

# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 6

Father John E Boll

No 3

MEET THE PRIESTS OF THE DIOCESE

## *Father Michael Devin Ritter*

Native of Carmichael, California

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Parochial Vicar, Saint John the Baptist Parish, Chico, California



**Michael Devin Ritter was born on August 1, 1983** at Mercy San Juan Hospital, Carmichael, the second of four children born to James Ritter and Patricia Ley. The Ritter children are Jennifer, Michael, Keith and Kimberly.

### **RITTER FAMILY MOVES TO ROCKLIN**

The family lived in Citrus Heights and lived there until Michael was five years of age. They then moved to Rocklin in 1988 where Michael attended Parker Whitney Elementary School in Rocklin from pre-kindergarten to sixth grade. During 1996 - 1998, he attended Spring View Middle School and in 1998, transferred to Rocklin High School where he graduated in 2002.

### **FIRST THOUGHT OF PRIESTHOOD**



Photo provided by Fr Michael Ritter

### **Michael's First Communion with Fr Michael Dillon**

### **INVOLVEMENT AT MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH NOVITIATE**

As a teenager, Mike would go to Mount Saint Joseph Novitiate in Loomis for first Friday Adoration with his mother and while there she saw a vocation flyer about a vocation discernment weekend. Remembering what the priest had said to Michael, she asked him if he wanted to attend the

Since he was 8 years old, Michael began serving Mass at his home parish, eventually became a Eucharistic Minister and helped in the RCIA at the parish.

Having regular contact with his pastor, Father Michael Dillon, inspired him to be like Father Dillon. He saw how much the parishioners loved Father Dillon and he loved them. As Michael watched how people responded to Father Dillon, he realized how much his pastor mattered to so many people.

When Michael was ten or eleven years of age, he and his family attended a healing Mass because his sister Jennifer was very ill. After the Mass, the priest walked out to the parking lot and asked Michael if he ever thought about becoming a priest. Michael said he had never thought about the priesthood. The priest said he thought Mike would make a good priest.

vocation weekend at the Mount. Mike attended that weekend and came to know Father Brian Crawford, OSJ, and thereafter attended many retreat weekends. He met with Father Brian monthly for spiritual direction. These contacts nurtured his desire to become a priest.



Photo by John E Boll

### **Mount Saint Joseph Novitiate, Loomis, CA**

#### **POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF HIS GRANDMOTHER**

Michael's maternal grandmother Yvonne Ley had a great influence on him during his youth. She was a parishioner at Saint John the Evangelist Parish and attended Adoration at her parish church for an hour and Michael often went with her. As he thinks about his early years, he believes his grandmother had the greatest influence on his spiritual life.

#### **INFLUENCE OF A PRIEST COUSIN**

Michael's grandfather's cousin, Monsignor Tony Leuer, was a priest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and was a classmate of Archbishops George Neiderauer, Roger Mahoney and William Levada. Mike came to know these archbishops through Monsignor Tony and remembers receiving a letter from Archbishop Levada inviting him to come to San Francisco to talk about his vocation to the priesthood. Mike never went to meet with the archbishop because he was pretty sure he wanted to be a priest in his home diocese of Sacramento.

### **CLOSELY KNIT FAMILY**

The Ritter family is a very close knit family who went on camping trips together every summer. The love and support of Mike's parents and his sisters and brother have been very important to him. His nieces and nephews are a source of great joy and fun for him.

On one occasion Bishop Weigand came to Saints Peter and Paul Parish for confirmation and while photos were being taken after the liturgy, Mike's mother told Bishop Weigand that Mike was interested in being a priest. Bishop Weigand took Mike's arm and said, "Come with me." He told Mike to make sure to contact the Vocation Office which Mike did.

### **BEGINNING COLLEGE AT MOUNT ANGEL**

Toward the end of high school, having been part of diocesan discernment meetings, Mike petitioned the diocese to enter the seminary and he was accepted by the diocese to begin studies for the priesthood. He was sent to the Benedictine Mount Angel Seminary in Saint Benedict, Oregon as a freshman in college.



Photo by John E Boll

### **Mount Angel Seminary, St Benedict, Oregon**

Mike clearly remembers the day when his family took him to the seminary in Oregon. What a painful moment that was for him as his family began their journey home to Rocklin. As his family drove down the hill from the seminary, Mike asked himself, "What am I doing here?"

## ENTERS THE DISCALCED CARMELITES



Mike attended three years of college at Mount Angel Seminary. He had been pondering the possibility of joining a religious community and after his third year of college, he decided to take a year off and entered the Discalced Carmelites of the Saint Joseph Province in San Jose, CA. He was with the Carmelites for about 10 months when it became clear to him that he really wanted to be a pastor like Father Dillon in Rocklin in order to be part of a community in a parish setting.

## RETURN TO MOUNT ANGEL

Mike left the Carmelites and returned to Mount Angel Seminary to complete his last year of college. He graduated from Mount Angel Seminary in 2007 and then the diocese sent him to Saint Patrick Seminary in Menlo Park for his theological studies.

While Mike spent three years studying theology at Saint Patrick Seminary, he served as a cantor and was part of the seminary choir. These were some of the most enjoyable parts of his life at Saint Patrick Seminary.

Mike with his Grandmother Yvonne in San Jose, CA



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Patrick Seminary, Menlo Park, California

During his first year of theology, Mike was assigned to Saint Catherine Parish in Vallejo for pastoral work on weekends to help in youth ministry. Working with youth was a significant and important part of his life of ministry. Parish youth ministry kept him in the loop of youth activities within the diocese.

### **PASTORAL YEAR IN REDDING**

After his second year of theology, Michael spent his pastoral year at Saint Joseph Parish in Redding with Father Ben De Leon as his pastor and Father John Lawrence who served as chaplain at the local Catholic hospital. This gave him first-hand experience on what it will be like to be a priest in pastoral ministry in a parish.



Photo by John E Boll

### **Saint Joseph Church, Redding**

Mike says Father Ben was a model of a priest who loved priests and the priesthood. He discovered that Father Lawrence was a man who would do anything for Mike and for the people. He was a humble man and Mike had many wonderful evenings talking with Father John in the kitchen with lots of humor and laughter.

### **RETURN TO SAINT PATRICK SEMINARY**

After his pastoral year, Mike returned to Saint Patrick Seminary and was elected president of the student body for that year. He loved being in the seminary, enjoyed seminary community life and

was honored to be chosen as student body president. It was a time of great growth in his life and he looks back on those years with great fondness.

### **LEAVES THE SEMINARY FOR TWO YEARS**

After his third year of theology, it became clear to Mike that there were areas in his life he needed to work on before making a final commitment. He took two years off and during the first year he lived in Southern California where he worked for a country club. In the second year, he worked at the Charter School located at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Sacramento.

### **RETURNS TO MOUNT ANGEL SEMINARY**

After those two years, in consultation with Bishop Soto and the Vocation Office, Mike returned to Mount Angel where he completed his Masters of Divinity degree with honors. Coming back to Oregon for his final year was a nice way to complete his seminary journey which began at Mount Angel Seminary in his first year of college.

### **ONE OF MIKE'S HEROES**

One of Mike's heroes at Mount Angel was Father Paschal Cheline, OSB, who was one of Mike's professors in college who later became vice rector. When Mike returned for his last year of theology, Father Paschal was in the process of dying from cancer. One of the great blessings for Mike was the many times he spent talking and sharing with Father Paschal.

### **CPE TRAINING AT UC DAVIS**

In the summer of 2010, Michael attend CPE training at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento. He lived in residence that summer at Saint Anthony Parish in Sacramento with Father John Boll. A fond memory of that summer was coming home from the hospital and having a glass of wine with Fr John while they spent the evening laughing at the many funny stories of situations and people Mike met at the hospital. The laughter was wonderful medicine for both Michael and Father John as they talked together in the evenings.



Photo by John E Boll

**UC Davis Medical Center, Sacramento**

## ORDAINED A DEACON



Photo provided by Fr Ritter

### **Deacon Michael is congratulated by Father Paschal, OSB and Father Stanley Poltorak**

Mike recalls that it was Father Paschal who clothed him in the dalmatic at his deaconate ordination at Mount Angel. Father Paschal told Mike that he did not think he would live to see him ordained a priest but that he knew Mike would be a good priest. He said, “My only regret is, I will not be able to pick up the phone and hear your stories anymore.” He then went on to say, “But if you need anything, you call on me.” Father Paschal died on March 13, 2015, three months before Mike was ordained a priest. Mike attended Father Paschal’s funeral at Mount Angel Abbey.

Mike used to call Father Paschal frequently and they would visit by telephone. Father Paschal would tell Mike, “Young man, make me laugh and tell me your stories.” The best advice Father Paschal ever gave Mike was, “Young man, keep living!”

## **SECOND PASTORAL YEAR**

Deacon Michael spent his second pastoral year at Saint Anthony Parish in Winters with Father Michael Hebda. The two significant things stand out for him during that year, building up the parish youth ministry and getting involved in campus ministry at the UC Davis Newman Center. He continued helping at the Davis Newman Center even after being assigned as a priest in Sacramento. Campus ministry was the highlight of his first years of ordained ministry.





Photo by John E Boll

**Saint Anthony Church, Winters, CA**



**Winter's Parish Youth Group attend the LA Religious Education Congress, spring 2015**

## GRANDMOTHER YVONNE ATTENDS MICHAEL'S ORDINATION

Mike's Grandmother Yvonne who was instrumental in awakening his vocation become ill. Her prayer to God was that she would live long enough to attend Mike's ordination to the priesthood. She came out of rehabilitation a week before his ordination and attended his ordination.



Michael's Grandmother Yvonne visits him at St Patrick Seminary in 2008

## ORDAINED A PRIEST FOR SACRAMENTO



Photo provided by Fr Ritter

Father Michael Ritter ordained a Priest by Bishop Jaime Soto



Michael was ordained a priest on Saturday, June 6, 2015, at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento by Bishop Jaime Soto. Also ordained to priesthood that day with Michael was Victor Gutierrez and three were ordained deacons, Raj Derivera, Jeremy Santos and Alex Estrella.

The next day, Father Michael celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Rocklin. Both Bishops William Weigand and Richard Garcia were concelebrants at the Mass. Father David Deibel, who had served as Episcopal Vicar for Canonical Affairs and a close friend and mentor of Father Michael, was the homilist. Father David preached about priesthood as a life of comings and goings, of arrivals and departures.

**Vesting Father Michael with the chasuble at his ordination are Fathers Michael Dillon and David Deibel**

About 20 priests concelebrated with Father Michael at his First Mass which was a joyful parish celebration of the community that helped nurture Michael's vocation to priesthood.



Photo provided by Fr Ritter

**Father Michael thanks his Grandmother Yvonne at his First Mass in Rocklin**



Photo provided by Fr Ritter

**Priest Concelebrants at Father Michael's First Mass, Sts Peter and Paul Church, Rocklin**



Photo provided by Fr Ritter

**Father Michael's Family celebrate with him at his First Mass, Rocklin**



Photo provided by Fr Ritter

**Father Dillon Concelebrates with Father Mike at his First Mass in Rocklin**

### **FIRST PRIESTLY ASSIGNMENT**

Father Ritter's first assignment as a priest was to Saint Charles Borromeo Parish in South Sacramento with Father Oscar Gomez-Medina as pastor. Father Oscar was a humble, hardworking priest who was a great pastor for Father Michael. He gave Father Mike great freedom to explore his gifts and experience different aspects of parish life. Father Mike was involved in youth ministry in the diocese, elected as representative of the priests ordained 10 years and less to the Presbyteral Council.



Photo by John E Boll

**Saint Charles Borromeo Church, Sacramento**

### **THE WORK OF HIS FIRST ASSIGNMENT**

Father Mike did countless hours hearing confessions in the parish and countless calls to the hospital ministering to the sick. He remembers reading in a book that stated: "A priest has to know that when he is dealing with people, he is dealing with living pages of the Gospel and he must learn to read them with reverence." Through the countless hours of confessions, hospital visits, home visits, ministry with youth and students and funerals, these experiences taught him to read these pages with great reverence for humanity, church and priesthood. Michael was overwhelmed by the way the people of Saint Charles Parish loved him.

### **FATHER MIKE WELCOMED BY THE PRESBYTERATE**

Mike also says that one of the greatest experiences and honors of his life was being welcomed by the fraternity of priests of the diocese. This was particularly clear when he attended the convocation of the presbyterate after only 4 months of his ordination.



Photo by John E Boll

### **Sacramento Diocesan Convocation of Priests in South Lake Tahoe, Fall 2015**

### **SECOND ASSIGNMENT, SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, CHICO**

After two years at Saint Charles Parish, Father Michael was assigned to Saint John the Baptist Church in Chico and to the Chico Newman Center. Continuing his work with college students has been a highlight for him. He has a passion for campus ministry so Chico is an appropriate place for him to be at this point in his life.





Photo by John E Boll

### **Saint John the Baptist Church, Chico**

#### **GRANDMOTHER DIES**

Father Mike's grandmother Yvonne died in April 2017 and he had the honor of celebrating her Funeral Mass at Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Rocklin with burial at Calvary Cemetery. She had been a great influence on Father Michael who encouraged him to follow his dream.

#### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

The Diocese of Sacramento is blessed to have the presence and ministry of Father Michael Ritter. He is multi-talented with an outgoing personality and a great sense of humor.

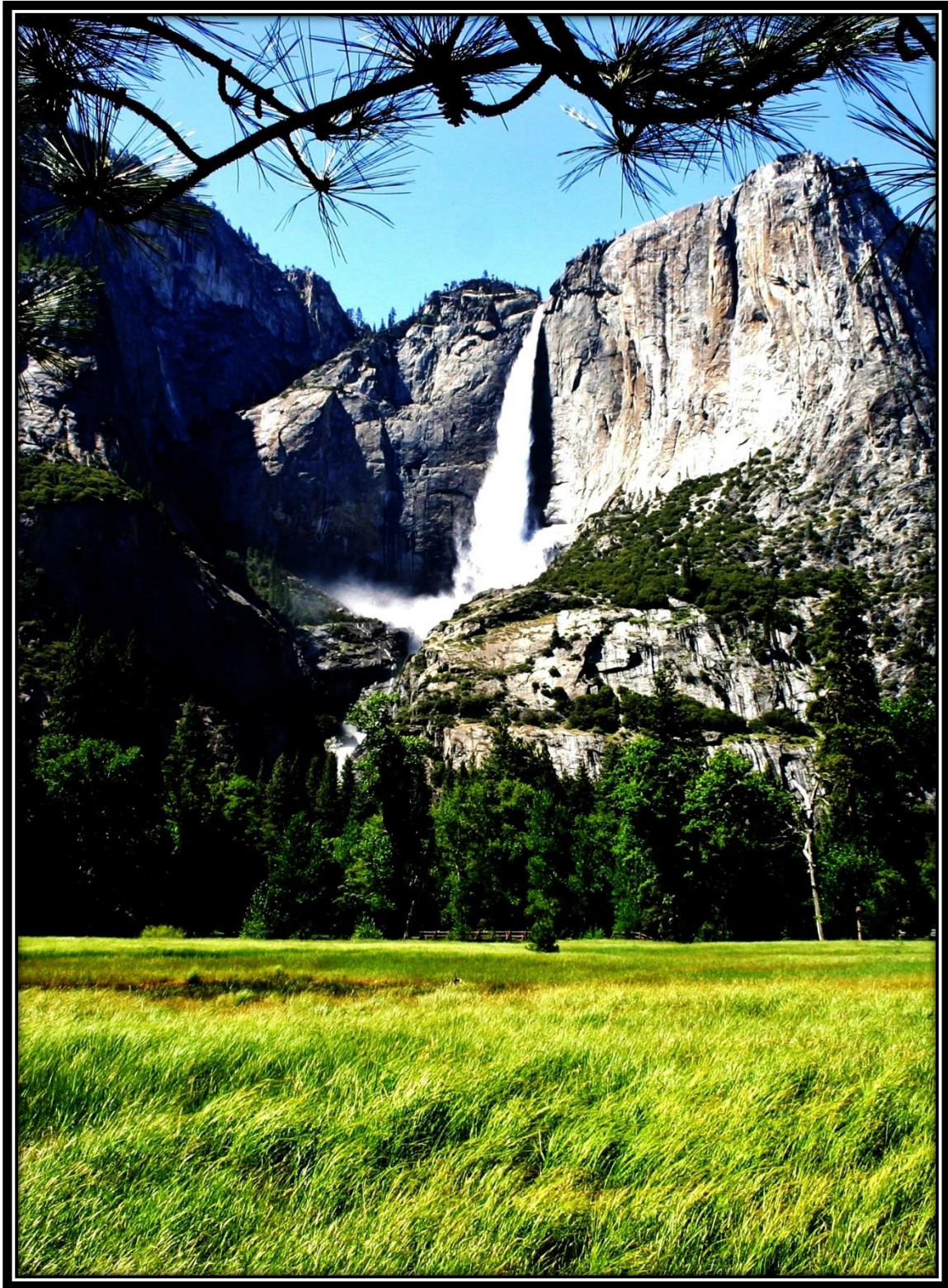
He speaks both English and Spanish, has a fine singing voice, is a good speaker, works well with youth and young adults, is intelligent and articulate, speaks his mind on issues, has a great sense of humor, can bring the house down with laughter and loves to be with people.

May Father Mike have a long, fruitful and happy ministry in the Church of Sacramento for many years to come!





*The Baptism of Michael Devin Ritter  
The Beginning of the Journey*



*Yosemite Falls*