

# STEWARDSHIP NEWS

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## A New Priest in the Family

Pat Metzger

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the youngest of our four sons, Kyle, was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood for the Fargo Diocese by Bishop John Folda. When people learn that my husband Glenn and I are parents of a newly ordained priest, the typical reaction is one of surprise and awe, along with the question, "What's it like to have a priest in your family?!" It's not a question that can be easily and completely answered with a simple response. The question always prompts a flood of thoughts and emotions for me.....

The notion that God might be calling Kyle to a religious vocation began to surface in my mind (and obviously in his) during his late middle school years. As he anticipated graduation from Shanley High School in Fargo, he began exploring his choices for a university to attend; he eventually enrolled in the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. As Kyle would tell you, "I had to see if God was truly calling me to be a priest." Kyle's discernment that ultimately led to his ordination as a diocesan priest included several years at UST's minor seminary, St. John Vianney; time out to discern if a teaching vocation was what God asked of him; and after almost 7 years of teaching and a graduate degree later, reentering major seminary at Mount St. Mary's in Maryland for the next 5 years to test the call and ask the Church to authenticate it. Ordained at 33, he's had some life experiences that will certainly benefit his work as a priest.

So, we (his immediate family) have had more than 15 years growing into the notion of our son/brother becoming a priest and supporting him along the way. Even during his years away from seminary, I was certain that Kyle would ultimately return; my prayer was that, if that was indeed God's plan, I would live to see it! The day he told all of us that

he had resigned his teaching position to reenter seminary was truly a day of rejoicing for us all.

Are there any drawbacks to having a son in the priesthood? For me, yes – just a couple. Now that Fr. Kyle's ordained, he's not just ours; we have to share him! His primary responsibility is shepherding the souls he's leading. Any time we have with him, including family get-togethers and holidays, is dictated by his schedule; and like most priests, he's very busy. (His first assignment is serving as the parochial vicar – or the associate priest, known by many of us in the laity – at Fargo's largest parish, Sts. Anne and Joachim. Among other parish responsibilities, he's teaching the high school seniors' weekly religious education class and teaching at Shanley High School two full days a week.) Even more of a concern is my constant prayer that he remains in good health and takes care of himself. After a career spanning 37 years in the Fargo Catholic schools, I was blessed with working closely with many priests in the diocese, some of whom remain good friends of mine. I'm well aware of the demands the priesthood makes on individuals. I pray for his ministry and for his well-being every day, and I'm gratified every time someone tells me they're including Fr. Kyle in their prayers. Our priests NEED our prayers!

The drawbacks related to Fr. Kyle's priesthood are certainly overshadowed by the positives. People tell me, "You must be so proud of Kyle!" I never want to make our other three sons feel like I have any less pride in them than I do for Kyle; they have grown into men of character and integrity – Glenn and I are so proud of all of them! However, I cannot deny that there is something very unique and special about being the parents of a priest. To a certain extent, words are inadequate; we certainly feel grateful and blessed, for his presence in our lives and for the gift of his priesthood to our family.

Reflecting on Fr. Kyle's priesthood always brings to mind his ordination and "first Mass" the following

day last summer. That weekend was a spiritual and emotional high for all of us in his immediate and extended family. It would be difficult to put those feelings into words, too. I will simply say that, for me, it was a glimpse of heaven. The sights, sounds, music, smells, and feelings I experienced during the Mass of Ordination, surrounded by loved ones, and highlighted by the glowing smile on the face of my son who had fallen in love with Jesus, will linger in my mind for eternity. Seeing Fr. Kyle elevate the Body of Jesus Christ for the first time during consecration at Mass the next day was a moment of indescribable joy. I was flooded with thoughts of our Blessed Mother throughout the weekend, feeling closer to her than I ever had before, and identifying in a small but profound way with the joy she must have experienced as Our Lord's mother.

Just thinking about that ordination weekend still brings tears to my eyes; it was a profound moment in time for all of us who were present. We were (and are) blessed beyond measure! Several days later, one of our other sons sent a short e-mail to Fr. Kyle (cc'd to me and his other brothers) that said it all:

"So.....As I lie here in bed, once again tossing and turning (but this time on a good note), I can't get the words you spoke on Sunday at Mass out of my head – 'You have given me a son; I return him to You a priest.' Never in my life have I felt so much joy, seeing the smile on your face, as well as on Mom's and Dad's. It was THE proudest moment of my life! I love you all, and once again, Kyle, congratulations!"

His words ring true for ALL of us in our family.....

## **Praying for family members**

Sacred Heart Parishioner

Everyone has the gift of prayer. Prayer is an opportunity to communicate with God. Often when one prays for a family member or friend it is an

intercessory prayer requesting a need for another person; like praying for physical health, mental health, education, employment, etc. These are prayers asking for help resolving one's life issues. It is each person's responsibility to develop their prayer life and communication with God.

I have struggled with the quality of my prayer life, more specifically, with my ability to pray for my family on an individual basis. I have seven adult children and have searched for an appropriate method of praying for each one. I was looking for a prayer process for each individual's general, spiritual well-being, not a specific need; a simple prayer for each family member to enhance their spiritual life. Through spiritual direction, it was suggested that praying a novena for each child would be an appropriate and rewarding gift.

I made a personal commitment to pray a novena for each child during the calendar year of 2016. I was given the website [praymorenovenas.com](http://praymorenovenas.com) as a reference and have used the website for three novenas. I have prayed novenas for four of my children to date.

When I begin a novena for one of my children, I will contact him/her, informing them that I am starting a novena prayer for them and ask if they have any special intentions that they would like to have included in the novena. On each occasion, I have received 3-5 additional intentions to add to the novena. Often the timing of the novena has occurred with a family issue, i.e., child birth, moving, behavior issues. Each novena has been a spiritual enrichment to me and hopefully for each child.

Prayer is a major component of one's spiritual life. Praying for family enhances one's spiritual life and tightens the bonds of family.

Use your gift of prayer, include your family in prayer and consider praying a novena for yourself and your family.

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