

‘It was beautiful’

SEMINARIAN ANDRE NADEAU ORDAINED A TRANSITIONAL DEACON *By Katie Lovett*

As he began his procession down the aisle of St. Anne Church in Berlin for his transitional diaconate ordination — the last step before his ordination as a priest — Deacon Andre Nadeau held back tears.

“It hit me ... ‘Oh my gosh, this is real,’” Nadeau recalls thinking as he spied the Knights of Columbus in full formation and a packed congregation.

“It was beautiful,” he says.

One day later, the newly minted Deacon Nadeau gave his first homily. After seven years to prepare, he says with a laugh, his nerves weren’t too strong.

Still, he says, he was struck again with emotion. After years of only preaching to classmates, now it was finally a reality.

“This isn’t practice anymore,” he says.

The next day, Nadeau gave a homily to students at Salve Regina Academy in Gorham — a powerful moment at an institution he knows well, having spent a part of his childhood nearby.

Born in Lancaster, Nadeau, 30, moved to Maine with his parents and his brother while young, and spent 12 years in the Pine Tree State.

While in Maine, his family grew as his parents had five more kids. A homeschool family, the Nadeaus had a large friend group and a giant network to rely on. Those kids

are still his friends today.

Active in all aspects of ministry, the Nadeaus’ life of faith was strong.

In 2006, the family returned to New Hampshire after purchasing Nadeau’s grandparents’ home.

Surrounded by a lot of land — and a lot of extended family and cousins — Nadeau cared for animals, sold vegetables from a roadside stand and went trapping with his grandfather.

“The world opened up a lot,” he says. His family grew to include three more sisters for a total of 10 kids (three boys and seven girls).

With that many siblings comes a lot of life lessons, Nadeau says, such as how to work together, how to help each other and how to share — especially when your house only has one bathroom.

“Getting ready for Sunday Mass, there was a lot of cooperation,” he says.

Soon, Nadeau found himself dating a girl he had long been friends with and first developed a crush on when he was about 8-years-old. He had long believed one day he’d marry that girl.

As they dated, Nadeau pushed aside his process of



Bishop Peter Libasci blesses Deacon Andre Nadeau.



Deacon Andre Nadeau stands beside Bishop Peter Libasci after the ordination. Photos by Michael Richards.

discernment, and rather than asking God what His plan was, he told God what his own plan was. He began community college and moved out of his family home.

Still, something was missing.

After a year of dating, his girlfriend broke up with him, shattering his view of his world and his long-believed plan for how his life would go.

Time passed, and his friendship with his former girlfriend resumed. Eventually, he asked her why she had ended their relationship. He listened closely to her answer. Instead of trying to tell God what would happen, she suggested that he needed to stop and let God guide him.

“Because it came from her, I really heard it,” Nadeau says.

He surrendered himself to discernment. He joined ministry groups, volunteered as a counselor at a Catholic camp and attended retreats. At the same time, he watched as several of his siblings battled serious medical issues.

“It was an eye-opener,” he says. “It showed that sometimes the world does not have the answer, but faith does, grace saves.”

One night, driving home from camp, he was struck with a feeling.

“I wish I could do this every day; I just love this ministry,” he recalls.

Then it all became clear: this is what priests do each day. The fulfillment and the love he had for ministry and the time he devoted to serving his church was the life he wanted, Nadeau realized.

Nadeau enrolled as a seminarian and spent the next seven years preparing for the moment in January when he took his vows before his family, friends and congregants.

“Everything was kind of surreal,” he says. ■