

Journey Jottings—Notes from St. Luke’s Deacon in Formation

Deacon formation classes were held twice in December, with only two weeks in between, so there was a lot of reading and writing to be done in a compressed period of time. The first class was held on December 1st, as our November class had been postponed due to unforeseen circumstances that arose on the day we were scheduled to meet. It reminded me of a quote of John Lennon: “Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans!” In any case, the topic for the day was “The Deacon as Prophet.” Most of the class dealt with the content of Walter Brueggemann’s classic book, *The Prophetic Imagination*. To try to summarize this classic work in a sentence or two would be a great disservice to Brueggemann, but a basic takeaway is that the prophet’s role is to both criticize and energize, and to speak in the language of a poet, using metaphors and images that stir people to repentance and conversion. To this end, we were asked to write a prophetic oracle, in class, about a contemporary social issue about which we are passionate. Susan’s dealt with climate change and humanity’s destruction of the environment; Amy’s was a lament over the apathy that exists in our culture; and mine decried our treatment of the elderly. We shared our oracles with each other, then took them home; polished and refined them; and submitted them for inclusion in our DFA portfolio, which contains copies of the papers that we have written, and will write, during the two-year formation period. The day ended on a less serious note, with a discussion of an 80-item “Spiritual Gifts Survey” that we had been assigned to complete prior to class, the purpose of which was to identify areas of ministry in which our spiritual gifts might be best utilized, e.g., leadership, administration, shepherding, teaching, service, etc.

Our December 15th class dealt with the topic, “The Deacon as Leader,” using a variety of sources that we had read beforehand, including Robert Greenleaf’s book, *The Servant as Leader*, and Bishop Smith’s pastoral letter of June, 2014, titled, “The Diaconate in the Diocese of Arizona for the 21st Century.” We also had been asked to write an essay, beforehand, about our thoughts on deacons as leaders, and to come to class prepared to share about someone in our own lives who is, or was, a leader role model for us. Needless to say, the class was very interesting, and not hypothetical at all, because deacons, even though they are “servants,” they are also—and perhaps more importantly—leaders. Greenleaf’s

book makes a compelling case that the roles of servant and leader can be fused in one person. He uses the term “servant leader” because “deep down inside,” effective leaders are servants first. We went home with a lot to think about—not only in regard to servant leadership, but also about our assignment for next month, which will be a presentation to the Deacons’ Council, the faculty of the Deacon Formation Academy, and the Rectors of our respective parishes about our “call” and the ministry we envision being involved in as deacons.