Pastor's Notes

Hello St. Philomena and St. Thomas!

This is Fr. Ben Bray, parochial vicar for our parish family. Once a month, I will be contributing to the pastor's note. Today, I would like to share a little more who I am and how I became a priest.

I grew up in the Renton Highlands, to parents who were reverts to the faith. They met each other at their childhood parish, St Louise Bellevue, at a young adult group. A few years later, they were married and would welcome five children, four boys and a girl..(I am the second oldest!) The faith was important to my parents and daily mass was a part of our upbringing. My brothers and I altar served daily mass at St. Anthony in Renton. It was there I first thought about being a priest.

I was moved by the experiences of newly ordained priests and seminarians (men studying to be priests) whom the latter would serve on their pastoral internship. One of these was our current pastor, Father Todd Strange! Over time, I began having thoughts about the priesthood, despite my own objections. However, the examples of priests and seminarians helped me choose the priesthood, seeing their authentic joy. I came to believe that God was inviting me to this as well.

After several years of discernment, I was accepted into the seminary (the school where men prepare for the priesthood). The studies were challenging for me, but the desire for priesthood only grew with each passing year. Eventually, I was ordained in 2019 and these past five years of priesthood have been anything but ordinary! From ministering to 5 communities in my first 2 years, a world wide pandemic, to all the events happening in the culture and our church, it has been quite the unexpected priesthood. Yet, I wouldn't trade it for anything. l have been blessed with every community I serve.

I am excited to meet and know all of you, please be assured of my thoughts and prayers as we work together building up our parish communities. Please pray for me and Fr. Todd, knowing that we are for each of you. We are truly blessed to serve Saint Philomena and Saint Thomas parishes.

God bless,
Fr. Ben Bray