Getting to Know Reverend Peter Bassey

Did you grow up in the WNY area? Do you have siblings?

I was born and raised in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria, as part of a family of six—four boys and two girls. I am the fifth child. Sadly, my eldest sister and both of my parents have passed away.

Did you go to public or Catholic schools growing up? What about college? Did you attend Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora?

I have been blessed to receive a Catholic education throughout my life. My seminary journey began at Immaculate Conception Minor Seminary (High School) in my hometown, a place where teens discern their vocations while receiving their high school education. During that time, the faith I was taught played a key role in nurturing my discernment for the priesthood. After completing my studies and formation at the minor seminary, I continued my philosophical education and formation at St. Joseph Major Seminary in Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. I earned a Bachelor's in Philosophy in 2010 through the seminary's affiliation with the Pontifical Urban University of Rome and the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Following my graduation, I took some time to reflect and prepare for the next chapter of my journey. In 2012, I was accepted into the graduate program at Providence College in Rhode Island, where I pursued a master's in theological studies. While there, I was accepted by the Diocese of Buffalo in the fall of 2013 to continue my studies at Christ the King Seminary, graduating with MDiv, leading up to my ordination. More recently, I completed a Master's program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Canisius University in Buffalo.

Did you work in other fields prior to becoming a priest?

I didn't really work in any other field prior to becoming a priest. Being a student is full-time work, right? (Smiles)

When were you ordained as a priest? What parishes were you assigned to prior to your assignment to our Akron Clarence Roman Catholic Community (ACRCC) family of parishes?

By the grace of God, my classmate and I were ordained on June 2nd, 2018, at St. Joseph Cathedral. Before being assigned to ACRCC Family #12, I was blessed with the opportunity to serve and work at Nativity of Our Lord in Orchard Park from 2018 to 2021. I then had the privilege of serving at St. John the Evangelist and the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels in Olean, with the assignment adding St. Bonaventure in Allegany to the family of parishes.

Who encouraged/inspired you to become a priest?

My journey to the priesthood was inspired by several key people in my life. My family's faith played a significant role in shaping my spiritual foundation. I was mainly influenced by a few

priests whose kindness and dedication to their calling deeply moved me. Their ability to guide others, serve selflessly, and share God's love made a lasting impact. Over time, I felt God calling me to follow a similar path, and with the support of my loved ones and pastor, I found the courage to answer that call.

What is your favorite Bible verse?

My favorite Bible verse is John 15: 16-17. This verse is a powerful reminder of God's purpose and calling in our lives. Jesus clarifies that we are chosen by Him, not by our own doing, and that we have been appointed to bear fruit—lasting, meaningful actions that reflect His love. This call to "bear fruit" isn't just about doing good works and living a life that reflects Christ's love, compassion, and grace.

Do you have a favorite hymn?

I honestly do not have a favorite hymn; sometimes, it depends on the song and who is singing it.

What would your ideal day off look like?

My ideal day off has always begun with a good six-mile run with Lucy, my dog, and then a good cup of coffee or tea, enjoying the stillness. Later, I'd dive into a creative project—maybe writing, reading, or exploring new ideas. It's all about that flow state where time doesn't feel rushed. Lunch would be something delicious but relaxed, or a meal at a favorite café with outdoor seating. The evening would involve a good dinner with close friends or at home with good food and a classic TV show. It's about balancing relaxation, creativity, and a sense of connection.

If you get a chance to read for pleasure, what genre of books do you prefer?

If I had the chance to read for pleasure, I'd likely gravitate toward genres that spark curiosity and creativity. I'd enjoy:

1. **Science Fiction/Fantasy** – Worlds where the boundaries of reality stretch, offering fresh perspectives on society, technology, or human nature. I love the imaginative possibilities and exploration of the unknown.
2. **Philosophy/Existential Fiction** – Books that delve into deep questions about life, existence, and the human experience. I'm drawn to stories that make you pause and reflect on meaning and purpose.

Do you have a favorite sport or sports team?

Go Bills or Go Home. LOL

What is at the top of your bucket list?

A visit to Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris with one of my favorite friends and my dog to protect me from the French. LOL.

What is your favorite holiday tradition?

Christmas Eve tradition continues to be my favorite: cooking with family, going to midnight mass, and singing Christmas carols. It has a vibe like no other.

What is your favorite food?

My favorite food is a hearty meal that brings people together. I've always enjoyed dishes that are simple yet rich in flavor, like homemade rice, roast chicken, or a good stew. There's something special about sharing a meal that's been prepared with love—it nourishes both the body and the spirit.

Do you have a favorite secular song?

One of my favorite secular songs would have to speak to the beauty of life and human connection. Music has a way of uplifting the soul, even outside of a religious context. A song like *What a Wonderful World* by Louis Armstrong, for example, reminds me to appreciate the simple joys of life, the beauty in creation, and the connections we share with others.

Would you like to share any other thoughts with the parishioners of our family of parishes?

I am both happy and humbled to join the faith communities of **ACRCC** following my three-year assignment as Parochial Vicar at Saint Mary's Basilica and Saint John's in Olean, New York, and St. Bonaventure in Allegany. I believe that our faith grows stronger when we come together and share it as a community. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Fr. Tom, our pastor, for the warm welcome I've received. I am genuinely excited to be a part of this vibrant community. As we come together as a family of parishes, I encourage you to embrace the opportunity to grow closer to God and one another. Every voice, every prayer, and every act of kindness strengthens the bond we share. My door is always open, and I look forward to listening to your stories, learning from you, and working together to build a faith community rooted in love, service, and compassion. Let's journey in faith, building a parish where everyone feels connected and spiritually nourished.