

Father Gavin Landers

Born from Irish parents who came over to England in the 60's and 70's my mam and dad met and fell in love. Some 8 years later they were married and then had three children, my older brother Michael, myself, and my baby sister, Lindsay.

Our home was in Stretford but I did a lot of my growing up in Old Trafford with my extended family. My mam is one of 10 children and I am one of 45 grandchildren (at the last count there are 64 great grandchildren). My best friends growing up we're my cousins; we would spend what seemed like endless days in the summer playing together, and then in my late teens they were the ones who I would spend my weekends with. Family is so important to me.

The Catholic Church became my family when I was baptised at Saint Alphonsus, Old Trafford, by Father Paddy MacMahon. I was a person who practised my faith, which was the norm in our family growing up. Although I did not always put faith as the greatest importance of my life, my faith-life ran deep; it was fundamental to who I was.

In my early 20's I found life lacklustre; I seemed to have everything I should have for a happy life (as the world tells it), however I lacked fulfilment. I now know it was because faith was a part of my life, but not central. Jesus was a friend but I had not yet experienced Him as my Lord and Saviour. This encounter with Jesus Christ happened during Confession when I was 23 and each subsequent Holy Communion I received. With the knowledge of Jesus in my heart and mind I realised the truth of what He promised "I have come that you might have life and have it to the full" (Jn. 10:10).

I felt a desire to serve God in the priesthood but my unworthiness held me back, that was until I realised that, as Saint Paul came to know, the words of Jesus are true "my grace is sufficient" (2 Cor. 12:9). I discerned the call to be a priest and was accepted to start formation for the priesthood (and continue to discern the vocation God had for me), first in Valladolid in Spain for a year, and then 6 years at Oscott in the Midlands. It was wonderful learning about our beautiful faith, to be surrounded by men of faith, and to have the ability to celebrate my faith daily at Mass. After plenty of discernment - learning and growing in my faith - I was accepted to be ordained.

In 2017 I was ordained a catholic priest at Salford Cathedral by Bishop John Arnold on the feast day of Saint Mary Magdalen. It was a joyous occasion and a moment of real grace. My biological family was present (family from Ireland travelled over too), my spiritual family that I had been baptised into were witness to the ordination, and the brotherhood of the priesthood was evident in the 109 priests and bishops present for the occasion.

Since being ordained I have had a variety of experiences in parish life, school ministry, hospital chaplaincy, and being part of the universal Church in the Diocese and through pilgrimage and on retreat. It has been wonderful, in these initial years, to serve people in their joys and sorrows. Christ promised that He would not leave us orphans ((Jn. 14:18), and He does abide in the

service of the priesthood - at the altar and in the confessional, in the home and at school, in the institutions and at the workplace.

Now joining the parish of Saint Augustine's and working alongside Father John I have the opportunity to grow in the priesthood and hopefully bring people to greater faith in Jesus "who loved us and gave His life for us" (Eph. 5:2). I am sure I will do more learning than most whilst I am here.

Regarding interests and hobbies I am an avid swimmer (when the time allows), and enjoy spending time with family and friends, usually around the dinner table. Going for a coffee is a favourite of mine as well as travelling.

A little Spanish phrase which I think explores the fundamental life of faith 'del la misa a la mesa' (from the Altar to the table). From the altar of God, gathered as a family, to the table of work and play gathered again as a family. As the Church we are family, and

"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ" (Gaudium et Spes, Vatican II). This is where the priesthood of Jesus Christ meets the work of parish life and hospital ministry (which is my role here in central Manchester); in service.