

CLERGY APPRECIATION MONTH

Did You Know?

Deacon Dave Smith

Growing up, Deacon Dave Smith learned the importance of his Catholic faith from his devout mother and a supportive father who joined the Catholic Church at age 60. "I had a mother who guided us. She had us knowing our religion," says Deacon Dave.

Like most of his peers, in elementary school Deacon Dave was an altar boy who thought about becoming a priest. "I thought I had a calling when I was in fourth or fifth grade," he says. "We all think we have that calling at that age."

He attended Regina Coeli for eight years, followed by four years at Central Catholic High School. After high school, Deacon Dave attended the University of Toledo and worked during the summers at different factories in the area.

Figuring out his life path wasn't a simple task, but it got a little easier when a co-worker told him her daughter was impressed with him, although she had yet to meet Dave. Unbeknownst to Deacon Dave, the woman also told her daughter that he was impressed with her, even though Deacon Dave had never seen her daughter. When Dave finally met Sue, the connection was immediate, and Sue's mother's tales became true.

"Sue and I dated," says Deacon Dave said of the next step in his life. "I tested for the Toledo Police Department and passed."

Following his graduation from the Police Academy in July 1973, Deacon Dave and Sue were married in August 1973. His police career lasted for 15 years until a fateful winter foot chase after a burglar ended with a serious fall. "I broke my neck," Deacon Dave says. "I was off all of 1989 and I retired in June 1990 with a medical discharge."

During his year of recovery, Deacon Dave finished up working on a law degree and passed the bar exam. He opened up his legal practice in 1990 after retiring from the police department.

His law career transformed five years later when he became a magistrate for Toledo Municipal Court. For 21 years, Deacon Dave presided in a downtown Toledo courtroom before retiring.

Along the way, God gave him a nudge for a different kind of service. "I felt another calling – to the diaconate," he says. "I came into this with a background of service. I am thankful to have had three careers. I'm very blessed."

His years of study in the Diocese of Toledo diaconate program ended with his ordination in 2014, and Deacon Dave was assigned to Immaculate Conception Catholic Church and his home parish at the Historic Church of Saint Patrick. He is now also a chaplain for the Toledo Fire Department.

Despite being a proud Irish-American, Deacon Dave had never been in the Historic Church of Saint Patrick until he and his wife Sue stopped in for Mass more than 25 years ago instead of heading to Rosary Cathedral as they had planned.

“I saw the shamrocks on the floor,” says Deacon Dave “and I said to Sue, ‘We are home.’”

Family is the most important thing for him. Adopted as an infant, Deacon Dave is thankful for his birth mother’s decision to allow him to be raised by his parents. He appreciates his parents’ unconditional love and acceptance of him and his brother.

He treasures his wife, Sue, who converted to Catholicism while they were dating. “I married way over my head,” he says. “She has been a wonderful Catholic.”

He is thankful and proud of his son, David, and daughter, Sarah, and feels blessed with his son-in-law Rodney, and grandsons Zach and Luke. Like any family, Deacon Dave and Sue have struggled with health issues themselves and, more concerning, with their grandsons.

Their Historic Church of Saint Patrick family has helped support them through all the struggles. The faith of the parish has helped the faith of his immediate family. Prayer for Deacon Dave is a way to connect with God and to connect with other people.

“I thank our church every day,” says Deacon Dave. “I appreciate all the prayers. You learn to take comfort in your prayers. I can feel it when people are praying for us. I really can. It’s joyful when you find you can have conversations in your prayers.”

Faith is a blessing for Deacon Dave. He credits the start of it to his mother, and the deepening of his faith to his wife and his involvement with the Catholic Church.

“I try to live my faith every day,” he says. “Faith is a celebration and I want to be involved.”

Following Christ’s example can be challenging, but Deacon Dave prays for strength and is willing to try his best – not because his choices will get him accolades, but because it’s important for him to make a difference. “I don’t need people to clap me on the back,” says Deacon Dave.

Answering God’s call to join the diaconate requires hard work and dedication but is totally worthwhile. “I’m happy as a deacon,” he says.