

## **Vocation Article – Fall 2021 – Deacon Bill Dwyer**

In Fr. Lawrence Porter's book, *A Guide to the Church*, he writes that "indeed the closer the God of the Bible calls someone to himself, the farther he sends that person out!" This line has caused me to wonder – where I have been, and where Lord am I headed? Where is God calling me today – what is He asking? As I recall my journey, I marvel at how God has been with me and provided experiences that allow me to be the person I am today. Each morning I include Ignatius' little prayer "*Lord please give me the grace to know Jesus more intimately, love Him more intensely and follow Him more closely*".

While unemployed, in March 2003 (after 5 years of saying No) I lived my Cursillo (a short course in Christianity) and was moved and changed – I found a true relationship with Jesus. Soon after, I was selected to be on team for an upcoming retreat and was asked to give a short talk including witness. In my witness, I shared I did not know how to pray and felt anxious and uneasy; the Spiritual Director, Fr John Sassani (God rest his soul) recommended the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius – 19<sup>th</sup> Annotation. I said yes and began with about 20 others. During my journaling after a period of long prayer on Jeremiah 29:11-13 (only 1 week into the exercises) I jotted down what about diaconate – this was November 15, 2004 (I still have my journal and notation!). I held the thought in prayer and 1<sup>st</sup> mentioned to Fr Sassani during a silent weekend retreat. He advised me to continue to pray especially Colossians Chapter 3. God was working because at every diocesan meeting, I attended, there was a deacon present who I would ask questions of and they would encourage me to apply.

In August 2008, Jeane and I attended a Diaconate Information night as my journal note "would not" go away. Continued prayer and meetings with Fr Peter Quinn were the norm over the next 16 months. I applied to the diaconate in January 2010 hoping for acceptance into the Class of 2014; always with the mantra "God willing". Fr Peter strongly encouraged me to make an 8-day silent retreat at Eastern Point, Gloucester MA prior to acceptance for continued discernment. I did so in April 2010 – which allowed me to affirm my call.

I was accepted into the class of 2014 – Archdiocese of Boston diaconate formation program that included discernment, a call to holiness and a multitude of academic courses which would hopefully lay a foundation for future service in the Kingdom of God. God is good all the time; all the time God is good! I was ordained a Permanent Deacon in Archdiocese of Boston on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014. I was given a parish assignment – the collaborative of St Anne (Littleton) and St Catherine (Westford) now both merged to be Blessed Trinity Parish and also assigned to the Pro-Life/Respect Office of the Archdiocese.

Not too long ago I was asked what I "get out" of being a deacon. My response was – this is a very difficult question because it is not about me; it is about me serving God. The Diaconate logo "I am in your midst as one who serves" ..... is simply about being and doing for others. My joy is being present to others wherever they may be. I have asked myself "how did I get here" – yet truly the answer is God called me to this diaconal ministry and I simply said Yes

and got out of the way so he can lead me through others. So, most importantly – it is not about recognition – rather receiving joy from helping and serving others.

As my journey continues, it is a joy to walk with another as others have walked with me. Listening, encouraging, challenging, and loving another as they too, journey to know, love and follow their God trying to be the person God has called them to be. Many people have stopped me for conversation and discussion of what is happening in their lives—both the good and the not so good. Some have asked for continued regular meetings on a monthly basis. It is a blessing and gift that God has placed people in my path to journey with them. Where God is leading me now is the pursuit of a Spiritual Direction Certificate. My hope is one day to lead the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius – 19<sup>th</sup> Annotation to allow others to experience a pathway to deeper prayer, good decisions, and an active life of service to others.

My prayer continues....."Your will be done" .....God willing.