

In Memory: Deacon Lenny DeCoste *~ Monsignor Charles J. Bourque, Pastor*

Soon after Leonard DeCoste's ordination to the diaconate, I became thoroughly convinced of the divine inspiration of the Church's decision to restore the permanent diaconate and to ordain married men: husbands and fathers, to that order of ministry for the Church.



Len and I had done the wake service for a little boy who had died in a horrific accident. Later in the evening I was trying to prepare a suitable homily with little success. I called Len and said to him: "Len, please preach at the funeral in the morning. You know how these parents feel. You can talk to them better than I."

The next day Deacon Len, standing in the same place where I am standing now, told the devastated parents: "I know where you are and how you feel. My wife and I have been there. The Lord will take care of you; you will survive. You will be given the strength to get over the horror of this moment." He told them about the death of his son Michael. Len had the right to say that. It was a right that I felt that I did not have.

Lenny in his ministry as deacon has always been available to me and to the people of this parish. He has always been the servant in sense that Jesus so highly praised. Len offered so many services to this parish that I have trouble even counting them. He did confirmation preparation, adult catechesis, and baptismal preparation. He established a wonderful marriage program that prepared many, many couples for the sacrament. He was spiritual director to the Legion of Mary. He brought food in from all over for the parish pantry.

He never missed a Saturday afternoon Mass until he became very ill. He never missed a Monday or Saturday evening supper with Fr. Mike McLellan and me. I believe this was Len's idea of a "night out with the guys."

If any request were morally legitimate, remotely possible, or graced with any amount of

common sense, Len would find some way of pulling it off. I have no idea how much money Lenny saved the parish over the years by applying his engineering knowledge, design experience, and dogged persistence to so much stuff around here that had broken down and needed to be fixed. One Saturday afternoon about 5 p.m. Joan Hoey, the school secretary, came over to the church and told us that she could not secure the door, because the lock had fallen apart. I went into immediate panic as I thought of having to call a locksmith at five o'clock on a Saturday afternoon. Len offered to go and look at it. It took him a minute to figure out what was wrong, another minute to decide what to do. It took us about five minutes to scout up a few spare parts. Len spent another few minutes putting it together. To the best of my knowledge, the lock is still working.

Len was happy when he was busy and when he was giving of himself as a servant in the sense that Jesus described as the greatest among disciples. He managed to combine the roles of husband, father,



grandfather, friend, and deacon in a single generous ministry of caring for all. As the number of priests in Jamaica Plain decreased, he found himself at funeral homes and cemeteries for wake services and committal services.

One area that Len and I share was a certain shall we say "musical deficiency". In other words neither of us could carry a tune. One year at the Mass on Thanksgiving I had become a bit excessive in my sense of gratitude as I sang the "Holy, Holy, Holy." With his customary feeling of care and concern he asked me: "Are you all right? Do you want me to get you some water?" I responded: "Len, I am fine; I am singing." He responded: "Oh!" and stepped back. In the same vein, although Len and I discussed every aspect of ministry

in the life of the Church, neither of us ever mentioned his singing of the “Exultet” at the Easter Vigil. He never said anything to me; I never brought it up to him. We both knew that it was a bad idea even though the Exultet is the song of the deacon.

Father Frank Goss retired as chaplain of the Faulkner Hospital the same day that Lenny retired from Raytheon after forty years. Len had spoken to me of his desire to serve in hospital ministry. I was vicar and responsible for providing service to the Faulkner so as I heard him come in the back door of the rectory, I yelled, “Hey, Len, do you want a job?” Len became a student again in Clinical pastoral education and served some 15 years as Director of Pastoral Care at the Faulkner. The priests of the surrounding parishes under Len’s coordination and supervision gave 24 / 7 coverage to the hospital with never a complaint from anyone that I became aware of.

Len was chaplain to patients, their families and hospital staff members of all faiths. He had a list of ministers, priests from Orthodox churches and Rabbis whom he would call upon to meet the spiritual needs of anyone who would make such a request. Again, Len DeCoste the deacon was Len the servant according to the mind of Jesus.

Len’s devotion to his ministry as a deacon, as extensive as it was, left him time for devotion to his family - to his parents when they were at Marian Manor; to “Jo”; to Pat and Marilyn and their families; to Sr. Francis Marilyn and the Sisters of St. Joseph. To his friends from work, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale and other places, he always gave of himself.

We shall miss his presence in our midst; but we know with the certainty of our divine faith that his son Michael and his beloved parents have welcomed Len into the kingdom of heaven where the Lord Jesus has given him the place of glory reserved for those who have been greatest in their ministry of love and service to his people here on earth.

