

# Hoyts keeping faith and family together in Rogers

written by Alesia Schaefer |



*Names:* Deacon Ronnie Hoyt, wife Sharon and son Tony

*Parish:* St. Vincent de Paul

*City:* Rogers

*Ages:* Ronnie, 50; Sharon, 50; and Tony, 24

*Family:* Ronnie and Sharon have been married 27 years and have five children, Hillary, Andrew, Tony, Clay and Cameron, and three grandchildren

*Why you want to know the Hoyt family:* As members of St. Vincent de Paul Church for the past 27 years, the Hoyts have watched their family grow up in the parish. But the past few years have introduced significant changes for the Hoyt family. Ronnie, one of the 40 deacons recently ordained in the diocese, left a high-octane career as senior vice president of merchandising at Wal-Mart in 2007 to spend a year with family, volunteering and serving in the church. After some soul searching, he discovered his 25 years of employment at one of the largest retailers in the world had given him unique skills that were also valuable in serving the Lord. Since 2011, he has shared those management skills with the church as parish manager. Besides continuing to strengthen his own family ties, Ronnie's goal as deacon is to minister to the family. Serving alongside him in the parish are his son, Tony, in the Life Teen and Music Ministry, and his wife Sharon, who is involved in the funeral meals ministry and is a catechist for youth ministry programs.

## **In Their Own Words**

Arkansas Catholic's theme this year is "Catholic Beyond Sunday." How do you remain committed as a Catholic beyond Sunday?

**Ronnie:** We are like a typical family and have the typical struggles of families in today's world,

but keeping Church as a central focus and seeking to balance my faith life with the demands of the world helps me stay focused. Ministry, for me, is the key to staying energized. The hospice ministry, our church's involvement in the Haiti project and the prison ministry are where I like to spend my time.

**Tony:** One thing we do as a family is to get together every Monday evening to eat dinner. It is not always easy since two of my siblings have children of their own, but we make it a commitment. For the past seven years this dinner date has helped to keep us all accountable. We check in with everyone and make sure everyone is attending Mass and help each other with problems.

**Sharon:** I converted to the Catholic faith when I was 21 and I never really felt Jesus in my heart until I became Catholic. But I feel ministry keeps us faithful. When it seems like something will be a lot of work is usually when you will walk away being blessed by the experience.

*As parents of five children and grandparents of three, what do you see as the biggest challenge Catholic families face today? And, Tony, as a 20-something what's the challenge for young adults in the faith?*

**Ronnie:** I think all of the things that pull us apart, like materialism and technology, for instance, are the things we have to guard against by attending Mass together as a family and incorporating things that help us stay grounded. At Christmas last year, even though it was hard to schedule, we took the whole family to carol at a nursing home with Tony playing guitar. That was more important than the gift giving.

**Sharon:** Outside influences have been a struggle for all of the children at times. But I think you have to help them understand your expectations for them.

**Tony:** I want to make young adults aware that there are programs after high school and to work to keep them involved through high school because if they don't make that connection in high school, they may not seek to get involved in college.

*You were instrumental in spearheading the Haiti project in your parish. What other issues are important to you in the parish?*

**Ronnie:** The sister parish we have in Bombardopolis, Haiti, is very important to me and through our continued support and visits and exchange of ideas we want to help them in becoming self-sustaining.