



June 2, 2019
- Fr. Chad VanHoose,
Associate Pastor

WHAT A LIFE!

A Priest

To live in the midst of the world without wishing its pleasures;
To be a member of each family,
Yet belonging to none; to share all suffering;
To penetrate all secrets;
To heal all wounds; to go from men to God,
And offer Him their prayers;
To return from God to men to bring pardon and hope;
To have a heart of fire for Charity,
And a heart of bronze for Chastity. To teach and to pardon,
Console and bless always.
My God, what a life;
And it is yours, O priest of Jesus Christ.

J.B. Henri Lacordaire, OP

I read that poem on the back of a priest's ordination holy card when I was a missionary with NET Ministries over 13 years ago, and it struck me in a powerful way. Back then the idea of the priesthood described by Lacordaire seemed so unapproachable, even though part of me was inspired by his words. How could I ever heal all wounds, bring pardon and hope, teach, console, and bless always? At that time in my life, I couldn't even speak in front of a small crowd without my face turning beet red!

But the simple priest who gave me the holy card proved himself to be approachable and an ordinary man like me. In getting to know his likes and dislikes, his strengths and weaknesses, his joy-filled personality and humor, I began to warm up more to the possibility of the priesthood. Knowing a priest like an older brother and somewhat of a friend didn't lessen my awe for the priesthood; rather it showed me how God can use the ordinary to do extraordinary things, like the St. Teresa of Calcutta sentiment, "I am a little pencil in the hand of God."

After celebrating last week my two-year anniversary as a priest, I am still bowled over by God's goodness and generosity to me and his children. When people ask me about my experience as a priest, I scarcely know how to answer. On the one hand, I know that I'm doing exactly what God made me for, and sometimes it even feels like second nature. But on the other, I sometimes tremble after God allows me to share someone's suffering, heal someone's wound, or pardon someone's offense. Who am I to be invited into each family and penetrate all secrets? I am an ordinary man called by God to be a priest of Jesus Christ.

I hope that you have found me to be ordinary, joyful, and approachable over the past two years, as I have tried to love you with a heart of fire for Charity. I hope that you have seen not only my strengths, but also my failures and weaknesses. But most of all, I hope that Jesus has touched you in some small way through my ministry. Thank you for all the patience, openness, and kindness shown to me as I learned the ropes of the priesthood at All Saints. Who knows, maybe some of your sons and grandsons will follow in my footsteps, as I have followed in those of so many other ordinary and holy priests. My God, what a life; and it is yours, O priest of Jesus Christ!