



Pastor's Pen

June 6, 2019

- Fr. Joseph Gifford,
Associate Pastor

Hello Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For those of you whom I have yet to meet, my name is Father Joseph Gifford. On May 25th I was ordained a priest, for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. I have been assigned to be with all of you at All Saints for my first assignment. I am greatly looking forward to getting to know all of you and to be working with such a fine pastor as Fr. Wilson.

A little bit about myself. I grew up in a strong Catholic family in Ham Lake, MN. I am the third of four boys (sadly, no sisters.) As I grew up, my family was highly involved at the Church of Saint Paul in Ham Lake. It helped that we lived next door. In fact, I grew up walking through my parents' backyard to get to the parish, which happened several times a week. So, living in the rectory here, will be just like living at home, with All Saints in my backyard. I was involved with several ministries in middle school and high school, such as altar serving, being an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, and being a youth group leader. This all strengthened my faith and, unknown to me at the time, it all helped to foster my vocation to the priesthood.

I then went off to Benedictine College for my undergraduate studies. After starting as a nursing major, I quickly realized that God was calling me elsewhere. I then talked with my pastor back in Ham Lake and he helped me to hear God's call to the priesthood. However, he also helped me to see that God was also calling me to stay at Benedictine for the time being. I eventually graduated with a bachelor's degree in Music, Philosophy, and Theology from Benedictine. Directly after college, I entered seminary, where I have been ever since. While in seminary, I greatly enjoyed living with the other seminarians and am looking forward to continued priestly fraternity with Fr. Wilson and Fr. Ben Little. I also found joy in my studies at the seminary, especially in the areas of mission work and spiritual theology. I hope to bring my love for these and all areas of theology into my ministry and share them with each and every one of you.

If I am not "priest-ing" at the altar, in the confessional, or in the office, people can often find me practicing music, with opera as my specialty, or at the gym honing my kickboxing skills. I picked up a love for music and singing while I was at Benedictine and I have continued to work on it in the seminary, where I hosted several concerts and conducted and was the Narrator in our recent production of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat." Kickboxing has become a recent love of mine. I love being able to simply forget all of my cares and roundhouse kick a punching bag. It is great exercise and great for a healthy mind and body. This is good for me because I also love food, whether it is cooking, baking, grilling, or eating. Other hobbies that I enjoy are camping, kayaking, movies, and reading. But mostly, I love being with other people; getting to know them and helping them to get to know God.

I was recently asked if I had a mission statement as a priest. Initially I thought that this was a weird question. I thought, "Shouldn't it be obvious? Shouldn't everyone know that each priest cares for them and is trying to help them get to heaven?" But after thinking about it and coming up with a "mission statement" I realized that this was actually quite helpful for me to internalize what the priesthood is all about. So as your priest my goal is to offer to God our prayers and sacrifices, to teach His Word without fail, and to help Fr. Wilson to lead this community for the glory of God and the ultimate salvation of your souls. I am looking forward to getting to know you all. Know of my prayers for all of you and God bless.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Gifford