



**Francis Averill, M.D., J.D.**



**Francis & Rose Averill**

**What is one of the most valuable things that you learned during your formation for the diaconate?**

The five-year formation process as a deacon have been a challenging time. There have been not only the academic challenges associated with the diaconate program but there have been personal challenges during that time period as well. My wife's health problem, my health challenges, business challenges and the COVID pandemic have all taught me to trust if the Lord. As Proverbs says "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." Despite all these challenges I have felt God's love and seen God's hand directing my life.

**What is the one thing about the diaconate that you are most looking forward to?**

I look forward to using the unique gifts that God has given me to serve others. For many years, I have served as a physician and worked to restore people to good health. I now look forward to serving others and strengthening their spiritual well-being. I look forward to service Bishop Parkes, my pastor, and my parish. I also look forward to serving the sick, the dying, the imprisoned, the poor and homeless and the less fortunate in our community. In the words of Mother Theresa, I look forward to "giving my hands in service my heart in love."

**Would you characterize God's call to the diaconate for you as a whisper or a roar? Why?**

It was both a whisper and a roar. God pursued me through the years like Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*, and "I fled Him, down the nights and down the days" Through the years he pursued me, and I heard him whisper to me in the baths at Lourdes and say "Rise, clasp My hand, and come! I am He Whom thou seekest!" From this mystical experience at Lourdes, I was given the grace to attend daily Mass and receive the Eucharist daily. Led by Mary and strengthened through the Eucharist, God then roared when a priest who was giving me a blessing said that the Holy Spirit told him to tell me that, "These are the hands of a deacon."

**Rose Averill, wife of Francis Averill:**

**How has my husband's diaconal formation affected our marriage and family life?**

My husband and I have always had an extremely integrated approach to our married life. Not only did we share the raising of our children, and other ordinary aspects of married life and vacation and travel time, but we have also shared our charity and ministry work and work together in our business. The journey to the diaconate was also something that we shared in an integrated manner.

We shared the educational and ministry aspects of the process. So, I had a deep involvement during the last five years and the diaconal process (particularly the master's program) became what our lives revolved around. We maneuvered our lives and schedules around the classes, working on assignments, volunteer work and diaconal meetings and obligations. I am very glad that it is something that we fully did together, because otherwise the time and stress involved, particularly in the academic portion, would have been something that divided us in time, space and understanding.



**Guillermo Caceres**

**Guillermo Caceres & Adriana Beaumont**

**What is one of the most valuable things you learned during your formation for the diaconate?**

One of the most valuable things I learned during my formation for the diaconate is that the Lord will equip an imperfect servant to proclaim His perfect message. God will complement and outpour his blessings over any shortcomings when we surrender to His calling. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

**What is one thing about the diaconate that you are most looking forward to?**

One thing about the diaconate that I am most looking forward to is the chance to serve the community like a regular minister (Eucharist, prison ministry, catechist) and also as a cleric (baptisms, weddings, blessings, proclaiming the Gospel). I am looking forward to serving people in the periphery of the Church and helping them get closer to the fullness of our Faith.

**Did the pandemic this past year influence your reflections during this final year of formation?**

The pandemic this past year influenced my reflections during this final year of formation as we were all reminded that our plans may change at any moment; that we do not own our future; it is all in the hand of God and we should all be grateful with what God has bestowed to us, including the blessing to live one more day. We were reminded that we usually surround ourselves with noise and stress from the world but we should never lose sight of what is truly important in our lives: God, family.

**Would you characterize God's call to the diaconate for you as a whisper or a roar? Why?**

Mostly, I heard God's call as a whisper, because I could only hear it when I was in my moments of silence; when emptying the mind. When I was not listening to His whisper, God called me with a roar, using the faces of family and friends to deliver His message, soundly and clearly.

**Adriana Beaumont, wife of Guillermo Caceres**

**How has your husband's formation affected your marriage and family life?**

My husband's diaconate formation has affected our marriage and our family life in various ways. The most perceptible way is the sharing of his family time with the responsibilities of formation, class time, studying, preparing papers, meetings. We now plan our family time around the commitments he has--and will have--as a permanent deacon in the two parishes he has been assigned to. Our marriage and our family lives have also been enriched abundantly from Guillermo's spiritual growth and the maturity he has acquired throughout his formation years. More we will have two extended families. We have been very blessed. God is good!



**Geoffrey D'Angelo**

**Geoffrey & Susan D'Angelo**

**What is one of the most valuable things you learned during your formation for the diaconate?**

Deus Semper Maior. God is always greater. Although that might seem like an obvious statement (and certainly one that doesn't require 5 years of formation to recognize), the implications that I've discovered have been profound for me. The Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, speaks of the Body of Christ, the Church, as being a pilgrim that "will receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things." As a human though, I find that temptation to set down roots; to become more of a resident than a pilgrim and to become fixed or rigid in my spiritual practices and prayer life, in my way of experiencing the liturgy, and in my way of living in the world and encountering other people. God is always greater. He's always showing us new ways of being, calling us to constant transformation so that we're always becoming more like Him. He's always inviting us to find Him in unexpected places, and in unexpected people. He's always challenging us to shed the "either-or" binary thinking that seeks to place Him in a box and embrace the "both-and" thinking that allows us to better encounter Him as He truly is. God is always greater, and He's always calling us to be open to discovering his greatness in new ways and through new encounters; to resist the temptation to become residents and to remain pilgrims.

**What is one thing about the diaconate that you are most looking forward to?**

Serving the people of God here in our Diocese. Again, from *Lumen Gentium*, we read that the deacon is one "upon whom hands are imposed "not unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service." That ministry of service is really, I think, an invitation to serve and to live one's life in such a way as to inspire others to do the same. There is so much need in our communities and deacons are called in a special way to be a sacrament of Christ's service to the world. St. Teresa of Calcutta tells us that "The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, and the fruit of service is peace." I look forward to being an instrument of God's love, service, and peace.

**Did the pandemic this past year influence your reflections during this final year of formation?**

Definitely. I remember the early days of the pandemic when we were unable to attend Mass in person and I was so moved by the ministry of our priests who celebrated Mass in an empty church building in front of a camera so that we could still gather together as a parish family and be spiritually fed by the Eucharist even though we could not physically receive the Blessed Sacrament. Our priests and deacons found new and creative ways to continue to build community through social media. In addition to Mass, we had morning updates from our deacons, online prayer intentions, and even music sessions where we would gather online to hear our music director and a few other music ministers (and even one of our priests!) sing hymns and other songs. The last 2 years of my formation classes went online and it was so much more difficult to share experiences and difficulties with my cohort. Despite all these challenges, the Spirit was helping us to find creative ways to stay together, to build our community, and to continue to share and adapt the message of the Gospel to our shared circumstance. This was a really difficult moment that also provided an opportunity for us to find new ways to meet the people of God where they are and to find new layers of meaning in the Gospel that would speak to the time we're living through.

**Would you characterize God's call to the diaconate for you as a whisper or a roar? Why?**

Definitely a whisper. This has been a journey that's spanned a decade. The call started in little things that would "shimmer" during the readings at Mass or during a homily or in something that someone would say to me. I suppose it was like allowing God to dream within me; something that was barely conscious to me. I'm not good at remembering my dreams in the morning but, over time and with a good spiritual director, I was able to "remember" more and more of God dreaming inside me until it became clear to my wife and I that I needed to do something to explore this further; to see if we could dream the same dream together. I would say that invitation to dream the same dream together has continued to this very day. I say invitation precisely because our own "yes" has always been part of this dreaming. I think if my wife, children, or I had decided we just wanted to wake up, to say "no" so to speak, He would have had another dream that He would have invited us to share with Him. As it happens though, we chose to keep dreaming this dream with Him and, to rehabilitate an often ironic idiom, here we are living the dream.

**Susan D'Angelo, wife of Geoffrey D'Angelo**

**How has your husband's formation affected your marriage and family life?**

This has been a wonderful experience for our marriage and family. I have enjoyed seeing my husband grow in wisdom, patience, and understanding as he experienced the coursework and the internships in the formation process. He challenged himself to get out of his comfort zone, with internships like prison ministry and Hospice, and he set a great example for our family in how to step out in faith and say yes to God and grow as a result. It's been exciting to see him follow God's call and I'm thankful that the kids and I were able to support him. We have 2 boys, who were ages 8 and 6 when Geoff started this process, so we've really been able to travel on this road with him. As his prayer life deepened, our family prayer life was also enriched. As he learned new things in formation, we discussed them at the dinner table and shared them with our boys, so we could all grow in our understanding of our faith. Geoff's formation has required some sacrifices from all of us, with work, school, kids in soccer and scouts, and volunteering at church, and we had many discussions with the boys about what dad was doing so they could be involved in the process and talk with us about any concerns they had. With our busy schedules, we needed to get comfortable prioritizing and asking for help from our moms when needed to get the kids to soccer games on time! Formation has been a tremendous blessing for us and we as a family have grown because of it. I'm so very happy for him and can hardly believe that his ordination date is so close! Thanks be to God.



**James Riveiro**

**What is one of the most valuable things you learned during your formation for the diaconate?**

The importance of loving God's people enough to give of yourself to them for their spiritual benefit so that they will stand with confidence before the judgment seat of God and hear, "Well done my good and faithful servant. Come into my Father's house."

**What is one thing about the diaconate that you are most looking forward to?'**

Helping God's people to grow ever more in love with Him.

**Did the pandemic this past year influence your reflections during this final year of formation?**

Yes. I worried greatly about the many who have missed receiving the Eucharist and the many who have not returned to Mass. They are not being fed, and with each passing day, I worry that they are separating themselves from God more and more.

**Would you characterize God's call to the diaconate for you as a whisper or a roar? Why?**

His call to me began as a whisper and grew into a raging roar. After a number of years of discerning, I told God in prayer that I was still not sure of his will and I was going to need some sort of clear sign of his will for me. A few days or so later, a former catechist happened to be visiting RCIA and turned to me, placed her hand on my leg, and asked, "why don't you become a deacon?" I knew then that God had provided the clear sign I needed to proceed.