

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Fr. Brian Lynch

Sponsored by the St. Michael's and St. Mary's Parish Councils

(Greg Lunzer and Joe McGrath, Interviewers)

Brian Lynch was born on October 7, 1968 in Queens, New York to Tom and Kathy Lynch. He is the oldest of four children, the others being his sister, Jean, and brothers, Kevin and Michael. Brian's father worked in human resources and his mother took care of the home until the children were grown; then she worked in catering. Brian was raised in Connecticut, attending public grade schools, first in Cromwell and then in Vernon for 5th through 8th grades. Brian learned diligence and confidence in Vernon by demonstrating that he should be placed with the faster learners in his new school.

Brian's father insisted that Brian go to East Catholic High School, Manchester, Connecticut despite his wishes to stay with his friends going to the public high school. The quality of the education and the better discipline at the Catholic school were the reasons for this decision and Fr. Lynch looks back on his Catholic high school days as an overall good experience. Brian continued to apply himself to his studies and was on the wrestling team through high school. He recalls being discouraged after his first wrestling practice as a 9th grader when he got the worst of it but his father told him: "You're going back!" Brian also played town league baseball while in high school.

Brian's earliest job was as a paperboy, and he recalls how poorly that paid for the service expected. He delivered TV sets for a TV repair service company and also worked in a kosher catering service that handled Bar Mitzvahs, Jewish weddings and other celebrations. He still recalls with a shudder that some of the older women had numbers tattooed on their arms from Nazi concentration camps.

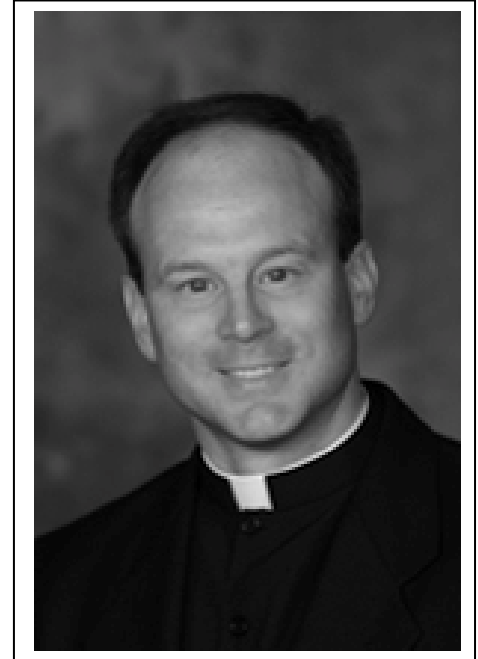
Brian next went to Pennsylvania State University, intending to major in Chemistry, as he especially was drawn to atoms, protons, electrons and the systematic beauty of the periodic table. Penn State is a big place, and Brian sought to manage its size by joining a fraternity, playing rugby and switching majors to Ceramic Science and Engineering. Rugby lasted until he broke a leg but he persevered to get his B.S. in Ceramic Science and Engineering and continued on to an M.S. in Ceramic Science, also from Penn State. Brian worked summers and weekends during his college days at a Subway restaurant, dug ditches for a cable company and did some graduate research at Penn State's Materials Research Lab. While in graduate school, Brian met some very dedicated, hard working international students. Seeing their passion led him to the question: "What could I do that I would be really motivated and excited to do?" It was then that he started to think about becoming a priest.

Brian delayed entering a seminary because he had made a large investment in time and energy for science, had loans to pay off and a girlfriend who thought his becoming a priest a really bad idea. His mom also was not on board; she liked his girlfriend! He also had a fear of the unknown and friends who would not understand. After leaving Penn State in 1994, Brian worked the summer at a factory making ceramic electronic components and then moved to Minnesota to take a better position with 3M in Maplewood. Brian considers his 3M work in X-ray diffraction his first real job and 3M a great company.

Brian had his "St. Paul moment" in St. Paul. In 1996, while his girlfriend was visiting her family, Brian decided to make a sort of retreat. He went to Mass at what was then St. Luke's Church, where he encountered a Jesuit seminarian who asked if he was Kevin's brother. It turns out that this seminarian was a friend of Brian's brother Kevin, from Catholic University, and noticed his resemblance to Kevin. They talked about the priesthood and Brian took this surprising meeting as a sign from the Holy Spirit.

Brian left 3M in June 1997 to more seriously discern if he was being called to the priesthood. He took a part-time parish ministry position at St. Michael's in West St. Paul. While there, he took theology and philosophy courses needed for entry to graduate-level seminary studies. In September, 2002, Brian entered the St. Paul Seminary.

Brian's love for scripture, especially the letters of his favorite saint, St. Paul, taught him that Jesus is most important. St. Paul felt loved and inspired by Christ and was driven to give his life to bring others to Christ. Brian wanted to become a priest so he could do



likewise. His parents were surprised by his interest in the priesthood. His father's reaction was: "If he's happy, I'm happy." His youngest sibling, Michael, was the most interested and supportive of Brian's decision. Fr. Lynch recalls that he was a serious student as a seminarian, with the seminary all consuming in comparison to graduate school in science. Seminarians studied, lived, ate and even spent their summers as seminarians.

Fr. Brian Lynch was ordained a priest May 27, 2006 at the Cathedral of St. Paul by Archbishop Harry Flynn along with four other seminarians. His family, including four relatives from Ireland, sat in the front row of this magnificent cathedral and was given special attention from Archbishop Flynn, who enjoys his Irish roots. As a new priest, Fr. Brian first served as Parochial Vicar at St. Ambrose in Woodbury and, with a lesser time commitment, supported the Hispanic ministry at St. John Neumann in Eagan. He recalls that it was fun to preach to about 1500 people at a time and appreciated the Catholic grade school at St. Ambrose for the energy and joy it brings to the parish.

Fr. Lynch became the Parochial Vicar at St. Mary's and St. Michael's parishes February 1, 2010. It was relatively easy for him to move to Stillwater because Woodbury friends are not far away and Stillwater is a beautiful city. Fr. Lynch enjoys baseball, sports in general and visiting friends. He has a baseball card collection and enjoys reading novels. His mother is now very supportive of his priesthood. He likes being invited out but points out that priests work mornings, evenings and weekends and so it may be difficult to find a suitable time.

Fr. Brian would like to have regular, ongoing relationships with increasing numbers of people. He encourages Catholics to consider priests as members of their extended family, noting that we call them "Father." A priest is not a Catholic robot who has everything all figured out. He relates: "I wasn't born a Catholic priest. I have problems and struggles as other people have." He recommends asking priests for advice and insight. He is able to sympathize with people who want to share and grow and get help. Fr. Brian is able to bring humor and personal experience when speaking with others on a one-on-one basis.

Fr. Lynch offers the following advice to parishioners: "Prayer is so important! Pray together as a family. The rosary is nice, comfortable and relatively easy. Also foster an environment receptive to spontaneous prayer. Pray with scripture. Share how God has been acting in your life. Make religion and prayer normal, not hidden or embarrassing. Receive the sacraments. We all need a relationship with Jesus, with God. Belief in Jesus and knowledge of history should bring people to the Catholic Church in spite of its flaws and foibles. If someone is trying to discern his or her vocation, prayer is necessary." Fr. Lynch's favorite prayer is the Mass.

Fr. Lynch envisions his fulfillment as a priest in both preaching to the multitude and reaching out to people one-on-one, being approachable. Catholics need to do more in bringing non-practicing Catholics and non-Catholics to the Church. He wants to do more than just "preach to the choir."



We are very fortunate, indeed, to have Fr. Brian Lynch and the other fine priests serving St. Mary's and St. Michael's parishioners on our earthly journey to God.

The photos are of Fr. Brian Lynch at the time of his ordination to the priesthood, at 3 months old and at 10 years old.

Greg Lunzer and Joe McGrath
St. Michael's Parish Council
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