

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*  
Robert Frost (1874–1963)



If there is a “typical” path to the priesthood, it would probably be the young man attending college and then entering a seminary. After years of formation, that young man would be ordained a priest in his mid to late twenties. I took the “road less traveled” and it has been an amazing journey.

Early in my life, I served as an altar boy in South Portland, Maine, where I grew up. I had some thoughts that being a priest might be an option for me. I was active in my church, even then. Beginning in Junior High School, I became an organist at my parish. But those thoughts of priesthood quickly dispersed when I took Chemistry in High School and found that I had a passion for the subject.



I went to the University of Maine in Orono, and stayed active in the Newman Center there as an organist in a folk group. There, I met a young woman named Carmen, who played the guitar. Now I must admit, we did not like each other at first, but a friendship grew and eventually we began dating. I graduated with a B.S. in Chemical Engineering in 1979. She graduated the next year and we were married soon after.

Within a year, we moved to Massachusetts for better jobs. Within 2 years, my company sent me to Arizona for 3 years and then we settled into our home of almost 30 years in Ayer, Massachusetts.



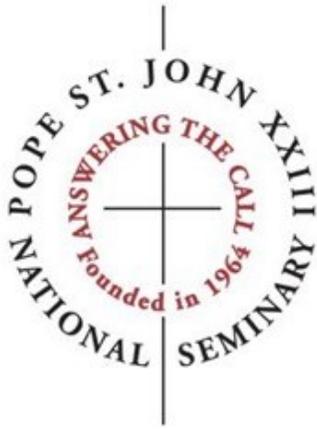
We were both well employed and had a pretty good life together. There were bumps in the road, we were not blessed with children, but we shared 30 years of our lives together. I moved out of Chemical Engineering and into computer programming. To support this, I went back to school at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and received a Master’s in Computer Science in 1993. At that time, I vowed to never return to school. Do you want to hear God laugh? Just tell him your plans! Our plans included living a long and happy life together. Those plans also changed. One day, Carmen said to me, completely out of the blue, “If anything were to happen to me, you’d never remarry, you’d just become a priest.” She was a very wise woman.



In our travels and as we finally settled in Ayer, we continued to practice our faith. We were both active in the church and were part of a music ministry everywhere we went. In 1985, we joined St. Catherine’s Church in Westford and could be found there every Sunday, playing the organ (me), guitar (her) and singing with the music group. We helped to stage several musical productions and cabaret nights as well.

In 1998, Carmen fell on her tailbone and within two weeks began to develop some neurological problems. It was soon diagnosed as POEMS Syndrome and/or Castleman’s disease (depending on the doctor you spoke with). At the time, there were only 250 cases reported in the U.S. and she was given two years to live. Fortunately, we had eleven more years together. The disease took its toll and she became weaker, but that did not stop her from fighting and enjoying our vacations to Disneyworld. (I freely admit to being a Disney addict.)

Carmen just humored me, but we always enjoyed our time there. I would push her around the parks and we would see the sights, dine at the restaurants and just enjoy our time together.



Finally in December of 2009, Carmen died quietly in our bedroom at home. We knew that the time was close and had the time to say everything that a couple would want to say to each other before one of them died. It was a peaceful event surrounded by friends and family. I cannot describe how special that day was to us all.

After her death, I had the opportunity to consider new paths in my life. I was NOT thinking about the priesthood! Then out of a sound sleep, a voice woke me up, "Now will you follow me?" I did not think too much about it, but the next week in our church bulletin was a note, "Is God calling you to a vocation?" I signed up for a retreat at Pope St. John XXII National Seminary.

This retreat was less than 3 months after my wife's death and was too early to enter, but I had to know more. (By the way, soon after this retreat, my Mom (who had been in an Alzheimer's care unit) also passed away. My dad and I found we had even more in common.)

I spoke to my family and friends and they all said, "Of course you should" or "It's about time." Carmen's prediction for my future life was about to come true. Her 30 years of love and helping me grow made me a much better man than I was. I don't think I would have made a good priest right out of college. That "road less traveled" had curved around and was now pointing to the seminary and priesthood.



In the summer of 2011, I quit my job and put my house on the market. The house sold and I bought a condominium in Maine. My family moved into the condo and I have a place to visit on days off. That September, I entered a 4 year program at Pope St. John Seminary. This seminary is one of three seminaries in the US that specialize in older vocations. It is a national seminary, so men come here from all over the US and indeed the world.

My dad drove down from Maine when I was instituted as an Acolyte. I cannot remember a time that he was more proud of me. He kept telling everyone that he knew back in Maine that I was going to be a priest.

The 4 years went by very quickly. The days could drag, but the years flew by. I was assigned to parishes in Milton, Franklin, Hull, Manchester/Essex and Abington/Whitman for my pastoral work.

In January of this year, I was ordained a Deacon by Cardinal Sean and served in the Abington/Whitman "The Light of Christ Catholic Collaborative" until May.



On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Cardinal once again ordained me, this time as a priest. I celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at my home parish of St. Catherine's in Westford, where Carmen and I had worshipped and provided music for so many years. My dad was glad to be able to make it to the ordination and Mass of Thanksgiving. At 95, he does not travel much, but he would not miss this for the world.

