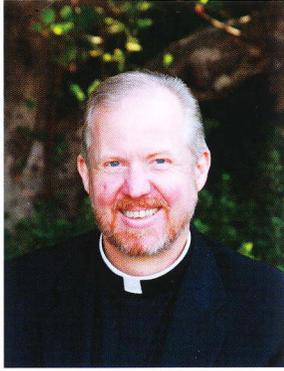


A Proud Legacy

ALUMNI CORNER



Rev. Roger Gustatson

After earning a law degree from the University of Chicago, Rev. Roger practiced employment discrimination law. In 2009, he was accepted to study at St. Patrick's Seminary and ordained to the priesthood on June 7, 2014. He currently serves as the Pastor of St. Brendan Church in San Francisco.

“As a graduate of St. Patrick’s Seminary, I consider myself to be a product of a legacy that has included a nearly 400-year tradition of Sulpician education and formation.”

After nearly a quarter-century of ignoring God’s call to the priesthood, I found myself unloading the tiny sedan I earlier had stuffed to the brim with boxes, and driven across the country from Atlanta, Georgia. It was January, and the weather was cold and damp. Trepidatious each mile along the journey, I had pulled through the tree-lined driveway of the seminary, and the colossal statue of Jesus extending His hands in welcome came into view. A young seminarian saw me struggling with the boxes and ran to my side. He helped me carry them to the tiny, west-facing closet on the third floor that barely passed for a living space. A small tremor a few months earlier had decorated the aging plaster with spidery lines. An actual spider in one of the corners was there to greet me. I sat down on the tiny twin bed crammed against the wall and cried.

It would be the last time. The next five years in the seminary were some of the most joyous years in my life. There I found community and camaraderie, a deep spiritual life and friendship with God, time for prayer, learning, and pastoral development. My professors were engaging and caring. They led me from a relatively superficial understanding of my faith to a deeper appreciation of the theological richness of the Church.

Several formation directors over the years molded me along spiritual, intellectual, pastoral, and human dimensions. My spiritual advisor led me to greater

intimacy with the Lord. Field education experiences challenged me to grow in my familiarity with and ease in pastoral encounters. I became friends with the Sulpician formators who inhabited the halls of the massive structure and seemingly were present at every turn, watching. When the machismo of the place became a bit too much, I found comfort in the feminine features of the Mexican sisters who nourished us with food, love, and prayers. I always sat in the same place at Mass: the first row of the first pew. I wore my chapel seat out each day with daily Mass, morning and evening liturgies of the hours, adoration, and personal time for prayer. I expressed my creative side by singing in the prestigious Schola Cantorum, under the baton of Fr. James McKearney, PSS. Yet, my favorite memory was serving for one year as the “head bartender” of that venerable institution.

As a graduate of St. Patrick’s Seminary, I consider myself to be a product of a legacy that has included a nearly 400-year tradition of Sulpician education and formation. After 118 years of service, the Sulpicians are leaving Menlo Park, and I am saddened.

Yet, I believe that we all should look to the future, when that next frightened, fresh seminarian, ready to begin a new life of giving himself away in the priesthood, turns the corner off Middlefield Road and is greeted by open-handed Jesus. In the midst of so much change, we, too, who truly love the seminary, should say to the Lord, “In Verbo Tuo” (“At your word”).