

‘I have had the opportunity to ... know some of the most wonderful people imaginable’

Father Warren Stecklein was born in Ness City. He is a religious vocation of Sacred Heart Parish. He was ordained by Bishop Stanley G. Schlarman on June 9, 1990. Father Stecklein has been pastor of St. Joseph, Scott City, and St. Theresa, Dighton, since July of 2004.

What was it that made you want to be a priest?

When I was growing up, our family pretty much lived our lives centered around the Church. It was a place of prayer and worship, but also a place for education and socialization. Our schedules and activities hinged upon what was taking place at the Church. We also had wonderful pastors that served as an inspiration to me. When I was in my mid 20s, still living my life centered around the Church, I recognized there were too few priests to serve in parishes and began to seriously discern a vocation to the priesthood.

Was there a particular individual who inspired you to become a priest?

There were actually numerous men who inspired me from an early age. However, while attending school at Fort Hays State University, Father Bob Schneider and Father Duane Reinert helped me to view the priesthood in a more mature, understandable way. Then, when attending Oklahoma State University, Father Bob Schlitz was the pastor at the Newman Center when I began the application process.

Who were people who encouraged you in your vocation?

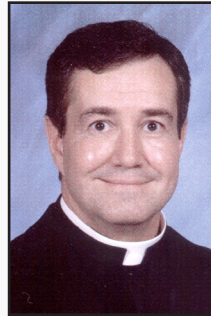
I am blessed to have Volga-German ancestry -- my parents, my sister, my uncles and aunts, my cousins, my closest friends and even many non-Catholic coworkers I had over the years. My ordination day was made special by the presence of many Protestant friends who supported by decision.

Meet Our Priests

This week's featured priest:

Father
Warren Stecklein

YEAR FOR PRIESTS



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What do you like most about being a priest?

I truly think I would be happy in a number of different vocations. Making the choice, accepting the call of the priesthood however, is where I truly believe God has called me, and continues to call me to be. I have had the opportunity to meet and come to know some of the most wonderful people imaginable: people who I try to serve, people who continue to challenge me, people who make my faith grow, and people who truly care about me.

What has been one of the greatest challenges you face in your ministry?

Although intellectually I know better, I try to please all people, all the time, and it continually gets me into trouble (and I know I do not succeed in doing so). I have such a great love for the Catholic Church, and I know there are other ministers and people constantly trying to entice people away from the Church, so I often try to accommodate when I should not. I am trying to trust the grace of God to make up for my many inadequacies. I know God provides for his people, but often I am a little too eager to do what God may not want me to.

What has been one of the highlights, so far, of your priesthood?

There have been many, one being the opportunity to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Rome, and a few other places. I think a pilgrimage I made to Turkey, to visit the churches of Revelation, to witness the impact of Islam on what was once a Christian area, had a significant impact on me. The similarity between the growing secularization of modern day America and choices made centuries ago by these places in Turkey -- leading to the marginalization of Christians -- has caused me to be more discerning about many things in our American culture ever since that pilgrimage.

What do you like to do in your free time?

At the present time I spend my day off with my parents in Ness City. At the ages of 91 and 87, they can always use a helping hand with little things around their home. I also belong to a health club where I like to go and work out. Although I serve in two smaller parishes, there does not seem to be much down time. I never find life boring or dull.

If you could take a vacation anywhere in the world, where would you go?

I think I would like to return to the Holy Land. Although I have been there, the time is always too brief. I have found that you never read or study Sacred Scripture the same once you have visited Israel.

What are your hobbies?

As I mentioned already, I like to frequent a health club. I try my best to stay healthy and keep a balance in my life. I also have too many books I try to read at once. Currently I have book marks in *Tortured for Christ*, *Inside Islam*, *Just Like Jesus*, and *A Catholic Guide to Caring for Your Aging Parents*.