

Celebrating Vocations



Two young women from the Archdiocese of Toronto recently entered the Sisters of Life!
www.sistersoflife.org

Sr. Charity (Emma Brown, pictured below) from Guardian Angels parish in Orillia, entered in 2016. Prior to that, she served for two summers as a Totus Tuus missionary. Marlena Loughheed (top right in group picture), from St. Paul's Basilica Toronto, entered in 2017, and previously worked for four years in the Office of Public Relations and Communication at the Archdiocese.

The Sisters of Life were founded in 1991 and are dedicated to pray and work for the protection of human life. They have been in the Archdiocese of Toronto since 2007 and offer assistance to vulnerable pregnant women in need, hope and healing after abortion, retreats and evangelization.



Journey of Faith: Call to Marriage

By Joe Di Fonzo, Program Coordinator at the Office of Vocations

God, in his master plan, puts people in our lives to lead us to Him and to help us discern our vocation. My parents, with three very young children, immigrated to Canada in 1955 with no formal education, no money, and no English language. What they had was a sacrificial work ethic, a supportive extended family and a faith that God would provide. The Italian culture back then clearly defined parental roles and responsibilities. Dad worked and focused on making ends meet, while my mother focused on the home, the children and the faith (though she too worked outside the home for many years). Her devotion and weekly mass attendance with my siblings and I planted the first seeds of the faith. Unfortunately, during the teenage years without enough adult male example, the faith waned. Sports had more of my attention. But, God used that love of athletics to his advantage. While at university, my daily routine was a visit to the campus gym. There I befriended another weight room enthusiast who happened to be a priest. He was instrumental in awakening a dormant faith, in helping me discern my vocation to marriage and in finding a calling to a career in teaching.



The first of many vocation celebrations for Joe and Rachel's seven sons

While at my first school assignment, I met my wife to be, Rachel. Though from different cultures and having different interests (music vs. sports), we shared the values that matter most: faith, family and friends. My wife came to personify the two ends of marriage: love and life, more specifically, sacrificial love and the raising of seven sons to help them become the best version of themselves...to grow in holiness.

She was the third person strategically placed in my life to assist me in my faith journey and to help me in that universal call to holiness. My teaching career, through a variety of circumstances, led me to spending most of my 32 years in teaching Religion and Phys. Ed., two great loves in my life. Once retired, I was asked by Fr. Hansoo Park, the Vocations Director at the time, a former associate pastor at our parish, to join the Office of Vocations as a program coordinator and in particular to bring the Totus Tuus program to Toronto. These last eight years have been a great blessing in so many ways as the office programs have expanded under the leadership of Fr. Chris Lemieux. I have had the pleasure of accompanying many men in their own vocation journey to the priesthood. Safe to say that every journey of faith and vocation story involves the hand of God through people he places in our lives.



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VOCATIONSTORONTO TODAY

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From the Director's Desk

My Dear Friends in Christ,

I want to welcome you to the first edition of *Vocations Toronto Today*, a general vocations newsletter published by the Office of Vocations for the Archdiocese of Toronto. When I began my ministry as Director of Vocations in July of 2014, it was my desire to be a collaborator with many throughout the archdiocese to help build and rebuild a culture of vocations in our very thriving communities.

We have seen many successes in these past few years. What started as a Prayer Vigil at St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica the evening before the Toronto ordinations to Priesthood, has now become a day set aside in the archdiocese to pray for vocations (in addition to the World Day of Prayer for Vocations). With the assistance of the vocations team, especially the Vocations Council, we are hosting discernment groups in strategic and regional locations to help

men discern in local and comfortable settings. We continue to help both men and women with referrals to vibrant religious communities. The Office of Vocations supports the Office of the Diaconate by helping men who may feel called to the Permanent Diaconate find their way.

In a busy world, we need to use social media and tools such as this newsletter to stay connected, and so I offer you the first of a quarterly newsletter with information about our seminarians, Vocations Office programs, and events. In return, I kindly ask for your prayers. Praying for vocations is perhaps the most important thing any of us can do; and we can be assured that the Lord will continue to send many labourers into His bountiful harvest.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

Fr. Chris Lemieux



Religious Priest Turned Diocesan Priest



Fr. Pat O'Dea was born in Ireland in 1951, the third oldest of six children. His family immigrated to Rochester, New York when he was seven years old. Following high school, he enlisted in the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War, serving four years in the military. During his time, he was guided by a chaplain as he quietly discerned a vocation to

the priesthood, something he had considered earlier in his life. He also began a two-year correspondence with Fr. Joseph Lupo, a vocation director who supported his vocation. Following military service, Fr. Pat pursued what he felt at the time was a call to religious life. He joined the Order of the Most Holy Trinity (Trinitarians) at the invitation of Fr. Lupo. He studied philosophy at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland, and received a Masters of Theology Degree from the Washington Theological Union. He was ordained a deacon on May 12, 1981 at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception (Washington, D.C.), and was ordained to the Priesthood by Bishop Francis Stafford (now Cardinal Stafford), at Holy Trinity Monastery in Baltimore on September 19, 1981.

Just before his ordination, the Archdiocese of Toronto contacted the Order of the Most Holy Trinity, requesting three priests to serve in the archdiocese. As a newly ordained priest, Fr. Pat was chosen to go. This was a timely decision on the part of his superiors, as Fr. Pat's father had passed away suddenly, and they felt the proximity of Toronto to Rochester would allow Fr. Pat to be closer to his family in their time of loss. This decision would also prove to be an important turning point in Fr. Pat's vocation, since this first assignment helped him and his religious superiors discern that his call was more ideally suited to diocesan ministry. He joined the Archdiocese of Toronto with the blessing of his Order a few years later, and still remains in touch with the community and his spiritual mentor to this day.

Fr. Pat served as an Associate Pastor at St. Anne's in Brampton, at Transfiguration of Our Lord, at St. Timothy's in North York, and at St. Patrick's in Markham. During this time, he was also invited by

Cardinal Carter and the Council of Priests to produce a study on Youth Ministry for the Archdiocese, due to his active work with youth in each of his parishes. His report recommended an Office of Catholic Youth, which was established by Cardinal Ambrozic in 1991. In the same year, Fr. Pat was appointed Director of Vocations and Rector of Serra House. Along with Fr. Norm Roberts, Fr. Pat helped coordinate the World Youth Day Toronto pilgrimage to Denver, Colorado, in 1993, with over 500 pilgrims attending from Toronto. Fr. Pat served as Director of Vocations for nine years, and was then appointed Director of the Newman Centre and Roman Catholic chaplain of the University of Toronto from 2000 - 2009.

Most recently, Fr. Pat served as Pastor of St. Marguerite d'Youville Parish in Brampton, 2009 -2014, and is currently the Pastor of St. Edward the Confessor Parish in North York. He loves to build community, with a particular emphasis on encouraging the gifts of people of all ages, especially the young, and building strong relationships between parishes and schools. He was recently recognized by the Toronto Catholic School Board with the 2017 Award of Merit for his ministry in this area.

As much as he loves this work, Fr. Pat's greatest joy is in supporting vocations to the priesthood. As he often jokes, "once a vocation director, always a vocation director!" In the past few years, he has welcomed seminarian interns for their parish internship experience, working in collaboration with St. Augustine's Seminary and the Office of Vocations. Fr. Michael Simoes, Fr. Rick Davis, and Fr. Favin Alemão have been recent interns under his guidance.

Fr. Pat recently celebrated 35 years of priestly ministry, and says he cannot believe how much has been achieved in such a "short" time. He feels truly blessed. One of the most memorable events of this anniversary year was a note he received from the Bishop who ordained him. Cardinal Stafford is now retired and living in Rome, but he and Fr. Pat exchanged emails on the anniversary of his Ordination, September 19th. Fr. Pat thanked him for ordaining him. Yet, he was more touched by something the Cardinal said in return: not only did he enjoy ordaining him, but he continues, to this day, to remember Fr. Pat in his daily prayers. In this, Fr. Pat says we cannot stress enough the power of prayer, especially for those serving in the Lord's vineyard.



Vocation Story of a Franciscan Nun

My greatest joy in life is God. His great love for me has been shown to me in the last 30 years of my life as a Felician Franciscan Sister. My faith journey began when I was searching for a deeper meaning and purpose to my life after the sudden death of my Dad in the summer of 1982. I searched for ways to fill the void his death left in my life. The only thing that helped was learning about God, about the Catholic faith, and journeying toward reception into the Catholic faith at the Easter Vigil of 1984. My new understanding of God being part of my life was that I could pray daily, attend Sunday Mass, receive Holy Communion and be like most other Catholics.

What I did not realize then is that when you allow God to become part of your life, heart and soul, He is in charge and has His own great plans for you, no matter what you think your life plans should be. I became involved in my parish CWL, took part in starting a young adult group at my parish, St. Michael's Cathedral, was introduced to the social outreach ministry of helping the poor and homeless, and experienced the visit of Saint Pope John Paul II to Toronto in the fall of 1984. These experiences helped God get my attention to start thinking about religious life. Oh my, what did it mean to become a nun? God provided the answers, the next three years, in a variety of ways.

"When you allow God to become part of your life, heart and soul, He is in charge and has His own great plans for you, no matter what you think your life plans should be."



Sr. Christina Kazimirek, FSSP

Trusting in God, I shared my thoughts with a priest who introduced me to a Felician Sister who referred me to the community's vocation director. Once I began the stage of exploring religious life, there was no turning back. I spent time with some religious communities but always came back to the Felician Sisters. I felt comfortable and at home with this community, spending time with them in prayer, celebrations and daily life. In 1987 I began my formation with the Felician Sisters - postulant, then a novice - to the point of professing my First Vows on August 11, 1990. As a religious, I have had the blessing to be of service to God's people in a variety of ministries, for which I am grateful.

Vocation Events Around the Arch



Friday May 11, 2018
Toronto Ordination Prayer Vigil
 ⇒ 6:00pm - Midnight
 ⇒ St. Augustine's Seminary



Friday May 4, 2018
Archdiocesan Day of Prayer for Vocations
 ⇒ Contact your parish for local prayer initiatives
 ⇒ Pray anytime for vocations to the priesthood and religious life

Check out our Vocations Programs on www.vocationstoronto.ca
 ⇒ Come and See weekends
 ⇒ Totus Tuus
 ⇒ Quo Vadis
 ⇒ Associates Program

Saturday May 12, 2018
Archdiocesan Priestly Ordination
 ⇒ 10:00am
 ⇒ St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica