

## ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST MASS OF DIANA CARROLL

*January 11, 2009*

Wow! What a great weekend this is!

Yesterday saw Diana Carroll join other Deacons from the Diocese as they were presented to Bishop Lee to be ordained to the Priesthood.

And now, this morning, Mother Diana stands at this Altar as she celebrates the Eucharist as a new Priest.

And, if that wasn't enough excitement for her family, her friends, and the members of this Parish Community of Faith, we are also joyfully celebrating **5** baptisms today, as ***Grace, Alexandra, Isabella, Alexa, and Ashley*** are presented to be incorporated in the Body of Christ we know and love as the Church.

In fact, the theme of baptism is pretty much woven throughout this amazing weekend.

Because, first of all, today is the First Sunday after the Epiphany, and the theme of this day is the baptism of Jesus, the event we heard about in our Gospel reading today, as Jesus was baptized by his cousin, John, in the Jordan River. It is because of this observance that this day is held up as one of the special times in the course of our Church's liturgical year when baptisms are most appropriate. And, boy are we honoring that tradition this morning!

And secondly, baptism is woven into this weekend in another interesting way. Mother Diana was born on December 29, 1981, and a month later, this month, on January 31, 1982, her family presented her at St. Mary's, Crystal Lake IL to be baptized by her grandfather, an Episcopal Priest. In a powerful way, the events of this weekend are a wonderful completion of the event of that first January in her life.

And thus, with the power of Holy Baptism just swirling around us this weekend, I would like to offer you three things to think upon this morning.

Back at St. Mary's, where I was Rector for 31 years, and where I watched Mother Diana grow from infancy to adulthood, right behind our baptismal font is a piece of calligraphy that reads, "I have called you by name; you are mine." It is from the book of the prophet Isaiah (43:1), and every time I had the great privilege to do pre-baptismal instruction I would refer to that passage.

I would point out to the excited parents and godparents – and this is the first of the three thoughts that I would like to share with you – that at baptism two names are really being given to us. Of course, our given name, like William, or Diana, or Peter, or Alan. But I would suggest to the family that perhaps another name was also being offered to the person about to be baptized. A name known only to God at the moment, but a name that could be, and hopefully would be, discovered later in that person's life.

This morning, I would, therefore, suggest that the other name offered to Diana that wonderful morning back in 1982 was "Priest." It took awhile for

Mother Diana to begin to hear and then understand that special name that God had given to her many years earlier. But, she did, and because of that we gather this weekend in great joy.

I wonder, what special name will God be offering to these children baptized this morning? And, could it be that their parents, and their godparents, and special friends and mentors, and the communities of faith that they will be a part of as they grow up, will be instrumental in helping them hear that divine name spoken over them by God? You bet, because that's what it means to be fellow members of the Church!

Have you discovered that special name that God spoke over you at your own baptism? Have you embraced it? And, if you're not sure, there is always time, even in our adulthood, to listen and to discover who and what God has called us to be because, as I well know, God is very patient.

And so, the divine, hidden name given to us at baptism is the first thought I want to share with you this morning.

The second involves puzzles. We all know about jig saw puzzles, and the time and effort it takes to put together a really good one! And, we know the frustration of discovering at the very end of our efforts that pieces are missing, and thus our project is incomplete!

Years ago I read something that has really stuck with me. The author of the now-forgotten article suggested that each of us possesses pieces of the puzzle

that we call *another* person's life. The person might be lost, or might be misguided in her life's journey; the person might not yet fully understand who he is, or what he should be doing with his life. Maybe she hasn't discovered the special name that was spoken over her by God at her baptism.

And the author suggested, in a very provocative way to me, that, so often, by the Grace of God, you and I can supply just the right piece of a person's life puzzle that will help her along her spiritual pilgrimage of life. That has happened to me over and over again, as I hear God's word, or feel the Spirit's "nudge", through other people. Has that ever happened to you? Some piece of your life fell into place because of someone else?

This is so apparent in a relationship between two people. Each can bring to the other pieces of the puzzle that might be missing, and thus make the other person's life more complete. It is a wonderful thing when that happens.

In what ways will Mother Diana, through perhaps a casual conversation, or perhaps through more formal spiritual direction, or perhaps simply through whom she is or what she does, in what ways will she be the supplier of an important piece in another person's life?

But, clearly, this holy endeavor isn't reserved for just the ordained. This can happen for all of us. Because we have been baptized into the Body of Christ, we, too, are fellow members of the Church, we, too, have been called to witness, and to serve, and to love, and to be a supplier of puzzle pieces for others – all in the Name of Jesus.

Well, this leads me to my third and final thought that I would like to offer to you – our lives lived in a deep sense of humility.

When you and I are involved in ministry to others in God's holy Name, whether as laity or as ordained, God is using us for his own purposes. For Mother Diana, for these blessed children this morning, for you, and for me, to be called through our baptisms to serve Christ in one another, to be privileged to help another person come to learn the special name that was spoken over her or him by God, to be able to supply a missing piece of another person's life puzzle – and many times without our even knowing it – how humbling is that?

This weekend you and I can rejoice that Mother Diana was able to discern the word spoken by God over her at her baptism – "Priest".

This weekend you and I can also rejoice that God will use her, many times unknown to her, to supply a missing piece to another person's life puzzle.

And, this weekend you and I can give thanks that Mother Diana has now joined this rich and holy procession of Priests, stretching all the way back to our Great High Priest himself, Jesus, making herself available to God, and now today standing at God's Holy Altar, for the benefit of his Holy People.

And so: a "hidden", unspoken, holy name to be discovered during one's lifetime.

A bearer of pieces of another's puzzle.

And, called to be *God's servant to others*, which is a cause for deepest humility.

Certainly, this weekend is about Mother Diana as we now embrace her as our new Priest.

But, far more, it is also about us all!

And therefore, let us now celebrate and rejoice!

ALLELUIA!