

## Diaconate as a calling: a deacon reflects on his journey

By Deacon Pat Malanaphy  
Special to The Witness

My name is Deacon Pat Malanaphy, and I recall that in third grade, we had a priest come and tell our class that the Holy Spirit was calling us to the priesthood. I recall that a number of times over the years I said, "Are you calling me, God?" I heard nothing, and once adolescence kicked in, I forgot about it. Then I proceeded to get on with my life as I saw fit.

When I finished landscaping school and moved back home, I got a job cooking at a restaurant because selling nursery stock door to door was not in my skill set. Within two weeks after starting at the restaurant, I was feeling lonely one night and said, "God, please send me someone," and a picture of a blonde holding a baby flashed into my mind. I don't know if that was me signaling to God that I wanted a family or if it was God telling me what was on the way — maybe both.



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Two weeks after that honest and heartfelt prayer, a beautiful blonde walked into the kitchen of the restaurant following the owner's wife, who was instructing the new waitress on the finer points of waiting tables.

Within a year that blonde, Pam, was holding our baby boy. How time flies! We have been married for 46-plus years now, and I do thank God for his gift. And, I thank Pam for putting up with me.

Around the year 2000, I started feeling like I was not doing enough ... ? We were running a business and raising three beautiful babies. I was teaching religious ed while being mayor of our town. What more do I need to be doing? I started waking up at 4:30 in the morning, (not every day) with a sermon on one topic or another running through my head. One morning it was the Our Father, but it was so alive. I truly felt on fire. Soon after that I heard about a diaconal information meeting in my area. I drove to Oelwein by myself to check it out, and soon afterward, I received an application to the permanent diaconate.

I got the application partly filled out, and when April came, I was very busy in the greenhouse. Then June rolled around, and it started bothering me that the application was unfinished. I called Deacon Len Froyen, who was the director. He said to finish it up and send it in.

Where was Pam in all of this? Just watching and wondering what I was getting into now. A fact that I have not yet shared is that Pam is Lutheran. For all of our married life we practiced being both faiths, separately and jointly. Our kids were all baptized Catholic, but were also welcomed at the Lutheran church. It sounds complicated as I share this, but it wasn't. We just made it work. I did wish that we were together in one faith, and we even talked about becoming Methodist so that neither one of us would win or lose. I made the statement one day that I could change my label, but it would not change

### Spotlight on a deacon: celebrating 40 years Is timing involved in a man's calling to the permanent diaconate?



**The vocational calling of a deacon:** Since inquirers to the diaconate have many commitments to family, career, employment, community and church service, it is a matter of prudential judgment to explore not only whether the call to the diaconate is from the Holy Spirit, but also whether the inquirer is ready and able to respond to that call at the present time.

who I was. That ended the discussion, and we went on being separate, but joined. (Thankfully) That does not mean that we did not have the normal marital challenges; of course we did.

Pam was less than thrilled that she was expected to go to all of the classes with me, but she did go. We discovered the (huge) blessing of spending the drive time, which is something that we still enjoy today. The 4 ½ years of diaconal formation flew by, and we miss being with our classmates and discussing the many topics that came up during the diaconal formation process.

When ordination day came it was hard to think that this was coming to an end and that now I was going to do something different with my life. I will never forget what it felt like to lay on the floor of the

cathedral and physically feel the weight and the presence of the Holy Spirit on my back — a strong and comforting presence.

Today I serve in the Trinity Cluster that includes St. Mary, McGregor; St. Patrick, Monona; and St. Bridget, Postville. I truly love being at all three sites because I get to worship with the families there. Because of my family and my own interests, I am not there every weekend, but many of them. I am privileged to preach once a month, the thing that God called me to do. But much more than that, I have made many lifelong friends, and I get to touch lives as a loving presence. This, too, we are all to do.

God is calling each and every one of us each and every day to do something with our life to share what we have been given or to help others ...

## Archbishop to speak at CEO retreat

CEDAR RAPIDS — The 2018 Catholic Evangelization Outreach (CEO) Retreat is scheduled for June 30 at St. Ludmila Parish in Cedar Rapids, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. The theme will be evangelizing the family. The day will include multiple talks by

Archbishop Michael Jackels and Deacon Mark Sandersfeld, confession, adoration and Mass. The retreat is free and open to all. Please RSVP to Karen Mathison by calling 319-573-8106 or via email: mathison@mchsi.com by Friday June 22.

## Courage/Encourage ministry

Contrary to popular belief, the Catholic Church does not reject or hate persons with same-sex attraction. In fact, they are loved!

For confidential support in accord with Catholic teaching, please contact Father Jerry Kopacek at 641-393-2520 or by email at DBQ075@dbqarch.org.

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### Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper Position

Resumes are now being accepted for the position of Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper at St. Patrick Church in Clear Lake and bookkeeper at Sacred Heart in Rockwell. A job description can be found online at [stpatrik.weconnect.com](http://stpatrik.weconnect.com), or by contacting the St. Patrick office at [saintpatrick@ctel.net](mailto:saintpatrick@ctel.net) or (641) 357-3214.

### Youth Minister/Pastoral Associate

Epiphany Parish in Mason City, Iowa, has a job opening for a full-time Youth Minister/Pastoral Associate. This position, with benefits, addresses youth ministry needs AND broader parish initiatives being implemented with our ongoing parish planning. This role is not solely involved with youth ministry. It offers some exciting possibilities to grow our involvement as a parish of more deeply committed disciples with youth and adults. Application form and job description found at [www.epiphanyparish.org](http://www.epiphanyparish.org). Send application and resume to Carol Bruns 300 5th Street SE, Mason City, IA 50401 or [c.bruns@dbqarch.org](mailto:c.bruns@dbqarch.org).

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