

Discovering Joy; a Journey from Fear to Faith



As we travel through life, particularly on our faith journey, we encounter moments which change our direction. At times these moments can be major life events, but often these moments are found in the small encounters of everyday life. Such moments are thought provoking, they challenge our status quo and stir our conscience. Often, they are pushed aside and quickly forgotten in the activity of our busy lives. From time to time these moments are different. They linger on our minds and in our hearts until they reach a point where we can no longer ignore the fact that something must be done. Some thought, plan or belief we hold will need to change. Of course, we all resist change and it can be a battle. Initially, doing nothing seems easier, until we realize that this course of action is particularly unfulfilling as the thought lingers.

This is where I found myself almost six years ago. God planted the call to the Diaconate on my mind and in my heart. At first, I pretended not to hear. Then I pretended not to understand. Then I assumed God had made a mistake. Once I acknowledged that God was calling me to the Diaconate I still resisted. Fear of change held me back. This was not part of my life plan. This was not something I had even considered. This was not a role I believed that I was capable of fulfilling. But God did not let up. The call lingered on my mind and in my heart. For nearly a year I battled.

One day a reflection challenged me to identify the fear in my life that was separating me from Christ, to name it, and to face it! At that moment I realized I feared giving up control and willingly trusting

God with my life! Once I faced this fear, truly trusted God with my life, placed God's will above my own and accepted God's call to the Diaconate, the pressure of making all the decisions in my life was lifted. My mind was at peace, and my heart was filled with the joy and the love of God!

Following God's call to the Diaconate has not always been easy, but it has been joyful. The academic requirements, spiritual development, and diaconal formation process have challenged me. It required a significant time commitment personally, and it took a great deal of understanding, flexibility and commitment from my family. Life also presented its fair share of challenges and difficulties along the way.

Through the process; however, God's call never wavered. Never once did the joy and peace in my heart fade. If I trusted God with my life, followed His call, and accepted His will, the loving presence of God was always there to support and guide me through the difficult moments. God never ceased to bring blessings into my life along the way. My classmates and their families have blessed me and my family in countless ways. Opportunities in my life that I thought I had walked away from to pursue this calling have developed beyond even my prior expectations. The many prayers, encouragement, and support of my family, friends and the OLPH community have carried me through the difficult moments, inspired me to push through tough times, and lifted me to achieve things beyond what I believed I was capable of accomplishing.

This coming week, from Wednesday through Sunday, I will attend my Ordination Retreat at Marytown in Libertyville, taking time away from daily life to once again listen for God's will in my life and discern His final call to the Diaconate. At the conclusion of the retreat I will be asked to take an Oath of Fidelity in word and action with the Catholic Church, make a public Profession of Faith in all the Church holds true, and sign a proclamation of Freedom to Receive Sacred Ordination as part of my final steps of preparation. Following these final commitments, I will receive my official "Call to Orders" from Cardinal Blase Cupich for Ordination to the Order of Deacon on May 12 at Holy Name Cathedral.

I humbly ask for your continued prayers. Please pray for my wife P.J. and our daughters Kirby and Murphy, that over these final days leading to Ordination their concern and anxiety might be lifted away and a joy placed in their hearts for this new chapter in our family. Please pray for me, that during this retreat God's call to the Diaconate may continue to be clear and that God will place a passion and joy in my heart to serve His Church in diaconal ministry as an Icon of Christ the Servant.

Servite Domino in Laetitia! [Serve the Lord Joyfully!],
Christopher Weiland