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This past Spring, I completed my fourth of six years of seminary formation. A Deacon friend said they call it “formation” for a reason. I figured entering seminary at 59 I would have most of my “formation” behind me. However, I have learned I still have much to learn!

The hardest thing has been letting go of my will and putting all my trust in God. It is important to have plans and goals. However, I am learning that I need to hold on to those goals and plans loosely since my plans aren’t necessarily God’s plans (e.g. Isaiah 55:8-9). St Thomas Aquinas referred to pride as disordered self-trust. This is opposite of what I learned in the working world. At work I had been told “I needed to make things happen,” “whatever I put my mind to I could do,” that it “was all on my shoulder.”

Having had been married for 34 years, I notice that much of what I am learning in seminary is totally applicable to being a holy husband. There are many similarities to marriage starting with marriage and holy orders as both vocations and service sacraments. Another similarity are the three spiritual paths, frequently mentioned by Bishop Barron at seminary. These are the realization that God should be in the center of my life, I am a sinner, and my life isn’t about me. This should be true for seminarians as well as men (and women) in marriage. Additionally chastity and the challenges to that are just as important for seminarians as for holy husbands.

I have been blessed to be able to share in class and one-on-one situations of what marriage is like. Additionally I have had the opportunity in formation classes to share that the challenges priest face are similar to the challenges married men face. The culture focuses on the sexual aspect of marriage and reinforces our “throwaway society.” However, the culture does not do a good job of explaining the work that is required for a successful long term marriage.

Background - I had a spiritual awakening in 1989. I wanted to pursue a full-time ministry of service to others, but my wife was concerned about financial security and my providing for two young children and so I pursued my faith and good works as an avocation.

Then in 2013, my wife died suddenly from breast cancer. We were married for 34 years. I then did a lot of soul searching as everything we had planned was wiped away in an instant. All our plans and goals seemed hollow and empty. I reflected on why I am here, where I am going after here and what does God want me to do. A spiritual friend from church asked if I had considered becoming a priest.

I am trying to make God #1 in my life. He has carried me through difficult times and been a constant companion and source of joy and peace. We still have problems after we make a decision to follow Christ. However, I learned that God’s way is a way better way to solve problems than my way.

I have two adult children. Michael is 32, married to Amy and they have an almost three year-old daughter Rosemary and a new born son Teddy. Andrew, 30, was just ordained a diocesan priest for the Milwaukee archdiocese.