

Greetings from our new Pastor Fr Jim Berning – Part 3

This week, I continue with another segment of my life; part 3, with the hoped for outcome that parishioners have a better understanding of their new pastor. I encourage that parishioners do the same with each other!

By revealing more about your lives in the course of the last several months, together we develop an attitude of openness, such that, becoming acclimated to life beyond the pandemic. We proceed with renewed faith, energy and vigor to live St. Benedict's mission "as signs and bearers of God's love".

What about the vocation to be Salesian?

I followed in sync with my father and brother John by choosing a career in the oil industry by studying engineering and geology, but something else was internally brewing as well.

Early on in my young adult life, Fr. Brady our pastor in Cody, Wyoming gave a vocation homily on the prophet Jeremiah. He closed his polished homily by asking a question that later I could not escape. He simply asked if we as young people of the parish might be called to serve God like the prophet Jeremiah. I did not think or feel too much about this notion at first, but then words kept reoccurring to me, like a broken record, and then they began to take effect.

For the next year I became more involved in Church activities in the downtown parish and in the Newman Center on the university campus. I was puzzled about why all this was happening to me, so I spoke to a parish priest about the matter. Ordinarily, he was a very frank, but when I told him about the homily experience with Fr. Brady and how I had become active in Church-related activities, he laughed and said with a smile, "Congratulations, you have a vocation". I was baffled since the word vocation was not used in the way it is now. The priest helped me to recognize that all my volunteering and frequenting of the sacraments of confession and Eucharist were linked particularly to a journey to serve.

During my remaining years of university, I discerned a vocation to religious life and the priesthood, signed up for ministry activities at the Newman Center, and participated in both formal and informal bible studies. During my last year, I made a vocation retreat with the Newman Center which gave me a navigation chart and a skill set to probe deeper into vocation discernment.