

Dear Friends,

I have some wonderful news that I am delighted to share with you. Over this past weekend, one of our Parishioners, Patrick Lovro, was officially accepted as a candidate for the permanent diaconate in the Rockford Diocese. In just three short years, Pat will be ordained a permanent deacon. Pat is married to Jo-Anne and is the father of Nick, Ann and Mike. He works for Progressive Suspensions. The Lovro family moved to Genoa in the early 1990's and they have been active members of our parish ever since. He attended the Lay Ministry Formation program for the Rockford Diocese a few years before I moved here and he is currently the director of the RCIA process in our parish.

Permanent deacons serve very important functions in the church. From the time before St. Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles (between 85-95 A.D), deacons have functioned in the role of making sure that everything would be ready for the Eucharistic Celebration. It was also their function to assist in taking care of the poor, especially widows and orphans. Today, they serve in many other important ways in parish life. They help prepare couples for marriage; they provide pastoral care to the sick and dying; they help grieving families and they assist the priests in the celebration of the Mass. This liturgical assistance can even include preaching on Sundays.

Permanent deacons are often married men. They are among the few people who actually are allowed to receive all seven sacraments in their life time. If the spouse of a permanent deacon passes away, he promises to remain chaste and celibate, which means the permanent deacon cannot remarry after being widowed, that is, unless he wishes to have his faculties to serve as a deacon removed.

I asked Pat why he wants to be a permanent deacon and he responded in this way. He has known for several years that the Holy Spirit has been talking to him, calling him to step out from the sidelines to get into the game. While he was in the Lay Ministry Formation program, one of his instructors used the metaphor of baseball. Often times there are people who come to Mass and don't participate in any other way: they can be seen as people at the ballpark to watch a game. They are there, they cheer on the team, their support is very important. Some people enjoy playing baseball on a casual basis. They are like the people who get involved in a liturgical ministry, or maybe help with Religious Education classes and these ministries are vital to the life of the parish. Some people are good at baseball and try to play the game professionally. They might be sent down to the minor leagues at first, but they have the potential to move up to a higher level. These are the people who want to invest themselves more intimately into the life of the parish, maybe as paid staff. But getting ordained is a divine calling, and Pat has been listening carefully, discerning prayerfully the roles he is being called to play in the Church.

He likens the commitment to Holy Orders in the same way he considers marriage. When he married Jo-Anne he didn't know everything there was to know about being married, but in time, he knew that this is what God was calling him to and that it was right for him to spend his life being married to Jo-Anne. As he discerns his call to Holy Orders he is also discerning where his strengths lie. This is very important because when Pat gets ordained, we want to use his strengths to their fullest potential.

There is one thing we have to remember though: Pat is being ordained to the Rockford Diocese. Like me, he will promise obedience to the bishop and his successors which means he may not be serving in

our parish. Very likely, Pat will be here at St. Catherine of Genoa parish as a permanent deacon, but only time will tell. Please keep Pat in your prayers over these next three years that God will bless his discernment with a spirit of peace and perseverance. The call to Holy Orders is a difficult one to answer, and I have seen Pat work very hard in this process. But I look forward with joyful anticipation to the day Pat is called to Holy Orders.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel