

“GOD IS THE ARTIST”: REFLECTIONS ON PRIESTHOOD  
by  
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Many people have been asking me about my experience thus far. I've always begun the answer with, “I'm the new baby priest of the Archdiocese, the new kid on the block.” I'm going to use this as long as possible! I have been ordained a priest now for three months and a few days. I have been busy trying to integrate this new reality into my life – what exactly does a priest do in 2009?

I have gone through six years of the seminary, and the image that came to mind in year one, my philosophy year, was one of a paint can. I often went with my dad to the hardware store as a child and was fascinated by the machine that mixed the paint. It looked painful indeed! However, the process was needed to prepare the paint. Similarly, the seminary was needed to prepare me to do God's work.

In the short time that I have been a priest I have celebrated the Sacraments of the Eucharist, Reconciliation, of the Sick, and of Marriage. I have spent time with people listening to their joys and sorrows. In many ways I was being prepared for this during my seminary years, however, at times it seems like I have forgotten everything.

For example, I spent the month of July doing ministry at the Civic Hospital. I found the time difficult, but rewarding. It is never easy to enter a room where the family has lost their mother, father, son or daughter. It is difficult to understand why this person is suffering with an unknown disease and they happen to be younger than me.

When I received these calls, I stopped everything and went over to the hospital, knowing that they hadn't called me but were looking for God! I'm in awe that He makes himself present through me, time and time again. I was particularly struck one day when I saw the obituary of a person that I had anointed a couple days earlier. God is at work and wants me to be part of his children's lives. I am experiencing the joy of being part of His plan each and every day.

Indeed, the People of God love their priests, and I feel that love every day! It is absolutely beautiful. I love being part of people's lives. I love being able to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass for them, and for myself. I love being able to share God's mercy in the confessional. Finally, I love celebrating the Sacraments!

However, the *paint can* is not the artist. I have been prepared and I am now a priest by the grace of God. He is the artist and I am confident that He will use me as He sees fit. There are still things I need to smooth out though. Ultimately the priest is man of prayer. I do my best to faithfully take all of this to prayer – every person I meet, their joys and sufferings, including my own, and I continue to trust that God will provide. I have enjoyed my time at the Cathedral, and a week now in my new parish. However, both experiences have taught me, and are teaching me that I must be rooted in prayer at all times. I am blessed to be given the time I need to be with the Lord.

Finally, the Lord said, “the harvest is great, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Lk 10:2) Each and every day I experience the priesthood of Our Lord Jesus Christ to be a great gift. I have also begun to feel the great responsibility that goes along with it. I continue to trust in God. Indeed, I trust not in my weakness, but in God's call for me. I know that God can do something with this old *paint can*! I have a colour to add too. Few have been called, and I am constantly in awe that He chose me to be one of them.