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Pensacola-Tallahassee Edition front page story

Nine ordained to the permanent diaconate

By Peggy DeKeyser, Pensacola

Defying wind, rain and the uncertainty of when and where Tropical Storm Arlene would hit, nine men came to the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, along with family and friends in the hundreds, to be ordained to the permanent diaconate for the diocese.

Not to be outdone by the storm, the men, who had prepared for the day for five years, assembled in the dark, hot church. An early burst of wind from the storm had disrupted electricity to the East Hill neighborhood. Power was restored just 10 minutes before the Mass began. In his opening greeting to the assembly, Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ, praised cathedral parishioner Rick Sanchez for having restored the light and cooling to the church.

The newly ordained deacons are:

- Deacon John Durkin, 53, who has been married to his wife, Cricket, for 31 years, is a graduate of Marshall University and a retired Navy aviator who now works as a contractor. Deacon Durkin, a native of Huntington, W.V., has been assigned to serve at the



TFC PHOTOS BY PEGGY DEKEYSER

Braving wind and rain, nine men were ordained to the permanent diaconate June 11.

Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Parish.

- Deacon Charles Louis (Lou) Feté, 46, married to Rita for 18 years, holds a bachelor's degree from the University of West Florida and a master's from the University of Kansas. Deacon Feté served in the Navy and has worked in social services for Father Flanagan's Boys' Town, in Maine and in Florida. A native of Belton, Md., he will serve at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Tallahassee.
- Deacon Paul D. Graaff, 51, has been married to his wife, Louise, for 13 years. He is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy with a degree in aerospace engineering. After spending 28 years as a Navy pilot, Deacon Graaff retired from the reserves in 2005 and now works in construction. Born in Kirkland, W. Va., Deacon Graaff will serve at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.
- Deacon Richard Lewis Lurton, 58, and his wife, Betty Ann, have been married for 35 years. A retired clinical chemist, Deacon Lurton holds a bachelor's degree in microbiology. The only native Floridian in the class, Deacon Lurton was born in Pensacola, where he will serve at St. Paul Parish.
- Deacon Robert Macko, 60, has been married to his wife, Mary, for 22 years. Deacon Macko served in the Navy as a fleet musician and later worked for the Florida Community College Library System. Deacon Macko, who was born in Minneapolis, will serve at St. Louis Parish in Tallahassee.
- Deacon Edwin C. Melvin III, 58, and Gail, his wife of 27 years, are members of Good Shepherd Parish in Tallahassee where Deacon Melvin will serve. Born in Pittsburgh, he holds advanced degrees in social work, which has been his profession in both Pennsylvania and Florida.
- Deacon John Thomas Parnham, 59, a native of Orange, N.J., and his wife, Wanda Lea, have been married for 34 years. Deacon Parnham served in the U.S. Marine Corps as a naval aviator and has been a circuit judge for 22 years. He holds a doctor of jurisprudence degree and will serve at Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Parish.
- Deacon Timothy Warner, 47, was born in New Orleans and married his wife, Kerry Trauth Warner, 22 years ago. He holds a bachelor's degree from Southeastern Louisiana University and a doctor of jurisprudence degree from Loyola Law School. Deacon Warner works as an attorney in Panama City where he will serve at St. John the Evangelist Parish.
- Deacon Henry Zmuda, 49, and his wife, Carol Ann, have been married 10 years. Holding bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees in electrical engineering, Deacon Zmuda taught at the University of Florida, Gainesville. A native of Jersey City, N.J., he will serve at Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Niceville.



Front row, left to right: Msgr. James Flaherty, Deacon Richard Lurton, Bishop John Ricard, Deacons John Parhnam and Paul Graaff, and Father Paul White. Back row, left to right: Deacons John Durkin, Robert Macko, Edward Melvin, Henry Zmuda, Lou Feté, Tim Warner and Jerry Williamson, vicar for deacons.

Eleven priests of the diocese celebrated the ordination Mass with Bishop Ricard. More than 30 of the diocese's deacons also participated, along with their wives. In spite of the weather, people filled the cathedral to capacity. In his homily, the bishop thanked the deacon candidates for presenting themselves to God and to this assembly for the laying on of hands and invocation of the Holy Spirit through which they will become ambassadors of the word of God in service to the church and to the world.

"Our first thoughts are directed with the greatest affection and reverence to their families and most especially to their wives. You have stood by them and encouraged them through the many years of formation. The rest of us will never know the full extent of the sacrifices you have made in supporting your husbands and your willingness to share them with the people of God in this wonderful relationship. As you continue to walk alongside them, I pray that your relationship continues to grow ever stronger," Bishop Ricard continued.

Referring to the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus instructs the disciples on their mission in going out two-by-two to the people, the bishop said, "Today, we have become a part of that narrative. Our church has always taught us that the events in the Bible, especially those in the life of Jesus, repeat themselves in each generation of believers. Be assured that it is Jesus who is calling you — it is the Lord who is sending you out."

Considering the odd number of candidates, the bishop added, "When it comes to going out 'two-by-two,' we'll leave it up to God to work the numbers out."

With the full dignity of the church, the men were presented and vowed their obedience to the bishop and his successors. They then lay prostrate before the altar as the choir led the Litany of the Saints. Each man then knelt before Bishop Ricard, seated in the episcopal chair (cathedra), who laid his hands upon each one in the sacramental gesture of ordination.

The deacons' wives assisted them in vesting in their stoles and dalmatics, the vestment worn by deacons. At the conclusion of the Mass, the assembly greeted the new deacons with thunderous applause to rival the storm swirling outside. Following Mass, many participants stayed for a reception hosted in the Cathedral parish hall.

Sharing his thoughts of the ordination, Deacon Lurton said, "I am just elated. I'm so honored and humbled that the Lord has called me to this ministry."

Deacon Warner praised all the people who had come out through the storm to witness the ordination. "What a great day this is, a day of joy and happiness. It's also my father's birthday, so what a great present for my family."

Deacon Jerry Williamson, director of formation for deacons, expressed his joy. "There were some moments there, when they were talking about hurricanes, that I was a little concerned, but we really wanted this day to go forward and it's turned out beautifully. They are a wonderful group who will be tremendous treasures for their parishes. They're really excited and that's really good."

"It's kind of hard to put these feelings into words," Deacon Graaff shared. "It's such a blessing to share this day with the people. I'm just looking forward to working with people, sharing that relationship with God. That's what it's all about."

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