

DIACONATE MEMORIES – J Fitch

My first memory of the Permanent Diaconate was in the 80's when I served on Parish Council with then Council President (now Deacon) Ron Henderson. Ron asked me to serve as vice-president and assured me that I "wouldn't have to do anything." In the middle of the year Ron resigned to enter formation for the Permanent Diaconate, making me Council President by default. He explained the Permanent Diaconate to me which sounded very appealing. In discussing it with my wife Laurie, we decided that our family life would make it impossible. Maybe later we told each other, which we did discuss occasionally.

Twenty some years later we were having dinner with Fr. Bill. Knowing the demands on him, I asked what I could do to help. He responded by asking me if I had ever considered the Diaconate. Afterward Laurie asked me how many times I had to be hit up the side of my head with that "two by four" before I got the message. Thus, began my 5½ year journey to the Permanent Diaconate. With Fr. Bill's and the Parishes support, prayers and encouragement, Laurie's keeping me on task, and Deacon Chuong leading me through the Siena Heights courses, followed by Diaconate Formation I was ordained.

Of the many memories I have before becoming a Deacon (some continued after) are Corn Roasts, going way back to beginning; after mass coffee and donuts when it was a social time in the Fr. Kal Hall until now in the Holy Family Center; cleaning smelt under the direction of Ron Fox for Fish Fries; the Men's Club; Super Bowl Sundays in the Fr. Kal Hall, the only time Fr. Hornberger allowed beer in the Church; being a Usher; Finance Council; Alter Serving with my Grandson, Zach; being a reader at mass; being a High School Catechist with Laurie; and all the dinners, luncheons and receptions with our Parish Family.

After Ordination to the Diaconate some memories I have are the Mass of Ordination Thanksgiving and the following Reception Dinner eloquently planned and hosted by Father Bill's mother Kathy Allen; baptizing my Grandson, Fitch the next day; Hospital and Nursing Home visits; Easter Vigils (being the smallest guy carrying the huge, heavy Easter Candle for the Procession); teaching Marriage Preparation classes for Fr. Bill; a large Funeral Mass for a parishioner and having to consume the full Chalice of Precious Blood after communion; after the aforementioned Funeral Mass, just handing the car keys to Laurie for the drive to St. Joseph Cemetery; having Deacon Chuong and family join our Parish; and all the support and prayers of Fr. Bill and the family of St. Casimir during this experience.

Laurie and I find it challenging to accept the closing of St. Casimir, know its God's plan to be carried out, not ours. Her paternal German grandparents were founding members of the Parish and has attended masses at St. Casimir for as long as she can remember. I am a newbie, having only joined the parish in 1976. We give praise and thanks to God for these joys, memories and relationships with priests, parish staff and parishioners that have formed over these years. We pray, that as we continue our faith journey, may God bless us all.