

JONATHON SCHMECKEL

**Colleen Jurkiewicz
Catholic Herald Staff
May 9, 2019**



Growing up on a working dairy farm in Paris in western Kenosha County, Dcn. Jon Schmeckel always assumed that he would go into the same business that seven generations of his family had before him.

“There are very few people who can say their family has done something for seven generations,” said Dcn. Schmeckel. “Priesthood was not on my radar at all.”

But his childhood was still one shaped by the witness of sacrificial love, as he watched his grandmother, Monica Schmeckel, care for his grandfather, who suffered from Parkinson’s Disease. “That always made a really big impact on me. She gave up so much to be able to take care of him for almost 15 years,” he said. “She was this incredible witness to love — a love rooted in something bigger than just that ‘she had to’.”

As the main Catholic influence in his life, it was Monica who ferried Dcn. Schmeckel to and from Mass and religious education classes at St. John the Baptist Parish in Union Grove. After graduating from Westosha Central High School, he took his faith with him to Iowa State University, where he planned to study dairy science and agricultural business. While at school, he became involved in the St. Thomas Aquinas Church and Catholic Student Center, and found that it was “much more life-giving than all the other things that were supposed to give me energy in life.”

It was St. Thomas pastor Fr. Jon Seda who first encouraged Dcn. Schmeckel to consider the priesthood.

“He was crucial in that — once we were sitting in the student lounge and he said, ‘Jon, the way I see it, you can either feed cows or feed sheep,’” he said. “That always sticks with me.”

He got in touch with Fr. Strand, who framed the vocation to the priesthood in terms that Dcn. Schmeckel recognized from his childhood, witnessing his grandparents’ devoted marriage. “He was the first to talk about priesthood as a relationship with the people of God,” he said. “It’s not a life empty of love — it’s just a different love than a husband’s.”

He applied and was accepted to Saint Francis de Sales Seminary, and has been learning at his teaching parish in St. Alphonsus in Greendale.

After his ordination, he will be assigned as the first associate pastor of the parishes of St. Peter (Slinger), Resurrection (Allenton) and St. Lawrence (Hartford).

“I’m just excited to celebrate the sacraments,” he said. “That’s what most of our preparation is for. In my own life, the sacraments are where we experience God most intimately, so I’m really excited about being that mediator for other people — the people of God.”

At his May 18 ordination, his grandmother Monica will be in attendance — “probably weeping the whole time,” he said with a laugh. One particularly powerful experience during his seminary studies was a trip to Rome, he said, where he was able to pray for her at the tomb of St. Monica.

And though he’s now fully committed to feeding sheep, he hasn’t forgotten about the cows. He still gets home regularly to visit the family farm, which his sister has committed to taking on. “I still love agriculture,” he said.

To read about local coverage in our community

Subscribe to the:
CATHOLIC HERALD

Phone: (414) 769-3464 ***** Toll Free: (877) 769-7699

Web site: www.catholicerald.org

Serving the Catholic Community of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee