

Journey Jottings (cont'd)

One of the activities that very naturally fostered a sense of community was eating our meals together. The food at La Casa was exquisite, healthy, made "from scratch," and served buffet-style. And, yes, there were scrumptious desserts, too! We all fit around one circular table, which, by its very shape, brings people together, generates conversation, and turns strangers into friends. We were nourished in body, mind, and spirit at regular intervals! Our first meal, on Friday evening, was graced by the Bishop's presence, which, for me, underscored the sacredness of our call, as well as giving us an opportunity to get to know, a bit, the man below the miter!

A special dimension of our mealtimes, and in between classes, was the presence of Amy's six-month-old son, Anderson, who, along with his babysitter/grandmother/St. Luke's parishioner, Leanne Bryan, shared the weekend with us. Anderson brings joy to everyone he meets, and he'll be walking with us on our journey as soon as his crawling stage is over!

Our first classes introduced the concept out of which deacon formation flows: transformation. Transformation is more than alteration. It is a complete change in character and in how a person views, and lives, life. It is what we see in Jesus' life and teachings. And it is about understanding, and experiencing, in our own lives, the recurrent pattern of life-death-resurrection that one day will allow us to say, with St. Paul: "I live now, not I, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

On Saturday evening, Elizabeth Roles, a priest at St. Barnabas, celebrated Eucharist with us and for us in the Meditation Chapel: a beautiful, circular, quiet, peaceful place that drew me back the following morning for personal prayer before our Sunday morning activities got underway. Elizabeth's homily, based on the Sunday Gospel of Mark 4:35-41 (Jesus' calming of the storm), fit perfectly into the theme of what deacons are called to do and be in our tempestuous world. And, in the breaking of bread, the Lord of the storm was with us, bringing peace and sustenance for the journey.

The part of the weekend when the power of the Holy Spirit seemed most present to me was when Robin and Sarah asked the three of us-as a group-to compose a prayer that would become "our" prayer for the next two years and beyond. The process by which the prayer emerged was beautiful. We all stepped up, side by side, to a large whiteboard and were given a few minutes to make a column of words that captured our thoughts and feelings about having been called to the diaconate. When the time was "up," we were tasked with composing a prayer that included words/images from the three columns. It took us about 20-30 minutes, with Amy being the scribe as our prayer took shape: writing, then crossing out, then writing again (the cycle continued a few times!), then eventually agreeing that the words we had put together were indeed a reflection of the hopes and desires embedded in each of our hearts. Here is our prayer: *"Holy God, Creator and source of all goodness: You have called us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus as deacons. Grant us courage, awareness, and compassion, that we may be healers in a wounded world, bridges between communities, and radical witnesses of your love, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit abides as One, now and always. Amen."*

Afterwards, we were asked to compress and distill our prayer into a mission statement, which will also accompany us on our journey to the diaconate. These are the words we chose: *"Prayerfully following in Jesus' footsteps and growing into radical servanthood."*

As I left La Casa on Sunday afternoon and headed back to Prescott, there was so much to reflect on, and absorb. I drove in silence-God's first language-and in the silence there was peace. It was as if God were whispering: "Have no fear; you were born for this." A moment of grace to remember along the way...

Submitted by Keehna Sture