



In the Spotlight: Meeting new members

"I am thankful to God for this discernment journey and hope that God will make me an instrument of peace." Desmond O'Carroll

Desmond O'Carroll

"I was born in Dublin, Ireland on 19 June 1975 and the youngest of eight children born to John and Kathleen O'Carroll. My parents were both born in rural Ireland in the 1930's and as young people emigrated from Ireland to the United States in the 1950's. Interestingly enough, they met in 1957 at the Pioneer Association sponsored by our Church of St. John the Baptist. They were also married at St. John's on 12 September 1959 and settled in the Bronx,

"In 1970, my parents decided to relocate the family to Ireland. Their decision was born of their shared anxiety about much of the violence and urban disintegration that was plaguing the United States in the late 1960's. In 1972, the family settled in a small seaside town called Portmarnock, just north of Dublin. It was there that I spent my childhood and early adulthood. I had a lovely upbringing. As the youngest in a large family I felt secure and protected by my parents and siblings: Mary, John, James, Elizabeth, Michael, Gerard, and Declan. My parents were wonderful people who embodied simple Christian virtues and it was from them that I inherited my Christian faith. Both were utterly selfless individuals who consistently forsook their own contentment for the good of their children, their wider families and even their community. Although our family was by no means wealthy, our home was filled with love, laughter, good food and great generosity of spirit.

"I was educated at St. Helen's National School in Portmarnock [1979-1987]. I advanced to St. Fintan's High School in Sutton, County Dublin, where I was a student from 1987-1992. In 1992, I began my studies at the University College Dublin [UCD], one of the colleges of the National University of Ireland majoring in commerce and law. During my college years, I was an active member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, involved in several outreach programs and later was determined to undertake some form of service once I graduated from college.

"In the fall of 1996, having graduated from UCD, I traveled to Chimbote, Peru to work as a volunteer in a Catholic parish. Chimbote was an eye-opening experience for me. It was the first time that I had the opportunity of visiting the developing world and was appalled by the poverty and suffering that I witnessed. It was during my time in Peru, having witnessed the outstanding work of so many missionary priests and sisters, that I felt a vocation call once again.

"In the fall of 1997, I moved to London and began a Masters in Public International Law at the London School of Economics, part of the University of London. The following year I continued my studies at the Honorable Society of King's Inn, the professional training body for barristers in Ireland [1998-2002]. During that time I was employed by the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin, working first in the Department's Legal Division, then the Human Rights Unit. I was called to the Irish Bar as a barrister in 2002.

"Instead of beginning my practice in Ireland, I decided to travel to Kosovo in the former Yugoslavia as a United Nations Volunteer, funded by the Government of Ireland. I was assigned as a legal officer to a UN-administered war crimes tribunal based in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo. Living and working in Kosovo was a very challenging experience, both personally and professionally, because the province was still riven with ethnic tension and also because the infrastructure had been so badly damaged in the conflict.

"I finally returned home to Dublin in the spring of 2005 and also traveled to United States to sit for the New York Bar Examination.

"In the fall of 2005, I began my practice in Dublin and remained for one year. After I learned that I had passed the NY Bar Exam, I decided to move to New York in 2006. I worked as a contract attorney at a number of large law firms in New York City. In 2008, I took up a new job as a lawyer with the Equal Justice Initiative, based in Montgomery, AL. This organization advocated on behalf of marginalized people in the criminal justice system, including inmates on death row.

"In the fall of 2008, I began my discernment journey with the Capuchins. I was drawn to the Capuchins because I like the combination of contemplation and social action that lies at the heart of their charism. I am also drawn by their focus on fraternity and community living. I would try to be guided by three important perspectives that I once heard the former Washington Post journalist Colman McCarthy speak about: a sense of prayer, a sense of service, and a sense of exorcism. The first two are self-explanatory and the third I think refers to the willingness to humble oneself and strive to free the better angels of one's nature. I am thankful to God that I am on this discernment journey, and I hope that as a Capuchin, God will make me an instrument of peace."