

## Father Rene Labrador:

# Sharing the 'love and compassion of God'

Father Rene Labrador is a priest from the Diocese of Boac in the Philippines. He began serving in the Diocese of Dodge City in 2006 and is currently the pastor of St. Michael, La Crosse; St. Joseph, Liebenthal, and Holy Trinity, Timken.

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

Coming to Mass every Sunday, I became aware of the great need for priests of our parish and of our diocese (one priest was taking care of 25 villages and "shepherding" more or less 25,000 parishioners). The great need for a priest to shepherd the great number people of our parish made me discern the vocation to the priesthood.

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

There were two most important people who really inspired me to become a priest. Msgr. Oliverio, my former pastor in my home parish, inspired me so much. His eloquent and interesting homilies and his dedication and tremendous love and compassion for the people he served were all a great inspiration for me. Also, my late bishop, Bishop Rafael Lim, was a great inspiration. He was so friendly, fatherly and very supportive of me.

### Who were people who encouraged you in your vocation?

Aside from my former pastor and the late bishop of our diocese whom I mentioned above, my late Spiritual Director, Father Sevilla, S.J., and my generous sponsor, (Mrs. Lourdes Carriedo) who is like a mother to me, have really encouraged me to pursue my priestly vocation.

### What do you like most being a priest?

Sharing the love and compassion of God to the people I serve, most especially in the celebration of the Sacraments, particularly

## Meet Our Priests

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reconciliation, anointing of the sick and the Holy Eucharist, makes me really feel good as a priest. And the opportunity to meet, to serve and be friends with a lot of wonderful people makes me really appreciate the beautiful gift of priesthood.

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

I really have a lot of challenges in my priestly ministry. But with all honesty, coming to Southwest Kansas to serve the three parishes of Rush County was the greatest challenge I ever faced in my priestly life and ministry. Resolving conflicts and making decisions in the three parishes are not easy. Because I have such a deep respect and great love for people, I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings. But as a pastor, there are times that I have to resolve issues and conflicts and make decisions for the common good and for the good of the three parishes. And the decisions I made sometimes (though unintentionally) hurt the feelings of the few. I really hate that. I really feel bad about that. But I have to make decisions for the sake of the common good.

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

There are two significant highlights in my priesthood. My 10 years of teaching and directing seminarians in the College Seminary is one of the highlights of my life as a priest. It's a really a good feeling for me to know that 10 of our newly ordained priests in the Diocese of Boac, Philippines, were my former students and directees. Another highlight of my priesthood is my present ministry at the three parishes of Rush County. Living in a different culture and meeting a lot of wonderful people are not only challenging, but really a blessing and opportunity for me to learn, to grow and become a better priest, a better Christian and a better person.

### What do you like to do in your free time?

I am a sports-minded person. So, during my free time, I usually play basketball and play "bean bags" with some friends – the game I learned in La Crosse and the game I really enjoy. Sometimes I go with some friends in the parish to watch some sporting event. Also, as much as possible, I take a walk to stay in good shape.

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

I would really love to see Rome, Jerusalem and the Holy Land (Israel). It would really be great and interesting to see the 'roots of our Catholic faith'.

### What are your hobbies?

As I have already mentioned, I really love to play basketball and to watch some sports. I also love to read books. Currently I have bookmarks in the "Doors to the Sacred", "Toward a Philosophy of Praxis" by the late Pope John Paul II, "The Priest for the Third Millennium" and "The Laws of Lifetime Growth."