

Greetings one and all. I cannot fully express how happy I am after these first two weeks here at St Vincent de Paul Parish. I have met so many wonderful people, and I look forward to getting to know each of you more as time goes on. I thought I'd take a moment to introduce myself a little more fully, so you know my background a little more.

I did not grow in a Mid-Michigan, or in a family of faith. I grew up in the city of Madison Heights, a suburb of Detroit, and graduated from Lamphere High School in 1987. We never attended church as a family and I was never baptized. I met my incredible wife Erin on October 10th, 1987 and we have been together ever since. It was Erin who first introduced me to an active faith life, and I began attending Mass with her and her family almost immediately after we began dating.

Erin and I were married in 1991 as she was finishing nursing school, and I was "finding myself". We spent a couple years in the suburbs of Detroit, then we discovered we could afford a house in Mid-Michigan. We moved to Alma, Erin began working at Gratiot Medical Center and I began attending CMU.

In 1997 our first son, Todd, was born. Looking down on him in the crib at the hospital was a life changing experience for me. I turned to Erin and said, "There is no way we did this on our own." At that moment, I truly acknowledged that God existed. Todd was baptized into the faith at St. Mary Catholic Church in Alma, and later our son Kyle was as well. I still had not done anything about my status in the church.

In 2004 Fr. Kevin Maksym arrived at our parish, and it was also time for Todd to begin sacramental formation. I thought I would be a good example for him and I entered the RCIA process. Deacon John Cremin and many other wonderful people would help form me over the course of that year. I still recall Fr. Kevin telling me at the Chrism Mass, that I couldn't sneak up there for Eucharist, I had to wait four more days. I hungered for that more than I could understand.

On March 26th, 2005 I was received into the church and my life was never the same. At this point I began my last secular career, as a salesperson for a basement waterproofing company. My career path from graduating college was one job leading to the next, from running the Biology labs at Lansing Community College, to science teacher at a charter school then a self-employed home inspector and finally my time in waterproofing.

My time in waterproofing sales was a dark time for me, I did not get along well with my boss, and I would not have gotten by without my faith. I became more and more involved with church activities, I entered the Knights of Columbus, became a lector at Mass, helped decorate for Christmas and Easter. At Fr. Kevin and Deacon John's suggestion, I entered the Lay Ministry Program and I began helping with prison ministry at the prisons in St. Louis. After rising to the position of Service Manager for the company I was let go, for continuing to speak up about fair treatment of employees and customers.

For the first time since college I was without work, so while looking for work Deacon Al Oliver let me begin a Youth Ministry program at the parishes. One year later both Directors of Religious Ed retired, and Deacon Al hired me to combine the faith formation programs of the two parishes.

About this time, I began to really feel called to the permanent Diaconate. I was something I had been considering for a little while, but the yearning was real. With the love and support of Erin, and well as Deacon John and Bea Cremin, I entered the Diocese of Saginaw formation process for the Diaconate. At the beginning of that journey, I was clear on two things: I never planned to preach, and I never planned to be a Pastoral Administrator. I have frequently said when Jesus knocks on the door he doesn't stay on your front porch. He comes in and pours himself a cup of coffee, and patiently waits for you to catch up.

Thank you again for your warm welcome. Erin and I are so excited to be a part of your parish family, loving God and serving him together.

Peace and blessings,

Deacon Todd