



Into the Depths

The Diaconate: A Call to Service

by Dcn. Lee Brokaw

It was a great blessing to be ordained a transitional deacon by Bishop Daniel Jenky on May 22nd! Immediately following my ordination, I enjoyed assisting at my home parish,

St. Patrick's in Raritan, as well as Immaculate Conception in Monmouth; spending time with my family; and helping on the family farm. This summer, I am serving at St. Jude Parish in Peoria and look forward to meeting many of the parishioners and families there!

As a deacon, I have really enjoyed preaching and assisting at funerals. One of the greatest blessings since being ordained was celebrating the wedding of my sister, Mary, and her husband, Landry, at my home parish on June 11th. To see them so full of life and love as they approached the Sacrament of Marriage gave me great joy, and it was an honor to be able to witness their vows.

Although I have been ordained a transitional deacon, meaning my goal is to be ordained a priest, the one aspect of the diaconate that is most appealing to me and that I share with all deacons whether permanent or transitional, is the life of service I am being invited into. Through my ordination to the diaconate by Bishop

Jenky, I have been given a mission to serve the people of God and assist the priest at the Altar of Sacrifice in a more intentional way.

The road leading up to diaconate and priesthood ordinations is unique for each seminarian. My brother

seminarians would likely agree, and we would get quite a laugh sharing just how unique it can be. Each man's journey is unique because each man is unique. Each seminarian has an incomparable story with particular blessings, challenges, and periods of tremendous growth in prayer, fraternity, and formation. In the midst of this exceptional walk with the Lord is God's grace, God's life and love, breaking into a man's life and radically transforming him by drawing him ever closer to the heart of Jesus Christ through his call to the Holy Priesthood. I have experienced this as a seminarian. This call is not always perfectly clear, but it is unique to the man and is persistent and loving. God does

not force a man to respond to his love, but He invites him to do so. It is a call from the heart of the Father,

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The Fruit of Your Labor

We were blessed to celebrate the ordinations of Dcn. Lee Brokaw and Fr. Michael Pica in May. Both are hardworking men who have already begun their labor in the vineyard that is the Diocese of Peoria. We hope you share with us a healthy pride in these two men, and in all of our seminarians. They are sustained by your prayers, financial support, and encouragement, and we continually pray for our benefactors.

We are also proud to welcome our new seminarians this fall, including one man whom God called *back* to the Diocese of Peoria. The others will

be featured in the next issue, but Andru O'Brien, originally of Bloomington, has been officially and enthusiastically accepted into our program by Bishop Jenky. He joins his classmates in 3rd Theology, which means that, God-willing, he has two years before priestly ordination.

And speaking of the fruits of your labor, we are looking forward to restarting the annual Msgr. Carton College Seminarian Scholarship Dinner this year. We will host the fifth annual dinner on Friday, August 5th at St. Jude

Parish in Peoria. Those who attend this dinner will be financially contributing to the scholarship that helps college seminarians pay for their tuition, room, and board, and ensuring that no man is denied entrance to the seminary for lack of financial resources. If you would like to contribute to the Msgr. Carton Fund, please contact us

in the Office of Priestly Vocations by calling (309) 671-1550 or emailing achovan@cdop.org. Thanks for your prayers and support, and please keep them coming!

Summer in God's Field: Emmaus Days & *Totus Tuus* by Fr. Tim Hepner

Summer has always been my favorite time of year. As a kid, it meant a break from school, bike rides into town to go swimming at the public pool, and celebrating my birthday. I would also go off to Emmaus Days or on a trip with my youth group, and those experiences would fuel my relationship with Christ for years to come.

For us at the Office of Priestly Vocations, summer is still a time to break from the normal schedule, and that break opens up a space for exciting encounters with Christ. Our seminarians get out into the "field" and have hands-on experiences with parish assignments. And they and our college *Totus Tuus* teams help to provide indelible summer experiences for hundreds of young people throughout the diocese.

Over a hundred young men between the ages of 12 and 30 set aside time to encounter Christ on Emmaus Days retreats. The young men get pelted with water balloons and dodge balls, battle it out with tug-of-war and trivia, and hear talks from priests and seminarians. In the middle of all that, they meet Jesus in Mass, adoration, and confession. For many men

who have gone on Emmaus Days (including myself, and Zak Leskanich, our assistant seminarian prefect), the night of adoration is a profound experience with Jesus that shapes our vocation for years to come.

Meanwhile, the older men in high school, college, and beyond, are engaged in Emmaus Days as a retreat, and they choose to set aside a weekend to grow in prayer and receive the tools for discernment that they need to discover their call. This is a time to take the next

step in one's vocation, and for many, it is a decisive moment that leads them into seminary.

In addition to Emmaus Days, 16 college students (including four seminarians) are travelling throughout the diocese leading the other major summer program of the Office of Priestly Vocations: *Totus Tuus*. Its name is a Latin phrase, short for "Totally Yours, Mary," which was the motto of Pope St. John Paul II. The teams catechize

and evangelize parishes, basing their teaching on the Catechism and the mysteries of the rosary. Each team consists of four college students who are on fire with the faith, well equipped to share it, and willing to wear themselves out for Christ. The families, children, and

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Lectio Divina: Praying with Scripture

Read: Slowly read the text once, then go back over it again. Seek to understand the who, what, where, when, why. Notice any words, patterns, phrases or images that "jump out" at you.

Meditate: "Rest in" the words that jump out at you. What do they mean in their original context? What do they mean to you? Do they disturb, comfort, or challenge you or affect your view of God, myself, or others?

Pray: Speak to God from the heart about the way the passage moves you. Relate this to Him in the context of the words/images that move you. Choose to love God as he is presented to your mind and feelings.

Contemplate: If God chooses, allow him to take you beyond your human faculties to a deeper union with him. Abide with him as long as the gift of contemplation endures, and thank him for it.

Take Action: Make a firm, concrete resolution based on your prayer so that this union with God in prayer bears fruit in your active life.

Passage to Pray With:

“Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.

~John 15:4-9



Summer cont'd.

teenagers who spend time with our teams are always revitalized in their faith, and many conversion experiences occur. The team themselves grow in leadership and evangelization skills, as well as in human virtues. Every *Totus Tuus* alumnus will tell you, “It’s the toughest summer you’ll ever love.”

For this reason, we ask for your spiritual support for Emmaus Days and *Totus Tuus*. These aren’t just “programs” we put on. They are our efforts at spreading the Gospel and helping young people discover Christ’s call and mission for their lives. And no human effort is sufficient for this. We need prayer, because we need the efficaciousness that can only come from divine assistance.

We ask you to offer up both prayers and sacrifices for these programs. One day—and it may not be until eternity—you will see the fruit of your prayer. It may be in the form of a priest who discovered his



call through Emmaus Days, or a married couple who was formed in their faith by serving on a *Totus Tuus* team. It may be a young person who learned how to pray and practice *Lectio Divina* while attending *Totus Tuus*, or a man who experienced the love of Christ on Emmaus Days and learned that Jesus has a mission especially for him.

We will be praying for you, our benefactors, as well, especially as we welcome new seminarians into our program and prepare to begin the school year once again. Because when we return to the “normal” schedule of life, we will take our experiences of the summer with us. They shape us, give us new spiritual energy, and prepare us for the path that Christ has laid out for us. Have a blessed summer, and keep us in your prayers!

Quote of the Month

“The highest and most fruitful form of human freedom is found in accepting, even more than in dominating. We show the greatness of our freedom when we transform reality, but still more when we accept it trustingly as it is given to us day after day. It is natural and easy to go along with pleasant situations that arise without our choosing them. It becomes a problem, obviously, when things are unpleasant, go against us, or make us suffer. But it is precisely then that, in order to become truly free, we are often called to choose to accept what we did not want, and even what we would not have wanted at any price...To achieve true interior freedom we must train ourselves to accept, peacefully and willingly, plenty of things that seem to contradict our freedom. The fact is that the situations that really make us grow are precisely those we do not control.”

~ Fr. Jacques Phillippe

THE LIFE OF PRAYER:

“Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part. It always presupposes effort. The great figures of prayer of the Old Covenant before Christ, as well as the Mother of God, the saints, and he himself, all teach us this: prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God. We pray as we live, because we live as we pray. If we do not want to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ, neither can we pray habitually in his name. The “spiritual battle” of the Christian’s new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer.”

~Catechism of the Catholic Church 2725



who desires for the man to be His son in an ever-deeper way.

This being chosen and being recognized by the Father is often very difficult for a man to accept, and is sometimes even rejected out of a sense of unworthiness or confusion about what this call may mean for a man's life. A man may question whether this incomprehensible love of the Father is enough to sustain him on a basic human level and keep him happy forever, and he may wonder where this call will lead him in the future. And yet, it is from this invitation, from this persistent and never-back-down love of the Father that a man generously and trustingly responds by laying his life down in service. He accepts the Father's invitation to be united to His Son in this way. That union floods the heart of the man with God's own love and fills him with peace. This is the life of the priest and the life I have and am continuing to allow God to draw me into. It is a tremendous gift!



~Dcn. Lee Brokaw, Seminarian for the Diocese of Peoria

WANT TO SUPPORT PRIESTLY VOCATIONS? KNOW A YOUNG MAN WHO MAY BE CALLED? CONTACT US:

CALL 309-671-1550 OR VISIT US ONLINE AT COMEANDFOLLOWME.ORG

FOLLOW ME.

Everyone is called to something. What's your calling?

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