

Deacon Jason Nguyen



Deacon Jason Nguyen's family arrived in the United States in 1993 with nothing, refugees from Vietnam in a foreign land with no idea where the future would lead.

It was the kindness and dedication of sisters and a local priest who helped the family and ultimately impacted Nguyen's call to the diaconate.

"When we arrived in Utica, N.Y., we were welcomed by St. Francis de Sales Parish and Refugee Center," said Nguyen. "We met wonderful religious sisters who treated us like family. These sisters visited, helped and assisted us to enroll in school and provided materials like pillows, blankets, food and spiritual support. At the same time, the priest went to each Catholic refugee apartment or house to celebrate Mass daily for us. He said Mass in Vietnamese and had one of my brothers or me translate his homily."

Deacon Nguyen's father was held in an internment camp for seven years by the communist regime and when he got home he proudly displayed a notebook with a collection of scripture passages that he wrote by memory and used to pray with others on a daily basis while in the camp. The communist regime continued to persecute Deacon Nguyen's father after release through monitoring and controlling his movement between towns, among other things. Deacon Nguyen and his siblings were also affected by their father's status with their faith questioned in school and limits on what schools they could attend or their choices of college majors.

In the U.S., Deacon Nguyen was able to attend college, studying Computer Information Systems, CI Science and CI Technology in which he holds a master's degree. He is a software engineer for Cardinal Health and belongs to St. Augustine and Gabriel Church.

He has been married to Hein Mai for 12 years and they have four children: Grace, 10; Timothy, 7; Luis, 3; and Theresa, 2.

Deacon Nguyen's call to the diaconate has been influenced by the religious who assisted his family when they arrived in the U.S.

"I have seen many living saints, and I think their ministry is very noble," he said. "So I have always wanted to follow in their footsteps. The Catholic brothers and sisters have loved us unconditionally without agenda due to their love of God which motivates them to serve. I have admired them and looked for an opportunity to become one of them. As a married man, I see the diaconate is the right place for me that will allow me to bring the gospel message of hope to others and to share the ministry of love and justice with others."