

Deacon Jim Ernst
NDCP Class of 1967
Hall of Honor Biography

Deacon Jim was born on the south side of Chicago; hence he is a good Sox Fan. His family moved to Edison Park, when he was 5 years old. He attended St. Juliana School and NDCP. In high school, being short in stature, 4 feet 9 inches as a freshman, he participated in various clubs and activities rather than sports. These clubs were mostly focused on service. He was involved in the Cross and Anchor Service Club and the Pep Club. He attended Marquette University. He earned a BA degree with a teaching major in Spanish and teaching minors in Chemistry, Theology and Secondary Education. He went to school for a summer semester in Guadalajara, Mexico. While at Marquette he met his wife, Rose.

Upon graduation in 1971, he taught Jr. High Religion and Science at St. Thecla School. In 1972 he and Rose got married and joined Our Lady of Hope Parish. After 8 years of teaching, he took an assignment with the Association of American Railroads, with headquarters in Washington, DC. He traveled extensively in the U.S. with this position and obtained a degree in Transportation and Traffic Management. During this time his three children were born and he also became involved with Religious Education and taught Confirmation and sixth grade.

In 1992 he took a position as a Junior High Science Teacher and Dept. Chair at St. Juliana School. While teaching, he was asked to consider the Diaconate. He and his wife entered the program in fall of 1992 and he was ordained in 1996. In 1998 he was offered a full time position as Pastoral Associate and became responsible for all liturgies and liturgical ministers and at the same time, he and his wife began the Our Lady of Hope Youth Group which for 14 years focused on building a summer camp for the disabled community. In 2001 he completed his Masters in Pastoral Studies with emphasis in Liturgy, Women's Issues, and Addiction from Loyola University-Chicago.

Responding to an invite by then Alumni Director Tony Kozole, Jim and his wife attended a small alumni function and basketball game. That led to his involvement in Life Time Learning and becoming an active alumni and working with various alumni committees. He currently sits on the NDCP Catholic Identity Committee and he volunteers as a substitute teacher during student retreats and assists at the all school masses as deacon.

Deacon Jim is currently on the executive board of the Des Plaines Ministerial Association, a member of the Des Plaines/Park Ridge Joint Community Response and Recovery Team; and he represents faith-based organizations on the Maine West Community Relations Committee. He and his wife lead the Confirmation Team at Our Lady of Hope. He is a recipient of the NDCP Alumni Fr. Stroot Award for Distinguished Service. He is a 3 time member of "Who's Who Among America's Teachers (5% of awardees); has received the City of Des Plaines Socrates Rand Award; The St. Philip the Deacon Award for Evangelization and he and his wife were the recipients of the Deacon Couple of the Year Award for the Archdiocese of Chicago in 2010. And, he is the proud grandfather of five, soon to be six.