



## Diocese of Fargo *Our Stories of Faith*

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### *Fr. Matt Kraemer's Story*



I was ordained a priest in 2012. I first began to fall in love with Jesus and his family, the Church, at home with my parents and siblings. It is a beautiful faith!

The day in and day out of family life was the setting in which my relationship with Jesus and his Church began to grow. My parents were very involved in my life. They homeschooled us, and sought to raise us well. Of course they were not perfect, and made mistakes in raising us. Nevertheless, there are many things that they did well that had a profound impact on my life. My parents' consistent example of prayer and service, and their perseverance in teaching the Faith was very instrumental in forming my desire to give my life to Jesus and his Church.

Growing up, I had a hard time with prayer. We went to Mass on Sunday and said quick prayers before meals and before going to bed. That was easy enough. But my parents also wanted us to have a deep prayer life as a

family. I remember really dreading and resisting the attempts my mom and dad made at helping us to pray as a family more often and more consistently. We would pray every day before school, but I was almost always distracted by something or other. It seemed to me that my siblings, with whom I usually got along, were particularly obnoxious during prayer. Family rosaries were also difficult. It was a struggle to get everyone together and settled down, and once we finally got started, it seemed laborious and dry. Even though it was hard and didn't seem to be working most of the time, I am grateful that my parents gave family prayer decent effort. I am glad that they made me pray with them, because as time went along I began to realize that I should want to pray with them, and it bothered me that I didn't. It was at that point that I was able to put aside the annoyances and distractions and really pray. Who knows where I would be now if I had been allowed to skip out of family prayer.

God worked in a special way through my dad to instill in me a heart of service. When I was quite young, perhaps five or six, he would take my older sister and



me with him to pick up elderly people for Sunday Mass. Riding along in the bus, we would watch Dad help the elderly from their homes onto the bus. As they came by they would pinch our cheeks and say how cute we



were. Even though we really didn't enjoy having our cheeks pinched we realized that we brightened their day just by being there. Dad gave us an example of service and gratitude for

God's gifts to us, but we didn't always follow it, especially at home. I remember on one occasion my dad had helped a couple move to a new apartment. The husband had ataxia and was losing his motor skills but he still helped in whatever small ways he could. When Dad came home that night he noticed our reluctance to help out around the house. He sat us down and shared with us how this man, whose entire body was failing him, wanted to help so badly, and couldn't. He really helped us to realize what a gift it is to have a healthy body, and that we must use it for the service of others.

Also instrumental in my growing in love with Jesus and his Church was learning about the Faith. My mother took it upon herself to understand the Faith and to be

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able to teach it to her children. She wasn't a theologian or scripture scholar, but she strived to present to us what the Church teaches. The Catechism books she had us study were interesting to me because they presented the truth. In them I saw the beauty of God's plan for mankind and His plan for me. I realized that to be a Christian really is an adventure; there really is a battle between good and evil and I could be on Jesus' side in the fight, and win. Of course I did not understand all of this then, but I do know that the desire to know the truth was stirring in my heart at a young age, and was fed through the unadulterated teaching of the Church.

I thank God for the gift of having grown up in a Catholic home. Reflecting back on the way my parents raised me I can say that with the help of God they laid a strong foundation for me through their example and teaching. This foundation, which is a life of prayer, service and learning, is being built upon in my priesthood. God willing, I will be able to support other Catholic families in their efforts to create strong Catholic homes of their own where vocations can flourish.

