



**Deacon Candidate
Michael R. Martini**



Call to diaconate started with pastor's simple request to serve

Michael R. Martini's journey to the permanent diaconate began with a small request from his pastor many years ago.

"It was a gradual thing as I started going to Immaculate Conception Parish in Annandale. For me, it started with just an invitation from a priest. Msgr. (Immanuel W.) Vernon was the first person to ask me (to help him), then Father Andy (Andrew L. Szaroleta)," Martini said.

"With both priests, but particularly with Msgr. Andy, it was simply being asked to do something, for example, 'Mike, could you go to the Sacristy and get something for me?' or, 'Can you help me out with this project?' I felt very trusted, very at home, by being asked to do something for the Church," he said.

"Attending a Cornerstone retreat was a life changing experience and it certainly enriched my faith. It made me very proud to be Catholic, and moved me in the direction of the diaconate," Martini said.

Two people especially helped him discern: Msgr. Andy and parish Deacon Joseph Campbell, who Michael describes as inspir-

ing. "They never pushed. Deacon Joe would just ask, 'Are you thinking about it?' They helped me to recognize (the call) because there always was that question: 'Is this just me or is it the Lord calling me?'"

Martini and his wife Kathleen have been married for 28 years and members of Immaculate Conception Parish since 1991. They have three children: Christopher, 21; Katharine, 17, and Andrew, 15. Originally from Brooklyn, Martini holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Pace University and a law degree from New York Law School, both in New York City. He works as an attorney and title officer for K. Hovnanian Title.

"My wife is extremely supportive. I think she's always recognized that this was a possibility. She's been extremely patient, and she has also kept me mindful of the balance that I need to keep between the Church and my family," Martini said. "The children also recognize how important this is to me and have been very generous in allowing me to do it."

"The family has to be on board. I think that they share the ministry to the

extent that they share me," he continued. "I think that (my ministry) enriches their lives at the same time," Martini said.

Martini's ministry experience in Immaculate Conception is extensive, including serving on the pastoral council, children's liturgy committee, Cornerstone, Citizens Advisory Board, Hunterdon/Warren County Catholic Charities, the Catholic School and School Advisory Committees and as an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist. He represented the parish before the Clinton Township Planning Board when obtaining approvals for Immaculate Conception School, cemetery and mausoleum.

Msgr. Szaroleta will vest Martini at ordination. "He was so instrumental in giving the invitation to participate in parish life, and for trusting me on a professional level," said Martini, who is assigned to minister at Immaculate Conception.

Right now, Martini feels "very blessed and obviously very excited. I feel that I've come full circle and I feel very blessed to have gotten through it. Also, being able to do the things that I have been privileged to do in the parish has been very affirming."

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— *Michael R. Martini*