He and his three brothers would canoe down the Clarion with the hopes of high adventure. But the shallow waters in the heat of summer put an end to their fun. They often were forced to pull their stuck vessel away from rocks or out of the muddy riverbed.

For the brothers, canoeing became more frustrating than enjoyable.

Years later, Father Detisch found himself at Cook Forest again, this time with friends. A regular park visitor offered some advice that changed Father Detisch’s perception of canoeing and, ultimately, how he would come to view his own priesthood.


In the introduction, Father Detisch writes of his encounter with the park visitor: “He told us to look for the darker colored stream in the midst of the river. That was where the water was deeper and more easily navigable.”

Father Detisch, 58, calls finding the deeper stream an “apt metaphor” for his own spiritual journey as a priest of the Diocese of Erie the past 32 years. Administrator of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Girard, he also serves as an adjunct faculty member at St. Mary’s Seminary in Wickliffe, Ohio, and a spiritual director to priests, sisters and lay people.

In all of his ministries, he tries to help others prepare for and navigate life’s unexpected frustrations. The result can be a sustained joy that helps one remain committed to his or her own particular path.
the book could apply to anyone in any vocation, they are specifically designed to assist priests, seminarians, those who work with seminarians, and those charged with the ongoing formation of priests. It outlines three stages of what he calls “archetypal energy” in men: the hero, the servant and the mystic.

Father Detisch explains, “The hero’s energy is for Christ, the servant’s energy is with Christ, and the mystic’s energy is in Christ.”

Without direction, the natural shift among these archetypes can get confusing, he says. If life gets difficult, if loneliness strikes and if doubts enter in, anyone can become fearful.

“When priests experience one of these shifts in their lives, the unsettledness they feel can make it too easy for them to make hasty or poor choices,” Father Detisch says. “In the book, I keep encouraging priests to stay with a spiritual director or a faith support group in order to stay connected to the inner life.”

“He finished writing the volume more than a year ago, but it comes at a relevant time in church history. The current sex abuse crisis, Father Detisch says, requires priests and seminarians to be seriously introspective.

Throughout its 168 pages, From Hero to Servant to Mystic explores helpful methods by which priests can navigate the rivers of change in their own lives, challenging as they may seem.”

“THE HERO’S ENERGY IS FOR CHRIST, THE SERVANT’S ENERGY IS WITH CHRIST, AND THE MYSTIC’S ENERGY IS IN CHRIST.”

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