

One Priest's Story  
By Father Bob Ulak

If I wanted to be theologically correct, I should mention the priesthood of all and the ministerial priesthood. We are all called to be ministers of Jesus in all we do. So, we are all priests. The church also has a ministerial priesthood, those called to bring Jesus to others through the Eucharist and the other Sacraments.

Now that the formal part is taken care of and I hope you are still reading this, let me tell you part of my priesthood. I assume that I was asked to write this article because I have been a part of the ministerial priesthood for the last 50 years.

I am amazed at not only how the world has changed, but also how I have changed. What have I experienced? I've had the privilege of baptizing many over these years. I am amazed that so many have remembered that I baptized them. I am amazed by phone calls asking me to baptize their children (even grandchildren).

I have helped prepare children for Reconciliation. I have been amazed at some children's understanding of forgiveness. I once had a child ask me if his brother had to come to the Reconciliation service. I asked him, didn't he want him there. NO! I asked why – he answered, "Then my brother will know I am supposed to forgive him and I'm mad at him."

Eucharist brings not only images of First Communion children, but also all who come forth each week to be nourished by Jesus. There are memories of those in the nursing home who seemed so peaceful after receiving the Lord. A wonderful ministry. My car service teck once brought in a picture of me giving him his first communion.

Weddings have been wonderful. And yes, some weddings you wonder about. But I have learned that most I worried about have been lived our well. I guess I should depend more on God's grace than on my judgements. And still, I tell every bride and groom that I am the most nervous at any wedding. It started at my first wedding when I closed the ritual book and could not find the right page. (probably the longest 10 seconds in my life)

I have left out Confirmation, but that's usually a bishop's job.

But I would like to talk about the Anointing of the Sick. I learned the most about anointing not from ministering to an elderly person, but a five-year-old. When he was born there were serious heart problems. I baptized him at home so we could have a real celebration and not have to take him out. A few operations made things better, but everyone knew there would be major surgery in the future. At five he went to Disney World through Make a Wish. The doctors said now was time. Before he went into the hospital, I anointed him with his parents and grandparents present. First day after surgery went well, then I received a call to come to the hospital. I found the family and there was nothing else to do but wait and pray. A few minutes later the doctor came in to say his heart had failed. All we could do was to hug each other and cry. We remembered we had given him to God's hands. Now we had to really believe what we had prayed.

And so goes the story of my priesthood. It's wonderful to reflect over these years. It's wonderful to realize not only what I have thought, but also what I have learned.