

Father Rubeling's priestly ordination is a family affair

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Moments after a beaming Father Michael Rubeling walked down the long center aisle at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen after his June 25 ordination Mass - his senses undoubtedly battered by triumphant organ and brass music, a sustained standing ovation and the flashes of cameras - it was a quiet moment with his mother that was especially poignant.

Returning to the front of the sanctuary, the Archdiocese of Baltimore's newest priest watched his mother, Stephanie Rubeling, kneel in front of him for a blessing.

Raising his hands over the woman who had nurtured him for all of his 27 years, Father Rubeling offered a prayer. His mother closed her eyes, bowed her head and clasped his hands in hers. Then, mother and son were overwhelmed with emotion as they embraced.

"I had an incredible gratitude to the Lord," said Mrs. Rubeling. "I was just so grateful to the Lord for getting him this far."



Father Michael Rubeling and his mother Stephanie are overcome with emotion following Father Rubeling's ordination to the priesthood at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland June 25. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)

Father Rubeling's ordination was very much a family affair - in every sense of the word.

Joining his mother for the ordination were Father Rubeling's father, Gary; the priest's nine siblings (including brother, Peter, who is in formation to become a future priest), and other relatives who packed several pews in the sanctuary.

In the congregation were hundreds of parishioners from Father Rubeling's home parish of St. Peter the Apostle in Libertytown and many homeschooling families such as the one in which Father Rubeling was educated from the time he was a tot through high school.

Archbishop Lori, who was joined by Bishop Denis J. Madden and Bishop William C. Newman, said there were few families he could think of that were "more wonderful"

than the Rubelings.

"I want to thank you for your love for the Lord and the church and the priesthood," he said.

In his homily, the archbishop held up three pillars on which he said every saintly priest has built his ministry: "Crux," "Hostia" and "Virgo" - Latin for Cross, Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The archbishop urged Father Rubeling to fix his eyes daily upon the crucifix.



Celebrating his ordination to the priesthood, Father Michael Rubeling is joined his parents, siblings and family following his ordination to the priesthood at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland June 25. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)

"As you open your heart in prayer to the heart pierced for our salvation, may you become ever more the priest whose whole life proclaims the message of reconciliation," Archbishop Lori said, "the message of God's mercy and forgiveness." The archbishop encouraged Father Rubeling to be a "eucharistic missionary" who will raise up missionary disciples who will help gather in those who are absent from Sunday Mass.

"Be a priest who loves the Eucharist so much that you will encourage many vocations to the priesthood," Archbishop Lori said.

As for the third priestly pillar - the Blessed Virgin Mary - Archbishop Lori said it is Mary who teaches priests how to listen prayerfully to the Word of God and allow that word to take root in their hearts.

During the ancient ordination rite, Father Rubeling made promises of service, prayer and obedience. He prostrated himself on the floor in front of the altar while those in the congregations chanted the Litany of the Saints. Archbishop Lori laid his hands on Father Rubeling's head - conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was a gesture that was repeated by approximately 40 other priests.



Father Michael Rubeling lies in prostrate on the floor of the sanctuary of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland as part of the ordination ceremony to the priesthood June 25. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)

Father John "Jack" Lombardi, the current pastor of St. Peter in Hancock and St.

Patrick in Little Orleans who had taken Father Rubeling on a spiritual pilgrimage to Kolkata, India, vested Father Rubeling in the stole and chasuble of the priestly office.

Archbishop Lori then anointed Father Rubeling's hands with sacred chrism and presented him a paten and chalice, symbolically giving him permission to celebrate Mass in the archbishop's name. One by one, priests gave their brother priest a fraternal kiss.

Father Rubeling, who prepared for the priesthood at Our Lady of Providence Seminary in Rhode Island and the Pontifical North American College in Rome, told the Catholic Review he felt much joy after his two-hour ordination Mass.

"It's amazing seeing the people who have supported me all these years," he said.

Photo slideshow follows; story continues below

Father Rubeling said he was awed to realize he had been given the ability to "bring (Christ) down from heaven" at the consecration at Mass.

Gary Rubeling, Father Rubeling's father, said he and his wife taught all their children to be generous in their response to whatever God asked of them. He called the laying on of hands by priests an especially moving moment to witness as a father.

"To see the support of the body (of priests) is pretty impressive," he said. "It's encouraging to know that we've entrusted our son to the church and they will take care of him."

Margaret Harp, a parishioner of St. Peter the Apostle in Libertytown, stood at the end of a long line of people who asked Father Rubeling for a blessing after his ordination. She knows him through the homeschooling community and had worshipped with the Rubeling family during First Friday celebrations at the Rubeling home.

More than 300 people from Harp's parish attended the ordination, she said, noting that the strong turnout was not surprising since the parish strongly supports religious vocations.

"Instead of just saying, 'Oh, you can be a doctor or a lawyer,'" she said, "we add to the list that you could be a nun or a priest. There's support in our community."

Father Rubeling will return to Rome to continue his studies in the fall. Archbishop Lori announced that the new priest will serve a summer assignment at Holy Family Catholic Community in Middletown.

"We are low on numbers this year," Archbishop Lori said of this year's small ordination class, "but I think you'll agree the quality is through the roof. We thank

the Lord for this day.”

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