

Pentecost Sunday / The Diaconate
Deacon George Collins

Today is Pentecost Sunday. This is not just another Sunday, because it is an awesome event. Some may see only a change of color to red. But it is the Sunday we celebrate the life of the Church. Through the Holy Spirit, truly awesome things can happen.

The Holy Spirit makes Sacraments happen; makes the Mass happen. Each Sacrament of the Church is activated by the Spirit of Life. Without the Holy Spirit, there is no Church. The Holy Spirit gives the Church the awesome power to heal, the power to bless, the power to become reconciled, the power to consecrate, the power to love, and the power to direct people to the means of salvation. The power to live our ordinary life in joy.

I have often thought how appropriate it was that 20 years ago, Archbishop Terence Cardinal Cooke of New York ordained me to the service of the Diaconate at the celebration of the Pentecost season. The Diaconate is a ministry of service, but there can be no service without love, for it is only love that brings about service. Love has only one desire, and that is to please. So we now can measure our love for God by our service we share with one another.

This love takes on another form. As you know, Deacons can be married, have families and grandchildren. As I was ordained by the Holy Spirit 20 years ago, my wife, Laretta, was also affected by the same Holy Spirit to a ministry of loneliness; the sharing of my company with others when she also had needs. There would be no 20th anniversary for me without her cooperation in a spirit of love and reconciliation. She accepted my 20 years of ordination to a service of another kind, and has received the strength from the Holy Spirit to endure. I am grateful for her 20 years of service. We celebrate this 20 years together in a spirit of the love of God.

These 20 years seem like yesterday but the mirror tells the truth. In the 20 years, I have served in only two parishes: Sacred

Heart in Rockland County, NY for 8 years, and here at St. Thomas More for the past 12 years. My greatest satisfaction was the 6 years I spent working with the mentally retarded adults in a New York State hospital. From them I learned compassion, humility, simplicity, and a true love of life. In them I found an important part of God's plan for us: His purpose for our lives.

I greatly enjoyed the privilege of baptizing all my grandchildren, and the baptizing and marrying of many of my nieces and nephews.

There have been so many things that have caused me to laugh and cry these past 20 years, but I wouldn't change a single thing: for people are loveable, people who accept the Holy Spirit in their lives are loveable. And through love they become aware of the awesomeness of our ordinary daily lives, and the joy of God's plan for them, even in the trials and troubles that enter our lives.