

Nearing priestly ordination, Tyler Kline hopes to help people through God

Editor's note: This is the third of three profiles of men who are on schedule to be ordained priests of the Archdiocese of Baltimore in June.

A long list of priests inspired Deacon Tyler G. Kline to follow that calling.

Certain priests, Deacon Kline said, “had a way of relating to people, they had a way of seeing the world and I think sort of a deep interior freedom.”

While his family did not regularly attend Mass, it sacrificed to send him to St. Philip Neri School in Linthicum Heights. He encountered then-associate pastor Monsignor Carl F. Cummings, who questioned students on the previous Sunday’s homily and Gospel readings. Deacon Kline describes himself as “the kid who usually knew the answers.” Dissatisfied that he was unable to respond, he began attending Mass with his grandparents.

He became an altar server in seventh grade, and came to know the pastor, Monsignor Francis X. Zorbach.

“He was a grandfatherly figure,” Deacon Kline said, noting that he would greet students by name. “A great character.”

Deacon Kline recalled a Mass when Monsignor Zorbach presented him and another server to the congregation and said, “Wouldn’t it be great to have them both as priests?” The pastor told young Tyler that he was praying for him to become a priest.

Monsignor Zorbach died in 2008. A decade later, his family came to the first Mass at which Deacon Kline preached after his diaconate ordination with a gift: the monsignor’s chalice, which Deacon Kline will use in his first Mass as a priest.

The thought of a religious vocation was furthered by the Jesuits he encountered at

Loyola Blakefield in Towson.

"They were a little younger," he said. "They were very bright, very witty, had a good sense of humor."

He chose a Jesuit college, Fordham University in the Bronx, where the only question became: would he enter formation with a diocese or the Society of Jesus? The archdiocesan priesthood held sway, and he returned home to work for a year as a bartender in Gunning's Seafood, his family's restaurant.

"It's a great experience," he said laughing. "I think all of our seminarians should work in food service at some point."

"It was a unique opportunity to engage a lot of people who ... have grown up in the church or who were away from the church."

He entered Mount St. Mary's Seminary in 2012 to study to be an archdiocesan priest. Any doubts about that choice ended with his first pastoral assignment, St. Bartholomew in Manchester, where he learned from Father Michael Roach.

"He was a real spiritual father to me and to his people," Deacon Kline said. "That's something I want to be."

"There's a joy in parish work," Father Roach said. "He (Deacon Kline) made quite an impact (at St. Bartholomew). He really won their hearts."

Father Roach, who will vest Deacon Kline at his ordination June 22, noted his keen sense of humor and ability to relate well to others.

Deacon Kline said he is ready to meet the faithful where they are. Celebrating the sacraments, including Mass and reconciliation, he said, are key to that goal.

"I think at the end of the day, that's why we (clergy) exist - to help people to encounter God through the means that God has given us to encounter him," he said. "Pope Francis uses this word accompaniment. ... It's not new, but it's maybe a reminder to us to do that - to meet people where they are and to help them to come to be where God wants them to be."

Deacon Tyler G. Kline

Age: 30

Sponsoring parish: *St. Philip Neri in Linthicum Heights*

Family: *Son of Mary René and Edward Gunning, and Timothy and Lisa Kline; older sister Lauren, younger step-sisters Marissa and Melanie*

Education: *Loyola Blakefield; bachelor's degree in history and theology from Fordham University, the Bronx; Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Emmitsburg*

Pastoral assignments: *St. Bartholomew, Manchester; New All Saints, Liberty Heights; St. John Regional Catholic School, Frederick; Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Ellicott City; St. Martin's Home, Catonsville; St. Joseph, Cockeysville; Vocations Office; St. Francis of Assisi-St. Mary, Petersville, and Holy Family Catholic Community, Middletown*

Also see:

'Home felt like church' for future Baltimore priest

Future priest hopes to offer 'authentic witness' to Gospel