

1. *No matter what our state of life may be, we are called by God. Describe your personal calling; how you first heard God calling you and what your initial reaction was.*

Jesus found me in my weakness. I was at Officer Training School (OTS) and having a really bad day. I was only a few weeks into the four-month training when I began to seriously doubt my decision to leave the security of my comfortable enlisted life in the Air Force to become an officer. I ducked into the uniform alterations room, which was off-limits to the abusive upperclassmen, for a short respite. As I looked down on the floor, I saw the green and blue embroidered cloth patch of a chaplain's insignia and I picked it up. Holding the Cross of our Lord seemed to put my 'bad day' into better perspective. I imagined the brand-new chaplain who had dropped it would be totally fine with me keeping it. Whenever the stress got too difficult to bear, touching the Cross in my pocket would always get me through, for I knew that Jesus was with me. Soon after that, I was asked to be an acolyte at the little OTS chapel on Sundays. Serving the Lord during Mass just felt right to me [and still does]. In time, I would serve as an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist (EME), and then as a lector. I didn't see it at the time, but looking back, my calling came in incremental nudges; starting on the day I found the patch.

2. *For many, first hearing the call did not necessarily incite an immediate response. Describe when and how you answered the call.*

I believe Jesus called me a lot, but I wasn't a very good listener then. So, He sent people into my life to relay His messages. A deacon serving at a military chapel looked me in the eye and told me that I would make a great deacon. I think I laughed, but the seed was already planted. A priest at the same chapel told me something similar; this time I didn't laugh and the seed was fertilized. Each time someone else brought up the diaconate to me, the soil surrounding the seed was watered. And yet, I always had work-related excuses as to why I couldn't start the diaconate program. Then, one day the Lord decided to remove all doubt from my mind. I accepted a job position which allowed me to work from home, and my travel was reduced from 50% down to about 10%. The final straw was when we left our military chapel behind and became members at Saint Catherine's in Westford. When the annual stewardship drive came around, I knew that I owed the Lord more than just serving again as lector and EME, so I stepped up to the plate!

3. *We are all pilgrims on a journey. At this moment in time, where are you on your vocational journey?*

I am nearly halfway through the fourth and final year in my diaconate formation. It has been an amazing journey so far, and the Lord has opened my heart to experience His love in ways I would never have dreamed possible. I'm a better listener now than I was. In my discernment, I am constantly assessing where I am today, where I am going, and praying for His guidance and direction along the Way. I believe in my heart that Jesus indeed wills me to become a deacon, and God-willing, it will happen in the fall of 2022.