

Baltimore's Deacon Rapisarda and other widowers among 2010 ordinands

WASHINGTON - A former NASA engineer, a PlayStation video game developer and widowed deacons are among the 440 men in the ordination class of 2010.

The average age of the men who will be ordained in June is 37, according to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University. More than half are between the ages of 25 and 34, and 11 of them are age 65 or older.

The center conducted a national survey of ordinands for the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The study was based on 339 responses or 77 percent of this year's ordination class. Of those who responded, 291 will become diocesan priests and 48 will be religious order priests.

A news release from the USCCB reported on results of the survey and highlighted some of the men who will become priests this year.

Paul Kubista of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis worked on the PlayStation 3 processor at IBM before entering the seminary. Roy Runkle of the Diocese of Birmingham, Ala., was an aerospace engineer with NASA for 38 years.

Gregory A. Rapisarda of the Archdiocese of Baltimore is a widowed deacon with four children, one of whom is a priest. After his ordination, he and his son will be the first father-son priests to serve in the archdiocese since its founding.

Rapisarda is an older member of the ordination class, but he is not the only widowed deacon in the group. Others are James Reinhart of the Archdiocese of Louisville, Ky., who has been a deacon for 27 years and is a father and grandfather, and D. Mark Hamlet of Austin, Texas, a deacon for 15 years, who was married for 37 years and has six children and 11 grandchildren.

Joseph Cretella, 71, who is being ordained by the Archdiocese of Hartford, Conn., has had a long road to the priesthood. He entered the seminary after high school, left after seven years, volunteered in the Peace Corps for two years, was married for 40 years and now has three children and seven grandchildren. His wife died three years ago and he re-entered the seminary in 2008.

With the permanent diaconate in place for several decades now, the church is seeing a growing number of priests with deacon fathers, according to the USCCB. More than one-third of the new priests have a relative who is a priest or a religious.

In the Diocese of Grand Island, Neb., Jerry Wetovick practiced dentistry for 45 years, and Joshua Brown was a firefighter for six years before pursuing the priesthood. In the Diocese of Paterson, N.J., Amadito Flores was a sheriff's officer before entering the seminary, and Benjamin Williams served as an officer in the U.S. Air Force for 20 years.

Nearly one-third of new priests this year were born outside the United States. Lutakome Nsubuga, who is being ordained for the Diocese of Spokane, Wash., traces his vocation back to his native Uganda, where he said his family sacrificed to send him to Catholic boarding schools.

Thien Nguyen, being ordained by the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa, was born in Vietnam and studied economics at the post-graduate level before switching to seminary studies and then coming to the United States.

Other ordinands with unique backgrounds include Andrew Budzinski of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., who represented his alma mater, the University of Notre Dame, as its leprechaun mascot, before pursuing a career in radio. Richard Daise of the Diocese of Salina, Kan., attended a one-room schoolhouse for eight years of elementary school.

David Price of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, Colo., was not a Catholic when he felt the call to become a Catholic priest. Others said they had left the church temporarily, such as Matthew Book of the Archdiocese of Denver. He dropped out of his high school confirmation program and didn't return to his faith until he was 24. James Arwady of Detroit describes himself as a "re-vert" to the Catholic faith.

The entire report can be found at www.usccb.org/vocations/classof2010 or www.ForYourVocation.org.