



My name is Emmanuel Gutierrez, and I was born in Monterey California in 1986 to Braulio and Alicia Gutierrez; two devout, hardworking immigrants who showed me how to love God, love neighbor, and work hard.

From an early age, my parents taught me the value of being subject to God, to authorities, and of carrying out one's duties faithfully and willingly. Their words and deeds modeled the virtues that inspired me to live a Christian life and moved me to be a good, studious student throughout grade school. Leading a virtuous life was not without its rewards---such as getting good grades and distinctions from teachers---but was also not without its difficulties---such as winning over the envy of one's peers. The constant pressure from my peer group was such a dominant force entering middle school that I soon gave up my resolve to live the virtues. Yet, as I re-entered CCD in preparation for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation, the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the teachings of His Church spoke, once more, to my intellect and will and allowed me to reexamine the direction of my life. I became a reflective admirer of the virtue of the saints. In a time when much of my peers began to experiment with grave sins, Christ, the

saints, and my CCD formation convinced me that happiness and salvation did not consist in giving in to one's passions, nor to peer pressure, but in loving God and following His will.

As I received the Sacrament of Confirmation in 2001 and grew in my relationship with God through daily prayer and meditation, I began to ask God what it was He willed for me in life. Hoping to attain clarity on a specific career in life, I received, instead, an overwhelming sense that God willed me to become a Diocesan Priest.

Not ready, nor willing, to accept this call, I ran from it for years; since I envisioned marriage and a family for myself. Yet God had His ways of drawing me back to trust in His will and goodness. Our Lord permitted me to make good money, at a very young age, in the construction industry and allowed me to date a very beautiful, devout protestant woman who, though a divorcee with three children, took her faith in Christ seriously.

As we dated for over a year, her devout fidelity to Christ and virtuous life sparked a desire in me to study and live the Catholic religion, in a serious way, reigniting in me that once dormant call to the Priesthood God had placed years ago. With time, God won me over to Himself, and before long, I did what I never thought I would do; call the regional vocation director in order to enter a seminary for Priestly formation.

I am now entering my seventh year of Priestly formation, and I am greatly blessed by God to be able to spend this year here at St. Mark in Belmont, CA. I look forward to the graces God has in store for me here, during this pastoral year, and I pray that the Lord of the harvest may bless the work of those who labor in His vineyard for the Glory of His name and the salvation of souls. Christus vincit. Christus regnat. Christus imperat.