

Baltimore Archdiocese welcomes six new deacons

There was standing room only as Archbishop William E. Lori ordained six men as deacons May 26 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore.

Matthew DeFusco, Justin Gough, Matthew Himes, Robert Katafiasz and Tyler Kline were ordained as transitional deacons, and are on track to be ordained to the priesthood next year.

Daniel Michaud was ordained as a permanent deacon, with his family watching from the first pew.

“I woke up this morning with the greatest sense of peace,” Deacon Michaud said after his ordination. “That’s the only thing that can describe this feeling right now. I feel I’m in the right place, and my heart is just filled.”

His wife, Gabrielle, and their four children shared in Deacon Michaud’s joy.

“I was not shocked at all when he told me he wanted to be a deacon,” Gabrielle Michaud said, adding that she and her husband are on the same page in putting their faith first. “We are very thrilled to be able to share our faith with each other and with our family.”

In the Catholic Church, the diaconate is the first of three ranks in ordained ministry, according the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Deacons preparing for the priesthood are transitional deacons. Those not planning to be ordained priests are called permanent deacons. Married men may be ordained permanent deacons,

and single men may be ordained with a commitment to celibacy, according to the USCCB.

Deacons are members of the clergy whose duties include proclaiming the Gospel at Mass and preaching homilies. They also administer the sacrament of baptism and witness marriages. Deacons may preside at rites of Christian burial, at eucharistic exposition and benediction, the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and other liturgical rites. Deacons also minister in a variety of roles within parishes, charitable agencies, hospitals, prisons and elsewhere.

In his [homily](#), Archbishop Lori discussed how any leader needs good coworkers to help lead a flock.

“Today, the Lord in his goodness is providing such coworkers,” the archbishop said. “As deacons, you are called to impart the word of God on others.”

The archbishop encouraged the new deacons to practice their ministry “with a fidelity, love and humility that shows us the face of Christ, the splendor of the father and our good and gentle shepherd.”

He also used the occasion as the perfect opportunity to call upon the faithful for more prayers for vocations.

As the diaconate candidates prostrated themselves before the altar, the congregation chanted the litany of saints. Then, Archbishop Lori conferred the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the candidates by the laying on of his hands.

“It was a really joyful experience,” Deacon Himes said of his ordination. “It was an overwhelming sense of joy and peace that really touched my life in a deep way through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was with me.”

The prayer of ordination concluded the sacrament of holy orders, and the archbishop asked God to dedicate the new deacons to the service of the church.

“It’s such a joyful day,” said Deacon Gough. “I’m totally excited to begin ministry as a deacon in the archdiocese and I’m ready and willing to serve the people of God.”

Story continues following photo slideshow below

The newly ordained deacons were ceremoniously vested by deacons and priests of their choosing.

It was all in the family for Deacon DeFusco, who was vested with his stole and dalmatic by his brother, Father Andrew DeFusco, who is associate pastor at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland.

Deacon DeFusco said he is humbled to take on his new ministry as deacon, and that it is bigger than just one man alone.

“I trust in God that he’ll give me his spirit and inspire me to do his will and be a father for others, for his flock,” Deacon DeFusco said.

The other deacons chose deacons and priests who were instrumental in the formation of their vocations to do the honors of vesting. Deacon Kline chose Monsignor Richard Hilgartner, pastor of St. Joseph in Cockeysville.

“As Tyler’s pastoral year internship supervisor, I had some small role in supporting his formation and leading him to the diaconate,” Monsignor Hilgartner said. “I am honored that he would invite me to symbolize that as I vest him in the sign of the office. In a way, it is like passing on the call to service, and it is a joy to welcome him to the sacrament of holy orders.”

After his ordination, Deacon Kline shared his thoughts on the sacrament: “We are worthy because of God’s help, because of God’s grace, because of the gift he has given us. ... It’s such a beautiful day to celebrate that and to offer that over to the Lord.”

The newly ordained deacons received family and friends at various locations, and were overwhelmed by the events of the day.

“I just got ordained less than two hours ago, and I served as the deacon of the Eucharist, which was awesome. I was a little deer in the headlights up there, but I have my first preaching at my home parish tomorrow,” said Deacon Katafiasz, who comes from St. Jane Frances de Chantal in Pasadena. “It’s a great gift in the Lord to have me as his deacon and, God willing, soon as a priest.”

Deacon Katafiasz’ father, who said his son’s ordination was a long time coming, summed up his feelings of the day in one word: “relieved.”

Parents were not the only family members who were emotional watching the ordination.

“I’ve never seen him happier,” said Rebecca Himes, who is four years younger than her brother, Deacon Himes. “He’s such a good example to everyone that he comes in contact with. Seeing him so happy means he’s following the right call.”

[Click here](#) for biographical sketches of the new deacons.

For more photos, visit our Smugmug gallery [here](#).

Email Emily Rosenthal at erosenthal@CatholicReview.org