

Mark Viviano on his brother becoming a priest



About a year ago, I wrote a story for the Catholic Review about Mark Viviano and his brother, Tony, who was on a path to becoming a priest. You can read that story [here](#)

For those of you who don't know, Mark is the sports director and anchor of WJZ-13, the CBS affiliate in Baltimore. Viviano also does occasional on-air work for the Mid-Atlantic Sports Network and formerly had a show on 105.7 The Fan. He's a down-to-earth guy committed to his faith in quiet and big ways. Most people don't know that about him.

I checked in with Mark June 11, two days after his brother was ordained a priest for the Jefferson City Diocese to see how everything went.

Matt: What was it like seeing your brother ordained Saturday?

Mark: The ordination was a beautiful ceremony. Among the many sights that struck me was the power of the priestly fraternity. Every priest from the Jefferson City, MO diocese was present (about 40 of them) to welcome the four newly ordained- each laying their hands on the new priests in welcome and encouragement. Funny that I didn't find the ceremony itself too overwhelming as I took Tony's cue that it was his destiny- the culmination of a commitment that's been in the works for years. More of a formality at that point- but no doubt a meaningful and beautiful one.

Matt: Did you ever think, even after all his seminary work and when he became a transitional deacon, that this would actually happen?

Mark: Absolutely and never in doubt. I mentioned it in the previous answer- the ordination was the formal culmination of a commitment that Tony has diligently pursued for years. I never doubted his commitment to the goal. It's been hard for him at times to remain patient as he's been so anxious to be ordained and begin his work as a priest.

Matt: For you, what was the most moving moment?

Mark: The most moving moment for me actually occurred *after* the ordination ceremony, after everyone had left. Tony (now Father Tony) went next door to St. Joseph's Cathedral (where he was ordained) to the home of the Carmelite nuns. He has been working with the nuns over the years and they requested that after he was

ordained that he come to their convent and offer them his first priestly blessings. Tony invited me to come with him before I drove him back home to St. Louis. One by one the nuns knelt before him and he offered his blessing. Seeing him for the first time working as a priest, just hours after his ordination, it struck me fully then that my brother is a Catholic priest. A very, very powerful sight to see.

Matt: Did you get to go to your brother's first Mass celebrated as a priest? How did he do?

Mark: His first Mass was the next day at my Dad's church, the parish of the Ascension in Chesterfield, MO. Father Tony was incredible! As I told him afterward, it was clear that God was speaking through him and Tony delivered impeccably. His homily on the significance of the eucharist was so powerfully delivered. Most emotional was in the wrap-up of the Mass and Tony sharing his thoughts about our late mother who passed away 30 years ago. It was hard to hold back the tears at that time. A wonderful first Mass.

Matt: What kind of priest do you think your brother will be? What can people look forward to with him?

Mark: Father Tony is dedicated to the solemn duty of upholding the Catholic church. He believes fully in the privilege and power of being Catholic, its tenets and traditions. He is a devoted caretaker of the lineage that extends more than two thousand years and he is proud to follow in the footsteps of the many who have come before him. He is caring, loving and encouraging by nature and will be someone people will feel comfortable turning to for help, advice and blessings. I consider him a true leader who is well suited for the role of priest.

Matt: Is there anything about your brother's life that people can learn from?

Mark: Tony's life offers many lessons for all of us. Foremost is his example of keeping one's heart open to God. Tony fathered his daughter Melanie 23 years ago and though he did not marry Melanie's mother, he stayed close to the mother and child and was integral in raising Melanie, something he prayed about often. He was running a successful business when he felt the calling to become a priest and after much discernment he answered that call. He's lived what many would already describe as a full life, yet he begins a new chapter as he's soon to turn 50 years old, his heart open to our Lord all along.

Matt: Were there many tears in your family this weekend?

Mark: Many tears of joy amongst us all. Tony has often referred our Dad as his guiding light and the weekend was most emotional for our dad, Joseph. At the end of his first Mass he presented Dad with his first confessional vestment (I believe it's tradition for a newly ordained priest to do so). We all cried, especially Dad! And remembering our late Mom and her guiding influence was also a reason for many emotions. All of them good emotions, all of them shared by so many family members

gathered in a celebration unlike any other. One that we'll never forget.