

## **A Vision of Diversity, Acceptance: Deacon Sam Nasada, OFM**

*The soon-to-be-ordained 2017 FST graduate finds the spirit of St. Francis lives on in all*

Sam Nasada, OFM, who received his Master of Divinity degree from the Franciscan School of Theology in 2017, will be ordained as a priest December 3rd at the Our Lady of the Angels Conventual Church at the Franciscan Renewal Center (The Casa) in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Born in Jakarta, Indonesia, Deacon Sam moved to the U.S. to study and went on to earn his B.S. and M.S. in engineering. He was baptized and raised in the Catholic faith, but, admittedly, took the first half of his life as a Catholic for granted. After landing a manufacturing industry job in Los Angeles, he sought out a community through faith, becoming active in his parish and a group for young Indonesian Catholics.

"I loved being involved in putting things together for liturgy and the choir," he said on a recent phone call, adding that over time he noticed himself being more excited preparing for liturgy than for his work as an engineer. "What if I want to do this full time?" he asked himself.

The Franciscan piece of Deacon Sam's journey-to-priesthood puzzle came after meeting the friars. "They were so welcoming," he recalled. "This was before I knew anything about Franciscan spirituality and teaching, but it is what caught my interest and I started discerning" a call to religious life.

He joined the Franciscans in 2010, professed solemn vows in 2016 and graduated from FST a year later.

"It was eye-opening to be surrounded by all the diversity," Deacon Sam said of his time at FST. "Between the faculty, staff and students there was this fraternity, there was a community. "And," he continued, "where else can you experience a community-like feeling in a world that is so polarized?"

Upon graduation, and with the nation's socio-political climate taking an increasingly negative shift against immigrants, Deacon Sam helped establish a new Franciscan community in Elfrida, Arizona—about 26 miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border towns of Douglas and Agua Prieta.

The FST community has inspired him "in a way that you learn what can be achieved."

"It continues to be an inspiration in recognizing that if I look deep enough and carefully enough, there are traces of Franciscan spirit in everyone," he added. "The spirit of Francis is

still alive in many people that I meet and there are so many allies in the world. That has been a great source of hope for me.”

Today, Deacon Sam serves at Our Lady of the Angels at The Casa, welcoming families from across the greater Phoenix valley, Arizona and southwest for who and where they are in life without judgement — a facet of his faith and teaching that’s rooted in the spirituality of St. Francis.

“To truly believe that God became human and, even with human nature and all the brokenness, was OK has given me a lot of freedom and passion toward myself and others,” Deacon Sam said. “Especially in a world where people don’t feel welcome or enough in the eyes of the church,” he added, it’s important to “know that you are welcome, and you are loved.”

“That is why we as Franciscans call everyone and all creations as brothers and sisters, because we are all connected,” he said.