

The Rev. Canon John T. W. Harmon

- Biography -

Discerning my vocation has been a lifelong journey. My earliest recollection was as a child. Years before my mother presented me to the priest, I played church at home with the neighborhood children. Then, I had already expressed to my parents my desire to become a priest. In 1976, my mother took me to see the rector. He met with us and my mother uttered the words that took shape and directed my life up to this very moment. She said what I already knew in my heart, "My son wants to be a priest. Here he is." The rector looking at me asked, "So you want to be a priest?" My response was simply, "yes." My mother left me with the priest, what trust. Like Hanna, my mother knew that before I was her child, I was God's child.

The early formation of my vocation that began and took shape with my parents and the very notion of my belonging to God was strengthened on Sunday afternoons. After church, the rector and I traveled to small village churches to conduct worship services. Silence, prayer, and conversations (small talk) marked those long trips. My rector became my first mentor.

When I was fifteen, my mother died. Her death marked a critical moment in my life. The deep loss I experienced heralded a pivotal shift in my life and spiritual journey. It crystallized a cardinal wisdom that brought into sharp focus the faith my mother and father imparted. She often said, "You belong to God. You are God's child." Fully aware of my busy-ness with church activities, my mother, one Sunday stood before me and said, "Don't get too busy doing church-work that you forget to do God's work." I pray never lose sight of God's work in my commitment to the work of the church and my ministry.

In 1980, a civil war broke out in Liberia. Fearing for my life, my family insisted that I leave for the United States. The civil war intensified, and my father was subsequently killed.

My life is shaped by prayer and public witness. A natural transition from my parents, first teachers and practitioners of faith, prayer and hospitality. By thirteen, I was teaching Sunday school, leading Bible studies and preaching. I worked inner city and studied organized street ministry.

Other influences are the mysticism of Howard Thurman and Rabindranath Tagore, Augustine's thoughts about memory and self, Hegel's observation about consciousness and the wisdom of those who pursued a spiritual and holy life. I am moved by the passion of young adults seeking to change the world. I feel called to address suffering in the world, particularly the concerns of the poor and marginalized, attend to the needs of the elderly, youth and children, speak out against injustice, honor the hopes and humanity of all persons. I seek to articulate in my life a spiritual vision love.

My wife, Keeva, and I are the parents of three young adult children, Joshua, Jarena, and Justin.