

Father Stephen Pontzer's Journey to Sacred Heart Parish



Born in Ashtabula, Ohio, young Stephen Pontzer moved with his father, mother, sister, and three brothers to Georgia early in his childhood. Father Stephen attended daily Mass with his father before school starting in the first grade. Father Stephen desired to assist at the Mass at this young age.



Nuns at the parish advised the pastor to have the young first grader wait until he was in second grade to assist at Mass. The pastor made an exception for the passionate young man and Father Stephen began to assist as an altar server. He continued to assist at Mass throughout high school, and even memorized all the prayers the Priest said during Mass. This is when Father Stephen began to hear his call to the Priesthood!



Later in life, Father Stephen attended the University of Georgia to study forestry. As an avid hunter, angler, and motorcyclist, this field of study seemed to suit all his interests quite well. In the final year of his studies in forestry school, his health took a turn for the worst, as he was diagnosed with cancer in his vocal cords.



He and his family met the challenges of his cancer with trust in the Lord and faithful surrender. Unsure where this road through cancer treatment would lead him, Father Stephen continued to surrender to whatever the Lord had planned for him. The cancer treatment was successful and Father Stephen continued

to surrender to the Lord's plan for his life. He began to see his studies, of forestry and stewardship of God's creation, as a way the Lord was preparing him for his vocation.

After graduation, Father Stephen accepted a position in Union Camp Corporation as a Forester near Savannah, Georgia. He loved his job and the time it offered him outdoors so much. However, he still felt something was missing. A sudden change in the company resulted in his job transforming from the outdoor work he loved to an office job. His desire to find what was missing

grew, leading him to seek the assistance of his pastor. His pastor asked Father Stephen one simple question, "Have you ever thought about being a Catholic Priest?" After further prayer, discernment, and nearly 10 years of being cancer-free, Father



Stephen embraced the call to the Priesthood after volunteering at a vocations camp.



Father Stephen went on to study at Saint Vincent's Seminary and was ordained to the priesthood in 2007. As a seminarian and a priest, he has served the Lord in many places around the globe. He has traveled to Colombia, Mexico, Australia, Nigeria, Bolivia, Israel, and Rome. In

summer of 2019, Bishop Gregory Hartmayer appointed Father Stephen as the pastor of our beloved parish, Sacred Heart.

He brings to our parish his love of God's Creation, a passion he shares with many of the parishioners here at Sacred Heart. He also requests the intercession of his patron Saints Hubert and Maria Goretti, who have helped him on his journey here. May these Saints pray for our pastor and our parish, as we journey Home together.

