

Deaf man completes journey to priesthood

O'Malley ordains small, diverse group



(Wendy Maeda/Globe Staff) Cardinal Sean O'Malley congratulates Rev. Shawn Carey during an ordination Mass for 6 men at Cathedral of the Holy Cross. Carey is one of only 11 deaf men in the nation to be ordained a priest.

By [Meghan Irons](#)

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Between greeting guests and offering his first blessings as a priest, the Rev. Shawn P. Carey took a moment yesterday to soak it all in.

"It's a miracle," said Carey, who was ordained with five other men at Boston's Cathedral of the Holy Cross.

He is one of only 11 deaf men in the nation to be ordained a priest, and he could hardly contain his joy.

"It's been a long journey for me as a deaf seminarian and a deaf man," he said through a sign-language interpreter. "And becoming a priest - I never thought it would come this fast."

Carey, who attended high schools in Northampton and Springfield, was drawn to the priesthood as a teenager and attended seminary after he graduated from Providence College. "It was overwhelming," he said of his struggles. "But it was overwhelmingly joyous."

Hundreds came to celebrate as Carey and a diverse mix of seminarians were ordained in a two-hour ceremony. A choir sang in Vietnamese, and part of the church was reserved for scores of people from the deaf community who came to celebrate with Carey.

In a stirring homily, Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley highlighted the mix of the group - a deaf man, a Vietnamese refugee, a widower, a Spaniard, an Irish immigrant, and a man in his second career.

"A century ago in this cathedral, there would have been 50 men, but those huge ordination processes did not begin to reflect the diversity of . . . today's class," O'Malley said. "This is a microcosm of the church today."

O'Malley urged the men to spread their faith to "those who have strayed."

"The task of preaching is to spread the light of the world," said O'Malley, who outlined for the men the official duties and tasks of the priesthood.

One by one, the men affirmed their commitment to serve. At the end of the ceremony, they kneeled, heads bowed and hands clasped in prayer, before the cardinal, who placed his hands on their heads in silent prayer.

The Rev. Sean M. Maher, one of the new priests, said he will heed the cardinal's message about the call to preach. Maher said he had considered the priesthood as a child, adding that he came to this path because "the hand of God was in it all."

A native of Ireland, he came to the United States on scholarship for a master's degree in 2002, he said. While at Fairfield University in Connecticut, Maher said he decided to go to the seminary.

"It's a wonderful day when you know you are being brought into something bigger than yourself," he said. "It's going to take me a lifetime to delve into how wonderful it is."

The other seminarians ordained were Israel J. Rodriguez, a native of Spain; Frank D. Camp, a widower from Pennsylvania; David W. Gunter, who attended school in Wellesley; and Huy H. Nguyen, a Vietnamese refugee who grew up in Dorchester.

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