

The Deacon's Corner

By Deacon Ron Desmarais

Who is Deacon Ron? (Part 2)

When I started attending Mass Fr. Lugar asked me on several occasions if I would lector. There was no scheduled lector or Eucharistic Ministers so it was hit or miss who might be asked to serve. After a while he just assumed I'd be his reader at Mass because we went to the 5:00 pretty regular. That is when I found that I was a pretty good Lector, and I enjoyed doing it. Along with attending Mass we continued to go to our small Marriage Encounter group meetings. This continued for 8 months until we left for Augsburg, Germany. This assignment was something Paula and I had both looked forward to for a long time and we would be returning to a place we both had fond memories of; little did we know that it would be a real blessing for both of us.

I knew that going to Germany was a good thing for me I saw it as a means to begin a new "me", rekindle our marriage, and return to a place where our marriage got off to a good start. I knew that my "new" life was going to bring me into contact with a people other than those who I normally worked with.

Little did Paula and I know how much that tour would change; both our marriage, and our relationship with God. I won't go into all the detail however I will say that the Lord placed many people in our path to support us in our faith, share our love of God, and to experience our faith in totally new ways. We had three great priests during our 4 years in Germany: Fr. Spiegel who liked to take pilgrimages, Fr. Stueben through his intercession I became involved with RCIA. Fr. Stueben had a stroke while there and had to return home for speech therapy. He was replaced by Fr. Piskura, who became a part of our family. We spent many a nights watching action movies because he liked seeing the Good Guys win. There was also Fr.

Benedict, an American with a Benedictine missionary Order supporting Africa. He served our parish when our pastor was in the field with the 7th Artillery.

During our tour Paula was active in several ministries not necessarily the same ones I became involved with. I tried being a CCD teacher and soon found that that was not going to be my calling. I continued as a lector, but also tried the choir. I enjoyed that as I'm not the best singer, but I was a male and they needed as many male voices as they could get. I also tried several other ministries, but the real ministry that called to me was the RCIA program getting started at that time. Lucky for me the Military Ordinariate had the National RCIA team come over to provide training and I was able to attend. Once I became involved with RCIA I knew that this was where I was meant to be. People remarked on my knowledge of the faith, but I told them, "I'm only one chapter ahead of you in the book". And I sincerely believe that! People don't realize how much they already know they just haven't tapped it. All they have to do is open the scripture and read God will provide the answers if you only stop long enough to listen. He will even send someone to help explain the answers to your questions if you only give him a chance.

As I said earlier, we were able to make several pilgrimages while there: to Italy (several times), Israel, and to Lourdes. It is the Lourdes trip that I would like to tell you about. Every year in June Catholic military personnel in NATO would hold a pilgrimage to Lourdes, France. There were thousands of military, family members, and civilians who would make that pilgrimage. We were broken up into language groups for the Liturgy of the Word, and would come together for the Liturgy of the Eucharistic. To see thousands

of military personnel from throughout Europe, in their dress uniforms attending Mass and receiving communion was breath taking. To see flags from nations around the world, soldiers marching to Mass or other events, proud to be representing their countries and sharing a love of their faith. It was like watching the opening ceremonies of the Olympics. On Saturday Night to see nothing but as sea of candles, to hear thousands of people praying in their own language and concluding by singing the Ave Maria in Latin waving candles was just awesome. But it isn't the end of the pilgrimage I wanted to talk about, but the journey.

Fr. Spiegel was a great pilgrimage organizer and he and his friend Alfredo, our tour bus driver, planned this one; our itinerary included Never, France to visit St. Bernadette's convent and see her uncorrupted body. Our second stop was to be Avignon, France to visit the papal palace and finally to arrive in Lourdes. While in Avignon we were sitting on the deck of the hotel enjoying the summer breezes of southern France, sipping wine, and talking about our pilgrimage, and our expectations. One of our trip mates, SFC Gutierrez said that when he retired he wanted to return to San Antonio and become a Deacon. I didn't know what a Deacon was or anything about it so I asked him. He explained how Vatican II reinstated the Permanent Diaconate, what the diaconate was about, and what it would mean to him to become a Deacon. After he finished I thought to myself "I could do that".

We finished the trip to Lourdes and all the wonderful things that we experience there. Now flash forward several years, in 1988 I retired from the Army and along with my family journey to Benson, Arizona to join Paula's Mother and Father. In 1992, soon after Fr. Ray became pastor he called me at work and asked if I would be interested in

the Diaconate. I said, "Yes". He then asked if I wanted to talk it over with Paula first. I told him "If this is where the Lord wanted me she would support me". I told him that after I came back to the church that I resolved never to say "NO" to God again. He accepted my answer and hurriedly submitted Tom Adams and my name for the next class. Unknowingly we went to the first meeting thinking it was an information session to find ourselves in the actual start of class. Surprise!

Needless to say after 4 years of attending Diaconate training, completing my Bachelor of Science degree, and supporting my boys playing football, I was ordained on 8 June 1996. It wasn't until after I was ordained that I realized that many years before on that trip to Lourdes, when I first acknowledged that I was open to the Diaconate, that I would be ordained a deacon at Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Benson, Arizona. So a casual "yes" in Avignon, France led me to another "yes" in Benson, Arizona. Now 15 years later Tom and I continue to serve you and our parish.

"That is my story and I'm sticking to it", as they say. I have told portions of this story in my homilies, to RCIA classes, and other venues, but I have never sat down and written it all out like I have here. I wanted to share this with you, to let you know who I am, and how I came to be here. It has been a long and circuitous journey with many twists and turns. I just wanted to share with you how God has worked in my life and brought me to this point. Our God is an awesome God. If he can work with the sinful man that I was he can work with you or your children. Have faith. My wife likes to tell people that she prayed for me to come back to church and now she can't get me out.

I love serving you and the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, thank you for your support these last 15 years.