

The Vocation office asked the priest of our diocese to share their vocation story for the weekends of September. In October all will have a chance to participate in the Call by Name. We will have cards during this time, and we would write the name of men who we feel to have a vocation to the priesthood. We will have an estimate of only 54 active priests, in our diocese under the age of 69. We currently have 126 parishes. We have gone through a process of merging, closing and consolidating

parishes to survive in the present. In our cluster alone we have closed St. Theresa in Brant Lake in 2008 and last year we closed St. Isaac Jogues-Blessed Sacrament in Hague which acted as a mission, seasonable church. And sadly, we will be closing St. James, North Creek in the end of October that has been a parish for 140 years opening its doors in 1884 having missions in Pottersville, Wevertown and Chestertown. Chestertown being the only church that remained open throughout the years.

We must do it because we just don't have the priest. As of other churches in diocese that will be closing. We are currently bringing back the Called By Name Program.

We did something similar 10 years ago and 30 years ago my name was chosen from that process 30 years ago. For those of you who don't know that I am from Long Island, Uniondale in Southern Nassau County. This explains why I am a Mets, Jets, Islanders, Nets fan. My parish was St. Martha in

Uniondale New York where I was baptized and received Holy Communion. The church was always an important part of my family life. My parents were born and raised in NYC children of Irish immigrants. My father was a New York City Police Detective and my housewife. I was the youngest of three children. I had two older sisters. I had two cousins from Ireland who were priest who came to live in our country. One left the priesthood to get married and the other was a priest and worked many

years at St. John University in Jamaica

Queens before he passed.

I became an altar server at St. Martha's and always remember the young associate pastor who trained me who had long hair to his ears. This was the 70's when we went from crew cuts to long hair. My two sisters were members of the parish folk group which helped found and I would later join this group five years later. I remember at an early age that my father would ask to me if I wanted to be a priest. And responded are

you nuts! No way! I did not know at that time a seed was planted by that question.

My mother was a great example for prayers to my sisters and me. They both recognized that I had a calling to the priesthood. Which might have been hard for him because I was his only son who could keep his namesake going. This didn't matter especially to my father.

When I was younger I did not like going to church. My father did a lot of overtime as a detective with NYPD. At times I would

not see him in days. He always try to ge
home on Sunday morning for Mass. It
would be 15 minutes before Mass time, and
it did not look like we were going to Mass. I
would get excited about this and
miraculously my father would come through
the front door saying, “Get in the car!”

I did not see any growth from that seed
until about the six grade. My little league
coach was a seminarian for the Diocese of
Rockville Centre. He would later be an
associate for the diocese and later be a

Maryknoll priest in Guatemala. He would leave the priesthood and get married and raise a family. But as my little league coach he would have us pray before and after each game. Another thing he would have us do, that I thought was so cool, our baseball fields were on the property of a nursing home called Holly Patterson and he would have us wheel some residents over to watch our games. One day I and a couple of my other friends helped him move him to his seminary in Huntington. When I met him

when he was going to Cathedral College in Douglaston Queens and he would start at their main seminary in Huntington LI. From those years I wanted to be a priest. But I also wanted to be a kid and fun too!

My father put his 20 years in and retire from the NYPD. He became a professor with Adirondack Community College and started their Criminal Justice program. So we moved to Glen Falls area, Queensbury when I was in the eighth grade. At this time, I would enjoy visiting churches and taking

pictures and collecting bulletins of church I visited for the first time. I still collect bulletins. Moving here was hard in a sense. We went to Our Lady of the Annunciation in Queensbury and my new parish was not as active as my Long Island parish. I attended St. Mary's Academy in Glens Falls and had four great years made a lot of friends and I expressed to them that I wanted to be a priest. Not one of them made fun of me for this. They made fun of me for other things but never for my vocation! I remember that

I would be sitting in the study hall in school, up to no good. I did not want to study or do homework. The principal would come in and say “O’Kane since your not doing anything productive help move in the new priest.” “Sure,” it got me out of the school! I would help move in the new associates by taking boxes from Father’s car up the long staircase to the third floor where the new Associates. I would move in and move out the associate priests of St. Mary’s into the rectory on Warren Street in Glens Falls.

Although I had a vocation, I also wanted to be a kid too and struggle with being worthy of being a priest. The things that my friends and I would do would not be the things future priests would do. I would graduate from high school and go to Adirondack Community College and later graduate from SUNY Plattsburgh. But never felt I was holy enough to be a priest. After college I tried to find work in NYC where my two sisters were living in Brooklyn. I spoke to a priest about

priesthood, but they felt I was immature.

So, I lack the confidence necessary to be a priest.

Although I was not ready, I had the desire for service. So, I moved back home and worked 11 years with Warren Washington ARC. I first worked in a group home called Wing House in Ft. Edward. I first worked in the Supportive Living Program helping higher functioning folks to learn the skills they needed to live in an apartment in the community. I was active in

church, but I did not have the confidence for priesthood. Finally, I had to address these feelings for priesthood that would never go away so I discerned and joined a diocesan discernment support group for men who felt they had a calling. The group was facilitated by the Associate Pastor in Blessed Sacrament in Albany and our first meeting was held in his suite which ironically would be my suite ten years later when I was ordained to priesthood.

After four years of discernment, I finally got off the fence or the pot as my home pastor would say and applied to the priesthood. I was accepted and I would study one year at Becket Hall in Rochester and would be part of the history of our great friendship with Rochester. I did four years at Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wisconsin, ten miles south from Milwaukee. I loved SHST but living in Milwaukee was interesting. I loved going to Bucks, Brewers and Marquette games but

they call soda a pop and they were big on bratwurst. Being originally from the NYC area I always thought there here was a hot dog and a sausage and there was no in between. As seminarian I had summer assignments at Our Lady Victory Troy, Holy Trinity in Johnstown, Blessed Sacrament in Albany. I did my summer hospital chaplaincy at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester living at Becket Hall. I did my pastoral year, working a full year at St.

James in Albany. This is one during 9/11 so I glad I was home during this time.

I was ordained by Bishop Hubbard in 2004 and was associate pastor at Blessed Sacrament in Albany before being assigned up here in Chestertown, North Creek and Hague and later Bolton Landing. I have been a priest for over 20 years and never regretted my decision.

I have done many things that I think I couldn't do in my early days. I have been blessed and privileged to be able to help

folks during the most important part of their lives. I must admit it has not been easy many obstacles, but the spirit has helped shepherding all you during your pains and joys of your lives. I do not regret any day that I am a priest. I am honored to be a priest during this time.

It is an interesting time to be a priest. When I was ordained, our church had stability and now we are going back to early apostles as we are creating that new identity and please think and pray for others who

could join me and our priests as we create
that brand new identity. In the weeks to
come I'll talk about my joys and challenges.