

‘Servant’s heart:’ At 35,000 feet or on the ground, deacon soars in ministry

Whether he is in a church or an airplane, permanent Deacon Daniel Michaud loves to serve God’s people.

In addition to his ministry at Our Lady of Victory in Arbutus, he has the opportunity to encounter 300 to 500 people a day as a flight attendant for Southwest Airlines, and he aims to make them all positive experiences.

“It’s seamless between working as a deacon and working as a flight attendant,” Deacon Michaud said. “In both places ... I’m serving God’s people. I’m able to call them God’s people in church, maybe not necessarily on the airplane, but ... they’re the same people.”

As a flight attendant, he said, he is able to witness to his faith and be the person God intended him to be.

“I think that’s what I love about my job – I get to be me,” said Deacon Michaud, a 20-year veteran of the company. “I get to share God with other people in a way that it’s not preaching God, but it’s showing God.”

Deacon Michaud was ordained in May 2018, and he is no stranger to the church. A native of Massachusetts, he spent two years in seminary discerning the priesthood in the early 1990s and time as a youth minister at St. Bartholomew in Manchester in the mid-1990s.

He met his wife, Gabrielle, in 1994 at St. Matthew in Northwood. Deacon Michaud proposed the following year in the same church, and the couple was married there in 1996. Their family now includes Jet, 18; Hawker, 16; and twins Alize and Piper, 14. All happen to be aircraft industry names.

The couple designed their own wedding bands – made from the melted down bands

that belonged to the deacon's godparents. The rings – which include symbols of Christianity, such as a cross, fish and grapevine – serve as a conversation starter on the airplane.

“It had to represent us and our faith,” Deacon Michaud said. “People see it – it's just one way that you start conversation.”

Deacon Michaud has encountered bishops and priests on his flights, friends from ministry, engaged couples and people from all different walks of life, and he never misses an opportunity to chat and share.

“It's almost like being a bartender,” he said. “They just lay it all out there.”

His jobs complement each other – he once used his Southwest training when a man was injured at his parish – and said situations on the airplane supply ideas and analogies for homilies.

“It's been more about the power of the spirit working through things,” Deacon Michaud said in reference to his life after ordination. “It's nothing different about me as far as gifts or talents, but the spirit that was ... instilled upon me during ordination has made a difference.”

Being among the people, he said, is what being a permanent deacon is all about.

“It's more than just being at church,” he said. “It's trying to be that witness every day, like the disciples.”

It is evident that Deacon Michaud treasures his callings.

“There's not separation in who I am between church and work,” he said. “I think that's part of why God called me: that I could be who I am at work, preaching in a different way.

“I'm able to go to work and still be Deacon Dan in a sense. ... I can still treat people with respect; I can still see the good in people.”

Working for a company that values its customers, Deacon Michaud said, has allowed him to be himself.

“They (Southwest) call it ‘servant’s heart,’ ” he said. “Servant’s heart in church is no different than my servant’s heart at work.”

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