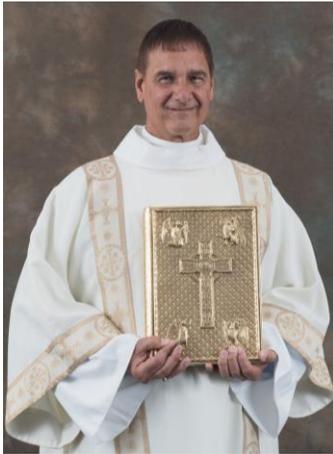


Deacon Paul Zemanek



Deacon Paul Zemanek points to 2007 as a turning point for him. It was one of those times when life threw him a curveball. His job was eliminated and, with it, his planned career path.

“I was unemployed for 15 months,” said Deacon Zemanek, who is now Director of Corporate Accounts for Honeywell International. “During this time I was able to reassess what was more important in my life – doing something to reach my next promotion and career advancement or doing something more applicable with my faith.”

So the guy who is a natural mentor began looking for some guidance of his own. He attended a Cum Christo retreat and realized that some of the other men had a stronger knowledge of their various faiths. Deacon Zemanek went to his pastor at St. Brigid of Kildare, Msgr. Joseph Hendricks, for some book suggestions. Instead, Msgr. Hendricks suggested Zemanek sit in on Deacon Frank Iannarino’s RCIA classes. It wasn’t long before he became a sponsor and then had set-up responsibilities before meetings.

In 2010 he took over RCIA for Deacon Iannarino and continued to lead the program until his diaconal internship at St. Peter began last year.

“Talk about evangelization and having a captive audience!” Deacon Zemanek said. “RCIA is a very serious responsibility, to get people interested in becoming Catholic and get them catechized so they learn the faith. Now I’m helping Fr. Mark Summers implement the St. Brigid RCIA program at St. Peter’s.”

Deacon Zemanek’s mentoring skills fit well with being a deacon.

“It’s a skill set God gave me that I’m able to sit down with people and work with them. I like people,” he said. “In my work I do a lot of mentoring from the sales position, to help other employees learn the basics and how to deal with customers. I’ve always enjoyed doing that type of thing.

“During the time I was unemployed I learned how to network and now I try to help others going through career transition. Some are more skilled at reaching out to others for help. It’s the ones who aren’t that really need the help. The other thing I learned was to pay it forward. A lot of people helped me and now I have been able to help some of them.”

Deacon Zemanek said he was probably working his way toward the diaconate without even realizing it, getting involved in several ministries when he and wife Cathy became parishioners at St. Brigid of Kildare Parish in 2000, then attending daily Mass more often after 9/11. He and Cathy have been married for 38 years and have two sons, Chris and Kevin. They are recently blessed with their first grandbaby.

“The unemployment obstacle was the avenue that God put in my way. You don’t know why at the time but when you look back you can see why. That was an event that had to happen or I wouldn’t have been in a position for Deacon Frank to ask me if I had ever considered being a deacon. Man plans, God laughs.”