

My New Life as a Priest

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“Wow, I’m a priest!” These were my first words in my remarks after Communion after my Mass of Thanksgiving at my home parish on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. After all of the waiting, all the seminary formation, and all of the anticipation and yearning the day had finally arrived and I was what the Lord has desired me to be since the moment of my conception ... a priest of Jesus Christ!

As I write this today it doesn’t seem possible that it has been just over two months since the day of my Ordination to the Priesthood. The time has flown by, and I am loving every moment of my new life as a priest. These first months of priesthood have been everything I have desired and so much more. It is amazing to wake up and realize that the one of the first things I get to do is to celebrate Mass! Then, following Mass, to set about the work of the day of a parish priest ... hospital visits and anointings, hearing confessions, visiting and teaching at the parish school, meetings with couples preparing for marriage, prayer and dinner with my pastor, parish meetings, and the list could continue ...

The work is busy, but it is so fulfilling and rewarding knowing that the work you do is not your own but truly the Lord’s. I am so blessed to carry about in my priesthood Christ’s and His Church’s work and mission of saving souls for His Kingdom. What a life! A month after my Ordination I had the wonderful opportunity to direct a retreat with a brother priest. This was such a grace-filled experience for me because I was privileged to see in a deeper and more intimate way Christ’s desire to love, forgive, heal, and save us all! And, He desired and accomplished this through me, still a weak, sinful man, but now a priest of Jesus Christ! I remember Friday night after hearing confessions leaving the confessional in tears. These tears were not of sadness, but of joy because I was so grateful to see and be the instrument of the Lord God as He touched and changed hearts forever.

This is just one awesome experience of so many that I could tell you about the great joy and gift of Christ’s Holy Priesthood. As you read this you are beginning another year (or perhaps your first year) of seminary formation. I encourage you ... persevere! Hang in there! The Lord and His Church needs you and want you to be their instruments of love and mercy. Stay close to the Eucharist through the Mass and daily time of prayer in His presence. Stay close to the Mother of all priests, our Mother, Mary and all the saints. Love your future spouse, the Church, and pray everyday that this love can be deepened. And, be humble, and willing to be formed as priests after the Heart of Christ. The Church truly speaks through the seminary faculty, your mentors, spiritual directors, and your brother seminarians. They want you to be good and holy priests too. Listen to them.

I am so grateful that I was ordained a priest and am beginning my first year of priesthood in this Year of the Priesthood as declared by our Holy Father. From the moment I began discerning my vocation St. John Vianney has been such a dear and great friend, intercessor, and example to me. I am looking forward to taking a Pilgrimage to Ars led by our bishop over the Octave of Christmas with the seminarians of the diocese and my brother priests to thank the Lord and the Holy Cure for all they have done for me! St. John Vianney says it best about the dignity and beauty of our wondrous vocation. He teaches us, “If the priest knew his dignity, he would die not of fear, but of love.” With this in mind I still continue to proclaim in love and gratitude to the Great High Priest Himself, “Wow, I’m a priest!”