

The question I'm getting the most is, "Have you ever lived in a small town before?" And the answer is sort of. I spent four years at Conception Seminary College. But I'm sure that going to college in a small town is different from living in a small town. My mother comes from rural Minnesota. She was born in Clements, raised in Morgan, and eventually moved to the big city, Redwood Falls, about the size of Cameron. Other than that, I am a city boy. I was born in New Orleans where my dad grew up, and we moved to Kansas City when I was a year and a half. My family still lives there: my parents, my three brothers, two sisters, and eight of my nieces and nephews are all in the Kansas City area. I have two more nephews who live in San Antonio, Texas, and Barcelona, Spain.

I'm 48 years old. I've been a priest 22 years. During my ministry I spent three years in Rome studying the sacraments, and eating a lot of pasta. I then spent three years working for our diocesan Center for Pastoral Life and Ministry. In that work I helped parish volunteers and staff throughout our diocese. One of the last sessions I facilitated before leaving that position in 1989 was in a building known as St. Rita's in Cameron, Missouri. For the last 12 years I have been pastor of St. John Francis Regis Church in Kansas City. St. Regis has about 900 Catholic households and a sizeable fulltime staff. I grew to love the people of that parish, and it was hard for all of us to say goodbye.

In our diocese the priest personnel board recommends that pastors remain in a parish no more than twelve years, as suggested by the Code of Canon Law. Bishop Boland invites us to tell him where we would like to go. Of the parishes available this spring, I liked the looks of Cameron and Maysville the best. I like a new challenge, and I thought the combination of small town, rural life, and prison ministry would broaden my vision of the Catholic Church. I was also looking for something smaller than St. Regis, because I get involved in a lot of projects. I write for the scripture page of our diocesan newspaper. I write bulletin inserts about the liturgy. I have several books in print, and I speak at workshops and institutes across the country. My hope in coming to a smaller community is that I could hold these responsibilities together, while staying rooted in parish life, which remains my first love.

Among my other interests are classical music – I play piano and organ – and baseball – I cannot pitch or swing a bat, but I am a hopelessly loyal fan to the Kansas City Royals. With regard to golf, hunting, and fishing, I am completely clueless.

Here's what I've learned about you so far: This community is very proud of its city and its church. You've made some improvements to the rectory and the exterior of the church building here, and to the church in Maysville. You'd like to do something with the interior of the Cameron church and some improvements to St. Rita's, like the boiler. You have a lot of people involved in committees and liturgical ministries, and you'd like to see even more. You're getting some new members, including some younger families, and you'd like to reach out to the new people, as well as to some folks who live around here but

are not members for whatever reason. You love the youth of this community and wish we could do more for them. This year you exceeded some financial goals with pledges to the diocesan-wide Gift of Faith campaign and to the children's rice bowl collection. You also sponsor a legendary St. Patrick's Day parade.

We have much to ask God for. We have much to thank God for. St. Paul says today he never wants to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever Paul accomplished he did by sacrifice and by the help of Christ. It's like he never noticed his personal sufferings because his heart was so on fire with the love of Christ. If we follow the same formula, faith and sacrifice, we will have the same success.