

## “TU ES SACERDOS IN AETERNUM” MUCH MORE THAN A “DREAM JOB”

Perhaps some of you may recall a 1992 episode of the hit show *Cheers* in which Norm Peterson served as a volunteer taster in a brewery. So valuable were his insights, he was offered a job. When given his introductory tour, he began to cry while hugging a giant fermentation vessel, exclaiming– “Honey, I’m home!” He had landed, so to speak, his “dream job.” He demurred when presented with his first paycheck. “No, sir, I couldn’t– absolutely not...not for this!” While humorous, it highlighted a valid point– channeling someone’s passion into their work is a really good idea! How many people are able to **live their passion** as their chosen path each and every day? I too recall receiving my first paycheck as a newly ordained priest 29 years ago. I did a little research and discovered that the base salary for a rookie priest in 1989 was barely above minimum wage (\$3.35 per hour), though it also included room, board and a \$3,700 car allowance. Nevertheless, even though the amount was quite modest, it still felt awkward to be “paid” for exercising ministry. Sure, there are temporal realities to consider, and priests need to pay bills, just like anyone else!

In my 29 years (reached today, in fact!) as a priest, I have never seen my vocation as merely a job. This is not to say that there have not been difficult days, long hours, or other aspects that seem like “work.” Not at all– there certainly have been. However, it is the fundamental orientation of ministry in the Church that has framed my life. This coming Tuesday marks my **20,000th day on earth** (not that I’m counting!), more than half of which have been as a priest. Each year at the ordination Mass, we priests are brought back to our own special day, much as a married couple would when attending a wedding. How can one not reminisce? But more than nostalgic, it is a moment for re-commitment. No vocation breathes from the air of a distant memory. Our vocations must be animated freshly each and every time we observe an anniversary. The priesthood is the best way I know to live my Catholic faith, a faith I desire to nourish, promote and provide to others.

One of the best definitions of a sacrament I ever saw was quite likely the least “theological” one. It referenced the famous fresco of the Sistine Chapel, “**The Creation of Adam.**” Adam holds out his left hand to God, appearing to be rather limp and lifeless in its position. Conversely, God actively appears to extend his right index finger to Adam. **Michelangelo’s masterpiece** captures the moment right before the fingers touch, a brilliant artistic motif. The sacraments become for us the space between the fingers. Christ reaches out to us in the sacraments if we merely extend our hands in receptivity. Bringing the sacraments to the People of God has always been and ought to remain the fundamental duty of each and every priest. Everything else we do (and many items cross our desks each day) must be subservient to the celebration of the sacraments.

Despite the uncertainties of life, both in society and even to an extent within the Church, we proceed with conviction that the priesthood matters precisely because God’s people matter. Though I have never felt called to military service as a chaplain, I admire our Catholic military chaplains who have accompanied soldiers on the harrowing journey to war. I also applaud our hospital chaplains who labor tirelessly, often in extremely stressful situations, and those who serve in the missions, teach our youth and form our future priests. We live our priesthood in many and varied circumstances. Traditional theology holds that once ordained, a man is a priest forever in the Order of Melchizedek. “*Tu es sacerdos secundum ordinem Melchisedechi*” (Ps. 110, 4; cf. Hebr. 5, 6).

Every day, I vest before the image in our sacristy window (Conrad Pickel Studios, 1958) printed on today’s cover. I am most grateful to Celeste Raspanti for providing me with archival information of this stunning window in which Christ the High Priest is depicted as the mediator between God and humanity, foreshadowed in the mysterious figure of the priest **Melchizedek** from the Old Testament. He holds a loaf of bread and is crowned, signifying his mysterious royal ancestry. Opposite Melchizedek is a priest of the New Covenant, offering the chalice at Mass. God the Father is shown in the heavenly glory (adoring angels, censor--symbols of adoration) and with the symbols of the Holy Trinity (dove within a triangle).

Christ’s outstretched arms express the idea that he is accepting the sacrifice that he offered for the our redemption. The intensity of the red hues was achieved by adding gold to the glass in its liquid state. Our Archival notes indicate that the window was a gift from **Archbishop William Brady** himself, whose Coat of Arms and Brady Family Crest are barely visible in the corner opposite the Archdiocesan Crest. I pray that my

initial reaction 29 years ago upon receiving that first check remains ever vivid. I am deeply blessed to live my passion every day. God willing, may it remain that way.

- **Fr. Andrew Jaspers** is a gifted and respected retreat and spiritual director. Recognizing that gift, he will move from part-time to full-time at Saint John Vianney Seminary beginning later in June. I am especially grateful for his care of the Cathedral Young adults group during this past year and I hope you can stop by at Coffee and Donuts next Sunday to offer your thanks as well.
- Cardinal Timothy Dolan issued a statement expressing deep appreciation upon learning that the Trump Administration will be issuing **new regulations to separate abortion** from the federal Title X family planning program. Dolan said: “Abortion always takes the life of a child and often harms the mother, her surviving children, and other family and friends as well. Most Americans recognize that abortion is distinct from family planning and has no place in a taxpayer-funded family planning program.”
- One of our gifted lectors was recently featured on the cover of the Catholic Studies magazine at UST. **Anne Morath** teaches Humane Letters at Trinity School. Teaching is a wonderful, though often exhausting vocation. Teachers like Anne deserve our admiration as another academic year draws to a close. May all our students in the parish persevere— you’re almost there!
- One of our esteemed altar servers, **Charlie DeRueil**, has been accepted into Saint John Vianney Seminary and I could not be happier. He is an outstanding young man who may be assured of our prayers as he continues his discernment of God’s will. I do not think he is the only server discerning a vocation— he may soon have company!
- Speaking of altar servers... **Thomas DeWitt** (master of the perfectly lit charcoal before Mass!) earned a *Summa Cum Laude* on the National Latin exam for 9th graders. Just for you Thomas— “Gratulationes! Mirabile visu, profectu tuo laetamur. In futuro tibi prosperitatem habeas, fortasse etiam in seminario?”

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,  
Rector