

Deacon Jerome P. Peterson

At a very young age, Deacon Jerome Peterson says he was aware that God was calling him to some type of service.

As he grew older, he realized that he was being called to married life. However, he says he could still sense that the Lord was asking something of him.

When the vocation of the permanent diaconate came to the Diocese of Erie, it seemed to be the ministry to which Deacon Peterson was being called. But he was reluctant to enter the program. There was one stumbling block for him. He says he was concerned about the church's requirement that an ordained deacon cannot marry again if his wife dies.

"I had difficulty with this as there was a time in my life when I experienced deep loneliness," Deacon Peterson says. "But then I reflected on Mary's call to her vocation as the mother of our savior. There were a number of valid reasons why Mary could have refused. Her 'yes' literally put her life in danger, yet she accepted."

He was ordained a permanent deacon by Bishop Donald Trautman on April 27, 2001 at St. Peter Cathedral in Erie. He is currently a deacon assistant at St. Julia Parish in Erie.

He describes his time serving as a deacon as "grace-filled, exciting and rewarding."

My Inspiration: "I am most inspired by three Scripture passages. First, Joshua 24:15, 'As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.' Second, John 2:5, 'His mother instructed those waiting on table, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Finally, John 6:68, 'Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'" – Deacon Jerome Peterson



Deacon assistant:
St. Julia, Erie
St. Patrick, Erie
Prison ministry apostolate

"I continue in my service as deacon because I can see the good works that God is completing through me," Deacon Peterson says. "I have been able to enter into ministries I can share with my wife, Joan. These ministries enrich our marriage."

He and Joan have been married since 1983. He has three step-sons, Gary, Mike and Joe, who is married to Kelly. Deacon Peterson and his wife also have three sons of their own, Collin, Liam and Cade.

Growing up, he says his faith was nurtured by his parents, Jack and Dorothy Peterson.

"I cannot recall a single day in my life wondering if they loved me," he says.

If he had just one more homily to give, Deacon Peterson says he would preach on the role of a man in his marriage and his vital role as father to his children (Ephesians 5:22-33).

"I will never tire of teaching this lesson," he says. "As an elementary school teacher, I experience first-hand the differences in children who are aware that they are loved by their parents and those children who know that they are unwanted and unloved. You cannot imagine the damage that has been done by men who do not live their vocation as husband and father."

He encourages young people trying to discern their vocation in life to allow themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit.

"God will not call you to a vocation and allow you to be miserable," he says. "On the contrary, a person is happiest when doing God's will."

Deacon David A. Pratt

Deacon David Pratt first found out about the Diocese of Erie's Permanent Diaconate Formation Program when his wife, Judy, showed him an article about it in a 1994 issue of the Lake Shore Visitor. She encouraged him to look into the program, which helps prepare those who are called to ordained ministry as a deacon.

"After making a half-hearted telephone call, I procrastinated until I forgot about it," Deacon Pratt admits.

He felt differently in 1996 after reading another article about the program and decided to pursue the calling.

"I believe the first call was the Lord giving me a 'preview of the coming attraction,'" he says.

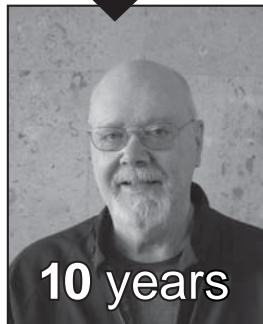
Deacon Pratt was ordained a permanent deacon on April 27, 2001.

Before looking at the permanent diaconate, Deacon Pratt had thoughts as a young man about joining the priesthood. He was an altar boy from his grade school years at St. John the Baptist in Erie through his four years at Cathedral Preparatory School.

In college, both David and Judy thought they had religious vocations and went to see Msgr. James Peterson to discuss them. But something interesting happened.

"Two years later, I told Father Pete that Judy and I were engaged," Deacon Pratt says. "He congratulated me and said, 'The ways of God are strange.'"

He serves at St. Jude the Apostle Parish in Erie.



Deacon assistant: St. Jude the Apostle, Erie

Deacon Pratt was previously a member of the parish stewardship and liturgy committees, a lector, eucharistic minister, catechist, member of the parish choir and parish Cursillo coordinator.

He previously worked as an auditor in the diocesan marriage tribunal and as a development consultant for the International Institute of Erie.

He has served as president of the Serra Club of Erie and as a lector and altar server for the TV Mass for shut-ins.

The faith of numerous people has touched Deacon Pratt throughout his life, including that of his family along with Msgr. Peterson, Father

James Sperry, Msgr. Robert Brugger and Father Jerry Simmons.

He is also inspired by his family. He and Judy have been married for 51 years and are the parents of grown children, Debbé, Dave, Mike and Damian. They also have eight grandchildren.

Ten years after his ordination, he is most proud of the work he does with the elderly and new deacons.

With the encouragement and support of Msgr. Robert Smith, director of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program, Deacon Pratt says he and his fellow deacons were able to implement a deacon ministerial program in many nursing homes.

He says he has also enjoyed the opportunity to teach in the diaconal formation program.

My Inspiration: "Hymns and Psalms that are sung inspire me. Well done liturgies, homilies and spiritual music, especially the Ave Maria. Most importantly, the holy Eucharist."

– Deacon David Pratt



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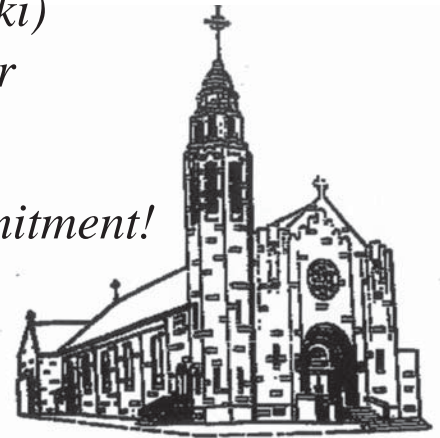
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then you will set the world on fire."

- St. Catherine of Siena



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