

# Various roles have shaped priest's ministry

*"If you're not making someone else's life better; you're wasting your time."*

— Will Smith, actor

That's not just Father Tom Muldowney's favorite quote; it defines how he has approached his life and his ministry as a priest.

Consider the roles he has filled so far: nurse, Navy chaplain, State Police chaplain, pastor.

"Ever since I was young, I felt a responsibility to give back to the community," Father Muldowney said, noting that he was involved in numerous volunteer projects. That set the stage for what was to come.

He was a licensed practical nurse at the Wilkes-Barre General Hospital for 11 years, working in the cardiac intensive care unit. Then he served as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy Reserves for six years, reaching the rank of lieutenant before his discharge in 2006.

"Both of these jobs,



**One of Father Tom Muldowney's roles is serving as a Pennsylvania State Police chaplain assigned to Troop R in Dunmore, offering spiritual support to the troopers and staff. He is pictured here with Trooper Ronald McCann, a 20-year veteran of the PSP.**

or vocations if you will, involved helping others," Father Muldowney said. "Caring for people facing serious health issues and ministering to the men and women who are serving in our military, and obviously are under stress, have given me a better understanding of how to handle various situations. These experiences have definitely influenced my approach to pastoral care."

Currently Father Muldowney is pastor of St. Patrick, Holy Ghost and St.

Michael the Archangel parishes in Olyphant, and he's also a Pennsylvania State Police chaplain assigned to Troop R in Dunmore, offering spiritual support to the troopers and staff.

One of Father Muldowney's responsibilities with the State Police is to accompany troopers and carry out death notifications. He and the troopers have the daunting task of informing family members that a loved one has been killed, most times due to motor vehicle accidents.

People often wonder how he can do that, given the awful circumstances.

"Yes, it is awful," he explained, "but it's also one of the most powerful moments of my priestly ministry, being there to comfort them and make Christ present to them in the midst of their sorrow and pain. As difficult as it is, it also brings graces and blessings."

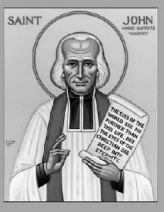
The impact of these encounters never really disappears. The priest cited, for example, a case in which a woman was killed in an accident. Her husband and Father Muldowney still talk on a regular basis.

Facing the unexpected is one of the aspects of priesthood that Father Muldowney loves. "Each day is never the same and you never know what situation you will find yourself in. I enjoy the spontaneity of my vocation. It seems that many people think that the priest only celebrates Mass; while the most important, it is the shortest part of my day. Celebrating the Eucharist gives me the strength to accomplish the other facets of my responsibilities as a pastor of three parishes."



**Father Muldowney leads prayers at a memorial service for a trooper who was killed in the line of duty.**

**"Anno Sacerdotale"**  
19<sup>th</sup> June 2009 – 19<sup>th</sup> June 2010



**"Men of truth,  
...of love,  
...of God"**

Papal Homily,  
Christm Mass, April 9, 2009.

**A Year for Priests**

*Editor's Note: The Catholic Light, in conjunction with the Diocesan Vocations Office, is presenting a series of profiles of priests serving in our Diocese. These profiles are intended to offer insight into the lives and ministries of our priests, and the particular ways they are answering God's call.*

A native of St. Nicholas Parish and a 1988 graduate of Bishop Hoban High School in Wilkes-Barre, Father Muldowney said his Catholic education was instrumental in his vocation to the priesthood. He remembered being in 4th grade and thinking that a priest had a great "job."

"As I matured, I came to realize that the priest plays a significant and sacred role in the lives of those he is called to serve," he said. "I have been blessed with the fine examples of many priests and women religious, who through their witness gave me the encouragement to pursue a priestly vocation. Jesus' invitation to 'come follow Me' led me to resign my job from the hospital and enter into priestly formation."

After graduating from The University of Scranton, St. Pius X Seminary and then St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, he was ordained June 28, 2003, by Bishop Emeritus James C. Timlin in St. Peter's Cathedral.

"That moment has made a lasting impression on me and it continues to remind me of the sacred duties I have as a priest," he said.

Father Muldowney has been an assistant pastor at Our Lady of the Snows in Clarks Summit and at St. Peter's Cathedral. He was recruitment coordinator for vocations before being named administrator and then pastor of the Olyphant parishes. He is also Diocesan chaplain to the Boy Scouts of America.

"The greatest joy of being a priest is the unique ability I have to bring the sacraments to God's people. From baptism to celebrating someone's funeral, I have the opportunity to be present to the faithful from birth to death – and everything in between!" Father Muldowney said.

"Each day, I'm reminded of the great honor and privilege I have to be a priest, and I'm thankful to almighty God for calling me to be His priest!"

**Are YOU being called?**

**God might be calling you to be one of His priests. That thought can be awe-inspiring, but perhaps also overwhelming. Talking about it can help. Call Father Christopher Washington at the Vocations Office at 570-207-2213, ext. 1013.**