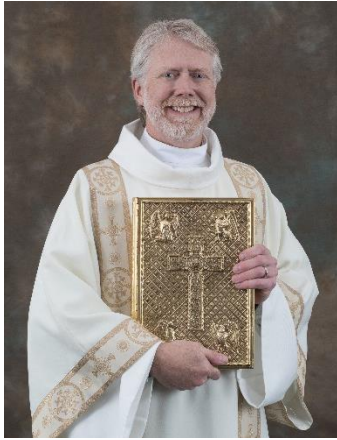


Deacon Tom Phillips



Deacon Tom Phillips sees the role of deacon, or anyone working in a parish, as “Being there.” It sounds so simple and yet it is a concept with many dimensions of meaning and it goes back to Phillips’ childhood at St. Thomas the Apostle in Columbus, where he is still a member.

“A former pastor explained that we couldn’t serve what we didn’t know needed serving, so he encouraged every parishioner to get to know and love each other, and our neighbors, and the community in which we were planted,” said Deacon Phillips, who currently works as the bookkeeper for St. Thomas the Apostle and Sts. Augustine and Gabriel parishes.

He has been married to wife Maria for 32 years and they have two children: Laura, 25; and Thomas, 22.

Deacon Phillips carries *being there* into not only his parish service but also into volunteer work with Habitat for Humanity and the Northeast Area Commission and said he has been blessed with an example of being fully present in his uncle, Deacon John Slatcoff of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Lorain.

“He often talks to me about the joys and sorrows of his vocation, the nuts and bolts of the process, and the hopes and fears he has going forward,” he said.

Deacon Phillips feels his uncle is a living example of discerning a call as well as formation in service.

“Being there is a lot of things,” Deacon Phillips said. “In the Parish, it’s awareness, having eyes and ears open to what the needs of the people, and the Pastor, may be, and then voicing the needs in the right places. If we see someone struggling, we help or find someone who can. If we hear praise, we pass it on, or complaint, we resolve or find someone who can. Not that every need gets met or complaint gets resolved; sometimes being there is simply to listen and hear or to look and see.

“Being there is stillness, providing a shoulder. Being there is action, lending our hand and arms and backs and taking on the tasks that have to get done when there’s no one else doing them, then helping to get the right person there next time. It’s improvement, discernment, and serenity at each step of the way. Ultimately, as a deacon, it is conformance to the will of Christ the servant, wherever ‘there’ is.”