



You just never know what God has in store for you in life. I was born into a Catholic family and baptized seven days after my birth on October 28, 1950 in a small Catholic church in the farming community of Clements, Minnesota. I was second oldest of eight children. Since my father learned electronics in the Navy, we moved from the farm to Minneapolis where he went to work for Honeywell. He was not fond of farming. Since there were so many children in our family, we attended public schools. Attending Mass regularly on Sundays as a family, we took up a whole pew! I attended Sunday school and received First Holy Communion at age 7 and confirmation at age 11, choosing the patron saint Paul. When I reflect back now on those years growing up, I wonder perhaps if I had been able to be involved in some way during the Mass like other boys in my neighborhood who attended Catholic school and were altar servers, if I might have stayed closer to God. Public school children were not allowed to be altar servers. After high school, I started drifting away from my Catholic faith and for the most part just lost interest in the church as a whole. I didn't think it had anything to offer me as a young adult.

I went to a community college where I spent five years, finally graduating with a degree in Applied Sciences for Respiratory Therapy. Believing this profession would be a worthwhile and meaningful career to help those who suffer with respiratory ailments, I began working and had jobs in Minneapolis and Albert Lea, Minnesota, and then landed in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1980, taking a job at the old Doctor's Hospital. My daughter was born three weeks after moving to Tulsa. My first wife and I considered ourselves non-denominational Christians. But every time I went home to see my parents, I always went to Mass with them. It wasn't until I went through both a divorce in 1998 and my father's death that I received some hints about returning to the Catholic faith, as I was asked to do one of the readings at my father's funeral Mass.

Later that year, I attended a retirement reception with a colleague from the hospital because her husband was running late. As I was greeting people I knew, I noticed a woman who had special grace about her. We met because others at this gathering thought we should. The next day, I e-mailed several of my colleagues to find out more about her. My boss told me that she was too religious for me, she was a "Catholic." Little did I know that this religious woman would help change my life forever. After meeting with an Augustinian priest, Fr. John Gaffney, I reentered the Catholic faith in 2000. I married to that Catholic woman, Toni Saffa, in July of that year. During my first year of being re-Catholic-ed, I knew there were a lot of things that I had forgotten, so I joined the RCIA class. Well, after three weeks of class, they made me a sponsor. I tried to say no; I just wanted to relearn my Catholic faith. Sr. Connie, Director of the RCIA at the time, told me what better way to learn your faith than sponsor someone else. How do you say no to a nun?

In 2001 at the age of 50, I received a MBA in business and told Toni that I was never going to school ever again. God has a funny way of showing you that He is the guide of your life. As I

became more involved in the Church, I noticed at the Masses there were adults who helped the Priest with Mass, aside from the occasional Deacon. I inquired about how someone might become a Liturgical Assistant. This became the connection of the altar server I missed out on in my early childhood. After training to become an LA with Deacon John Johnson, I felt more involved in liturgy, and closer and closer to God in the Mass.

Something began pulling me toward the diaconate. I was invited by a friend to attend Madalene's Men's Retreat at Fort Gibson, where I met Deacon DeWeese. Toni and I became a part of a bible study group with three other couples, one of the men being Deacon Alan Mikell. In 2004, I attended a Cursillo retreat in May and went to an Eucharistic Congress at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. in September. Wow, it was awesome! The theme was "where Heaven unites with earth", which was followed by the Year of the Eucharist. I attended the closing Mass where there were 7 Cardinals, 30 bishops, and representation from all religious orders in the states, not to mention hundreds of priests and deacons. As a layperson I was a minority. I had waded into the deep water!

In the months that followed, many parishioners at Christ the King started asking me about becoming a deacon since I had become so involved with parish life. I thought to myself, "Well, if God's wants me do this or not, he will help discern this vocation." I knew I wasn't worthy. I applied to the program and was accepted to begin in the fall of 2005. Well, here I was again... back in school, something I had promised myself I would never attend again. I figured that if my grades were not good enough, they would ask to leave the program. Well that never happened. I was ordained a deacon on Pentecost Sunday, June 12, 2011. My primary assignment is to the people of the parish of Christ the King and secondary assignment to the ministry of Rachel's Vineyard, retreats for post-abortion healing. Additionally, I am an advocate for the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal.

In truth my vocation has given me more than I deserve. I am humbled each day by God's presence in my life. I thank each person who has spoken an encouraging word or said a prayer for me since ordination. In Joshua 24:15b, it states, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." I like being a deacon and I like helping people in whatever capacity God calls me to serve.