

## Getting to Know....

### Deacon Prayson and Dr. Beth O'Toole

Written by Vic Gideon

When we got married, this is the first parish my wife and I belonged to," says newly ordained deacon, Dr. Richard Prayson, assigned by Bishop Edward Malesic to serve at Communion of Saints Parish. "It's like coming back home, which is a beautiful and cool thing."

"But this time, I'm really home," adds his wife, Dr. Beth O'Toole.

Beth O'Toole and Richard Prayson met while attending medical school at Case Western Reserve University, Beth working toward becoming a geriatrician and palliative medicine physician, now part-time at MetroHealth Medical Center, and Richard studying as a pathologist, now the Head of Neuropathology at Cleveland Clinic and Director of Student Affairs at Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine.

The couple moved to South Euclid after graduation, becoming parishioners at St. Margaret Mary and then St. Gregory the Great before moving to Shaker Heights, where they belonged to Gesu and St. Dominic. But Communion of Saints has always been special. And now home.

"People have been very welcoming here," says Richard. "I like the diversity of the community. I think it helps to bring different perspectives, different viewpoints to the table, people are open to listening and sharing and I think that's a beautiful thing. That's what I like about Cleveland."

Richard Prayson grew up in Cleveland's Old Brooklyn neighborhood, graduating from St. Thomas More School, St. Ignatius High School, and then earning his undergraduate degree from Case Western Reserve University. Beth, meanwhile, grew up in the Boston area, going to Boston University and Wellesley College before graduating from medical school at Case. The couple got married in her home parish, Our Lady of Mercy in Belmont, Massachusetts.

"We were always a religious family," Beth says of her upbringing.

The couple has two adult twins, a boy and a girl (both physicians), and a two-year-old grandson, all in the Cleveland area. And their careers in medicine have only deepened their faith.

"I specialize in brain pathology," Richard says. "It's just amazing to me, how there's hundreds of thousands of cells there and, for most of us, all where they're supposed to be and doing what they're supposed to be doing and that's not just random chance, I don't think."

"What drives me in medicine and in religion, it's who these people are, what's important to them, what means something to them," Beth adds about her practice as a geriatrician. "It's what gives your life meaning."

"I see all the beauty of nature, and the complexity," says Richard, who enjoys outdoor walks. "It's not random. It's too complex, it's too beautiful, everything's all interconnected. There's got to be a big guy upstairs overseeing all of this."

Seven years ago, Richard saw an ad for deacons in the diocesan magazine and considered it for almost a year before eventually calling and starting the process of becoming a deacon, which culminated on May 3 with his ordination.

"Your whole life sort of leads up to it," Richard says of becoming a deacon. "I was kind of looking for ways to do something with meaning in my life."

"They were very good about involving the wives," Beth says of the five-year Diaconate Program. "I think it made a huge difference in my own understanding of what he's doing but also my spiritual and scriptural education."

"I'm looking forward to figuring out how I can be of service and where I can fit in," adds Beth about her desire to help at COS as well.

"It's been an awesome experience to try to help out whatever way I can help out,"

Richard says of being a deacon. "This is what I should be doing."

