sacrament Parish in Amherstview. In 2005, he was appointed Coordinator of Continuing Formation and served in that capacity until 2011. He was assigned to Holy Family Parish in 1999, and remained there until his retirement in 2016.



Deacon Bill Heasley and his wife, Dorothy, have six children, and live in Brockville. Bill spent his career with Brockville's wire and cable manufacturer, Phillips Cables. After ordination to the Permanent Diaconate, Deacon Heasley was appointed to his home parish of St. John Bosco. He was very active in parish and community ministry, notably in palliative care. With Deacon Hank Gray, he founded the Loaves and Fishes Restaurant in Brockville and served on its Board of Directors for 18 years. Deacon Heasley retired from Diaconate Ministry in 2010.



Deacon Ralph O'Brien and his wife, Elaine, also live in Brockville and have three children. Ralph served as an OPP officer and teacher for nine years before joining the federal government, where he worked for Revenue Canada as a customs officer and adjudicator. At the time they entered the formation program, Ralph and Elaine were living in Morrisburg. After ordination, Deacon O'Brien was assigned to St. Mary's Parish, Morrisburg, and St. Cecilia's, Iroquois. After the family's move to Brockville, he was assigned to St. John Bosco Parish, where he remained until his retirement from pastoral ministry in 2013.

Congratulations to all of you – you are a blessing to the people of the Archdiocese of Kingston.

