

# A Letter to Parents

On June 21, 2008 my son, Deacon John Rapisarda, will be ordained a priest in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. For our family, this is a time of thanksgiving and overwhelming joy and inspiration.

My wife, Carol and I were married in 1968. John is the third of our four children. Each of us has been involved in John's journey through prayer and discernment. For John, there were always pressures to follow a path to marriage or life in the business world. But somehow John came to know Jesus and in Jesus he found hope.

As a father, and a lifelong Catholic, I have been overjoyed with John's calling but still wondered whether the priesthood was consistent with what I (not God) had expected for John. I am pleased to say that John's commitment to the Church has drawn us as a family closer together and has renewed in us a joyful perspective of life.

My wife, Carol, was raised a Methodist, and was received into the Catholic Church at the time of our marriage in 1968. Little did she know that she would later give birth to a Catholic priest. Through her private prayer life, attending daily mass, and receiving the Eucharist, Carol came to love the Catholic Church and understood the life of the priest and prayed the rosary daily. She continually supported John in his decisions and recognized the privilege of the priesthood. What she wanted for John and for all our children was that God's will be done.

Carol would have loved to have been present at John's ordination, but her death in January 2006 means that she will not be physically present in the congregation, but spiritually connected in the Eucharist, which she received during her lifetime, and which John will consecrate at his first mass. The Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ, is our connection with heaven.

While the path to the priesthood involves sacrifices, these sacrifices are outnumbered by the abundant blessings we receive. The Archdiocese of Baltimore has been especially supportive. Cardinal Keeler, Father Jim Barker, and Father Jerry Francik, the priests at Mount St. Mary and St. Vincent seminaries, and the vocation office in Baltimore, have been most supportive and always available. Archbishop

O'Brien continues this inspirational support for John and the dedicated seminarians in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Our lives have been enriched by the seminarians we have come to know and who have found their joy in the Lord.

As a Permanent Deacon and a father, I have come to more fully recognize how important it is that sons have their family's support to seek the priesthood. Young men may be reluctant to share their calling. They need to know that in your eyes it is a blessing to be a priest and that you will support them. It is within the family that vocations are nourished. I have been continually reminded of Christ's words, "Do not be afraid."

To parents who have sons who are drawn to the wonderful life of the priesthood, I pray that you will allow Christ to be their hope.

Deacon Greg Rapisarda serves St. Margaret, Bel Air.