

The Catholic Compass

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE
OF PENSACOLA-TALLAHASSEE

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2023
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from the editor

Together, we can build
a culture of life

feature story

**NATIONAL BLACK
CATHOLIC CONGRESS**
Write the Vision: A
Prophetic Call to Thrives

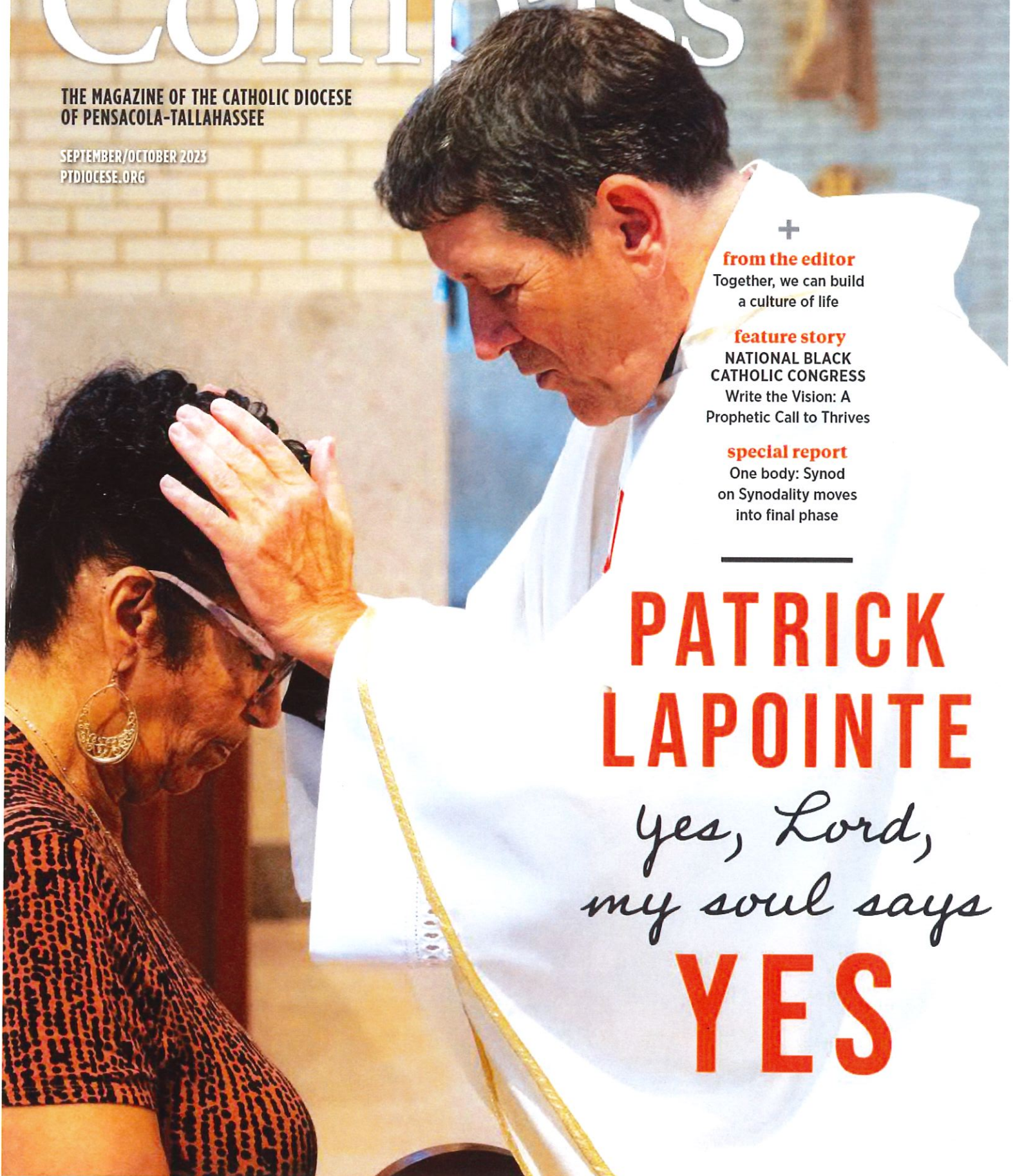
special report

One body: Synod
on Synodality moves
into final phase

PATRICK LAPOINTE

*Yes, Lord,
my soul says*

YES



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THE MAGAZINE OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PENSACOLA-TALLAHASSEE

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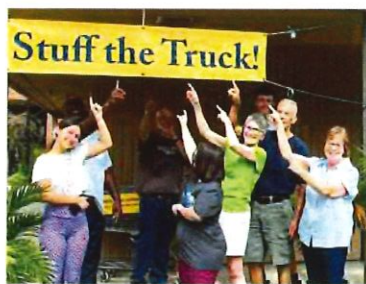
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The Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee encourages anyone who may have been abused, or who is aware of abuse by a priest, deacon or church personnel to report it so that we may help individuals in the healing process and better ensure the safety of all. All information supplied is maintained in strictest confidence, except where disclosure is required by law. For victim assistance, visit ptdiocese.org/reportabuse or call 800.96.ABUSE.

To report bishop abuse, visit reportbishopabuse.org or call 800.276.1562.



PATRICK LAPOINTE

*Yes, Lord,
my soul says*

YES

BY KANOBIA RUSSELL-BLACKMON

Patrick LaPointe served as a permanent deacon in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, but after the death of his wife, Catherine, he began to discern a call to the priesthood. Ordained a priest by Bishop William A. Wack, CSC of Pensacola-Tallahassee on May 27 at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Father Patrick LaPointe has become a spiritual father of many more children as he settles into his new assignment as the administrator of St. Joseph Parish in Pensacola. As he approaches his priestly ministry, he explains that he does so with the full realization that he is a new creation and a catalyst of reconciliation in a secular society weighed down by division.

Bishop William A. Wack, CSC and Father Patrick LaPointe.

Getty Images/Alamy



▲ Father LaPointe Joins Bishop Wack and his brother priests during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

LaPointe possesses a unique perspective, as he has been a husband and a father; he has worked in the private sector; and he has served in the U.S. Air Force. There was even a time when he was not in regular practice of the Catholic faith. Yes, there was a time when he was away from the Church. He believes that — through encounter, accompaniment, spiritual counseling and faith development of the Christian faithful — his life experiences will benefit him as he effects meaningful pastoral care.

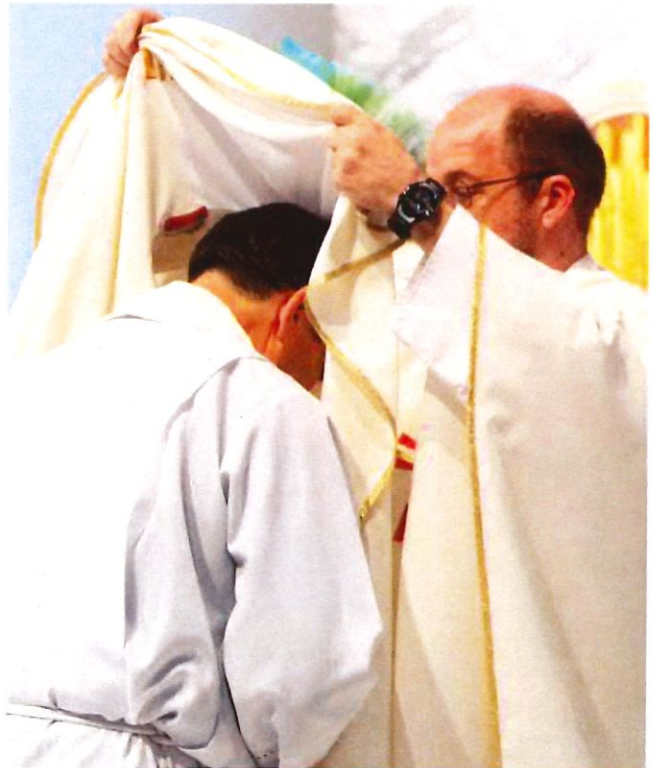
LaPointe's faith journey started in Wisconsin, where he was born the youngest of four children in Caledonia, a village outside Milwaukee. He recalled that his family participated in the Sunday Eucharist each week in their rural parish, St. Louis, until he entered high school. While all the children were confirmed in the faith,

Mass was no longer a priority and they became a family that would merely attend Mass at Christmas and Easter.

When LaPointe married Catherine Schill in 1979 in the very parish within which they were nurtured by the sacraments, he found his first vocation, the sacrament of marriage. Unfortunately, after their marriage, Catherine's parents were killed in a plane crash. After the death of Catherine's parents, the newlyweds became guardians for Catherine's two youngest siblings for about five years — which delayed them having their own children for many years. LaPointe expressed how the tragic circumstances of her parents' deaths left a feeling of disconnection and abandonment from God and the faith.

Reflecting on the promises of God to never leave his people alone, the birth of their first daughter became — in

Father LaPointe is vested with the priestly stole and chasuble. ▼





Bishop Wack lays hands on Deacon LaPointe.

many respects — a consequential encounter with the Lord who was always beside them, even at the bleakest moments of their lives. LaPointe explained, “When I held my daughter, I thought, ‘If God is going to give us the gift of this child, I have to give back.’ This was a spiritual awakening for [Catherine and me].” LaPointe felt a fire burning within himself that compelled him to return to regular practice of the faith with devotion, becoming heavily involved in music ministry and the administration of the parish.

After many years of being quite involved in the faith, LaPointe wanted to do more for Christ and the Church. With a wife and four children, he felt a diaconal call and subsequently entered the formation program in the

Archdiocese of Milwaukee. During his third year of formation, Catherine experienced a life-threatening diabetic event, which left her physically disabled. LaPointe’s faith and the dedicated support of Catherine helped to sustain his resolve to complete diaconal formation, resulting in sacred ordination in Milwaukee. The archbishop assigned him to provide diaconal ministry to six parishes while working professionally in information technology.

In 2020, Catherine, LaPointe’s wife of more than 40 years, died after many years of suffering with multiple health issues. Reflecting on the death of Catherine, LaPointe praised God in thanksgiving for the graces received from “caring for her as much as we could.” He explained that the faith of their

family, and support of each other, helped them through their grief, adding, “If we truly believe what we teach, I will see her again.”

After Catherine’s death and his retirement, he placed more focus on serving Christ and his Church. Feeling that discernment of the priesthood was the best way he could serve God, he felt that God was calling him to now minister through the sacraments of healing — penance and anointing of the sick. When he shared this with his children, they not only expressed their unequivocal support, but also shared with him that two years before Catherine died, she told them, “When I die, I want you to let your father become a priest.”

Having already reached the maximum age many bishops would even consider ordaining a man to the priesthood, LaPointe thought the chances of becoming a priest were beyond reach. However, Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology encouraged LaPointe to reach out to the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. LaPointe visited the diocese and met with Bishop Wack and Father Tim Holeda, the vocation director, who later agreed to sponsor him. Upon further reflection, LaPointe considered just how important it is “to place [everything] in the hands of the Holy Spirit.” He explained that the last few years have been miraculous opportunities of things falling into place and moving experiences that affirm how the will of God never places his people where God’s grace cannot sustain them.

The day of the presbyterial ordination of Patrick LaPointe was a momentous day of rejoicing for the Church of

Pensacola-Tallahassee. In the presence of LaPointe’s family and friends, the clergy, seminarians, consecrated religious and lay faithful, Bishop Wack addressed LaPointe in the homily, saying, “Pat, today, we thank you for [saying] yes again and again to God.” During the rite of ordination, the bishop invoked the Holy Spirit to come down upon LaPointe, and through the laying on of hands and the prayer of consecration, he was ordained a priest of Jesus Christ. After being vested with the priestly stole and chasuble, which signifies the obligation to serve in imitation of Christ, the bishop anointed LaPointe’s hands with sacred chrism to indicate the sacred duties with which his hands would bring about his priestly ministry. LaPointe remarked that the anointing of his hands “was the most powerful aspect because these hands now can consecrate bread and wine,” making it the body and blood of Christ.

LaPointe expressed gratitude for his appointment by Bishop Wack to St. Joseph Parish in Pensacola, conveying that his “spiritual charisma matches with the parish.” With joyful hope to grow the community by inviting people to come back to the parish — particularly those no longer in regular practice of the faith — LaPointe expressed, “I’m just so grateful to Bishop (Wack) for having enough trust and faith in me to place me here because this is my family!” †



If you or someone you know is discerning the priesthood, contact Vocation Director Father Tim Holeda at 850.435.3552 or visit ptvocations.org.