

Candidate for diaconate and his wife reflect on experiences

By Abby and Rolando Morales
Special to The Witness

Our mutual faith and love of and for God was what immediately attracted us to one another. Rolando was discerning priesthood when we first met. Through much prayer and spiritual direction, Father Ken Glaser encouraged Rolando to date so he could be certain of his vocation. And so we did. We prayed together, and we both attended spiritual direction individually in order to grow in our own faith lives and prayerfully discern our callings. Through ongoing prayer, Rolando experienced God speaking to him through recurring dreams of being on the altar with his wife and children in the front pew. As much as he knew he wanted to serve God and his people, Rolando could now be certain of his vocation, to serve God in the church, but with his wife by his side as a permanent deacon. This was something that we both felt called to, but knowing the age restriction, we focused on building our family and life together while being open to God's will.

Our dear friend Dominic Hogan told us about an informational meeting regarding the permanent diaconate. Knowing that



Abby and Rolando Morales are pictured with their children, John, Joe and Alan. (Contributed photo)

Rolando wasn't old enough, we still wanted to go and learn more about the diaconate formation process. To our surprise and excitement, we learned during that meeting that Rolando would be old enough

upon ordination, and we could still apply. At the time of our application, we had two young children, Abby was working on her master's degree, and we were also in the adoption process. Did it seem like a lot? To the outside world, yes, but not to us. We knew that whatever God called us to, he would carry us through. We had come to learn in our married life, that when we were open to God's plan, our lives became more fruitful than we could've hoped, and so we continued to stay open. (It was no surprise to us when we explicitly learned that being open is critical to diaconate formation.) Our emotions were hopeful, but not nervous, because we had talked to Deacon Len Froyen and his wife, Gail, who helped us understand that a vocation is a lifelong calling, and that if the formation board felt that now was not the right time, God would continue to pull at our hearts.

In reality, the application process for the permanent diaconate was profoundly similar to that of the adoption process — essay, background checks, psychological testing, etc. — so it really didn't faze us.

The day after Thanksgiving 2016 was a little crazy to say the least. Family from out of state was flooding in to visit for the holiday, and just as they were walking in the door, Father Paul Baldwin sent Abby a text message saying congratulations. At receiving that text, she told Rolando to run to the mailbox and get the mail. He was taken aback and, without shoes, ran down the lane to the mailbox. He brought in

the letter, and we opened it together, with tears in our eyes that we had been accepted to formation. The very next day was our second son's third birthday and the day that changed our lives forever when we got "the call" that we had been longing for. Alan's birth parents chose us as his forever family. We didn't have much time to process what this would mean for diaconate, as we were in Maryland within four days to meet our son. During the two weeks in Maryland, Abby got a job teaching online, meanwhile completing her final semester of her master's degree. Upon returning from the holidays with family, Alan was hospitalized with RSV and pneumonia. He was still in the hospital for our first day of formation.


"On the way to our first formation class, we were pretty overwhelmed and filled with concern for our sick baby. We prayed that God would help us know if now was the right time to begin formation or if we should wait."

Abby's dad was able to stay with Alan in the hospital so we could attend the class. On the way to our first formation class, we were pretty overwhelmed and filled with concern for our sick baby. We prayed that God would help us know if now was the right time to begin formation or if we should wait. The class was completely mind-blowing, and we were so filled with God's love, as we were part of 17 couples who were on fire for serving the Lord. Signs seemed to be all around us, including Deacon Len Froyen as the day's speaker. Deacon Len did Abby's parents' Pre-Marriage Cana almost 30 years before, and after the relationship we built with him and his wife during our time at St. Stephen the Witness 10 years ago, everything seemed to come full circle. The focus on "our story" and living a life of gratitude made our hearts so full that we were completely affirmed that we were exactly where we were called to be.

(Please turn to Page 5)

PROCLAMATION

ARCHDIOCESE of DUBUQUE **FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF DIACONAL MINISTRY IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DUBUQUE**



WHEREAS: the Order of the Permanent Diaconate was restored by the Second Vatican Council on September 29, 1964, and by Pope Paul VI on June 18, 1967 for the Church in the West; and

WHEREAS: Archbishop James Byrne restored the Permanent Diaconate in the Archdiocese of Dubuque in March 1975 followed by the appointment of Father Paul Steimel as the first director on May 12; and

WHEREAS: Archbishop James Byrne ordained the first fifteen men to the Permanent Diaconate for the Archdiocese of Dubuque on November 5, 1978; and

WHEREAS: Permanent Deacons, as ministers of the altar, preside at public prayer, baptize, assist at marriages and bless them, give viaticum to the dying, and lead rites of burial giving witness to the Christian life; and

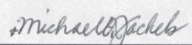
WHEREAS: Permanent Deacons, as minister of the Word, proclaim the Good News of God's Kingdom to the world, bringing hope and peace to the people they serve; and

WHEREAS: Permanent Deacons, as ministers of charity, bring the presence of Jesus to the workplace, through word and action, by their love and service to those in need, while at the same time calling forth others to live out their baptismal call; and

WHEREAS: Permanent Deacons, if married, recognize and cherish their sacramental partner who loves and supports them in family life and ministry, and who, through their own faith and love for God perform many works of charity:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Most Reverend Michael Jackels, Archbishop of Dubuque, do hereby, in honor of forty years of diaconal service, proclaim a year-long celebration of the Permanent Diaconate in the Archdiocese of Dubuque, and call upon all the people of the Archdiocese to celebrate this gift of ministry and service to the Church.

Signed this day: December 26, 2017


ARCHBISHOP OF DUBUQUE

Spotlight on a deacon: celebrating 40 years

How does a man know if he is called to be a permanent deacon?



The Formation Process: The call to the permanent diaconate is a call by God to a ministry of service to the church. The discernment process requires prayer and the ability to listen to God's invitation along with input from spouse, family, pastor and faith community. Discernment is rarely a one-time event. Rather, it is nurtured over time and throughout the diaconal formation journey. Spiritual direction becomes a key element in the process.

Disciple's Corner

St. Peter's imperfections and his role as a 'wounded healer'

If you were going to choose the perfect person on whom to found a church, whom would you choose? Apparently not someone like St. Peter.

Peter – son of Jonah, brother of Andrew, a fisherman by trade, one of the first disciples, and the first bishop of Rome; he was originally called Simon, but was given the name Cephas (“rock”) by Jesus.

Christian tradition interprets this “rock” as the foundation on which the Lord set the church; but many who knew Cephas might have thought it was a nickname for a disciple who wasn't too bright and had a habit of demonstrating that fact.

When Jesus asked the disciples “Who do you say that I am?” Peter rightly answered “You are the Christ,” although events showed he had no idea of what that meant.

When he recognized the Lord walking toward him on the water, Peter stepped out of the boat – but lacking faith, plunged into the sea.

On the night Jesus was arrested, Peter repeatedly denied he even knew Jesus, and when the Lord commissioned him with the task to “feed my sheep” he repeated it three times, perhaps just to be sure Peter got it.

“He was always getting things wrong,” Father James Martin writes in “My Life



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with the Saints.” And still he is among the greatest of the saints, Martin says, exactly because of his shortcomings, his doubt and, most of all, his keen awareness of those faults.

“We do not have to be smarter, holier or more faithful than anyone else. But we do have to recognize our own weaknesses ... ”

“Only someone like Peter, who understood his own sinfulness and the redeeming love of Christ, would be able to ... lead others to Jesus,” Martin writes.

Once in seminary, one of my classmates said he thought Jesus set a bad precedent

Mission Belongs to the Whole Church

“A failure to realize that the mission belongs to the entire Church, and not to the individual priest or bishop, limits the horizon, and even worse, stifles all the initiatives that the Spirit may be awakening in our midst.”

“Let us be clear about this. The laypersons are not our peons, or our employees. They don't have to parrot back whatever we say.”

“Clericalism, far from giving impetus to various contributions and proposals, gradually extinguishes the prophetic flame to which the entire Church is called to bear witness. Clericalism forgets that the visibility and the sacramentality of the Church belong to all the faithful people of God, not only to the few chosen and enlightened.”

— Pope Francis, in an address to the bishops of Chile, Jan. 16, 2018.

by choosing Peter, creating an example which would too often produce leaders who are no smarter, holier or faithful than the people they serve.

No, the professor responded, the problem is not leaders who are no better than the people they serve; the problem is those who think and act like they are.

Peter is a reminder and a model, I think, for all of us who are called to be disciples, ordained or not — an example of what the late Henri Nouwen called “the wounded healer.”

We do not have to be smarter, holier or more faithful than anyone else. But we do have to recognize our own weaknesses, shortcomings and sinfulness in order to first experience and then to share God's infinite love and unconditional mercy.

This is the way Father Gregory Boyle put it recently on C-SPAN2: “If we are strangers to ourselves we can't be compassionate. ... [It's only when] you are familiar with your brokenness ... that your heart can be broken by the very thing that breaks the heart of God.”

What do you think?

Pray and Reflect

Use one or more of the following questions for personal reflection, group discussion or private journaling:

- On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) rate how aware you are of how your own brokenness enables you to serve others better. How would you have rated your awareness five years ago?

- Can you think of examples of church leaders, ordained or not, who were especially compassionate? Do you know people who have been hurt because leaders were not? Have you thought about how your own weakness or sinfulness makes you a better parent, grandparent or teacher? How can we help our children, grandchildren and students learn to acknowledge their own weaknesses and be more understanding of others'?

- I think the key to being a compassionate disciple is ...

Learn More

Read Pope Francis' address to the bishops of Chile:

<http://bit.do/francis-in-chile>.

Watch Fr. Gregory Boyle's presentation on C-SPAN2:

<http://bit.do/greg-boyle>.

Join the Conversation

Add your comments to this week's discussion at <http://bit.do/disciples-corner>.

Dave Cushing is director of adult faith formation for the Catholic parishes in Waterloo. The Disciple's Corner is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Dubuque's Office of Faith Formation and Education and is funded through the Archdiocesan Educational Development Board. It is designed to help catechists, teachers, parents, grandparents, guardians and other adults grow in their appreciation of their role as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Candidate for (Con't. from p. 4)

At the very end of that first class, Deacon Tom Lang called us up to the front and asked us to share our story about how the Holy Spirit had been working in our lives and how Alan's adoption, in the midst of this diaconate application process, came to be. Everyone in the room became instantly aware that the Holy Spirit had joined each of our stories, because diaconate formation Class XIX is truly a family. Alan continues to touch the hearts of Class XIX.

ment. It has been incredible to experience the growing faith of our children, just since we began this process a year ago.

There is a lot of reading, but even though Rolando struggled somewhat in school, he is so driven and inspired by the readings we have for formation, because they bring us into a deeper relationship with God and one another. Our families are very supportive of the formation process as well. The friendships we have created with the members of Class XIX over the last year are deep friendships that truly do feel like family.

This article continues the 40th anniversary of the permanent diaconate in the Archdiocese of Dubuque. For more information go to: www.DBQArch.org/Deacon40.

Another deacon formation class is being formed. For more information contact Deacon Tom Lang at 563-556-2580 ext. 252.



More online at
DBQArch.org/Deacon40

Our other two children, John (age 5) and Joe (age 4), absolutely love “Waterloo Days” since they get to have lunchables and play with the other kids whose parents are in diaconate formation, through the child care available at Blessed Sacra-

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