

I would like to introduce all of you to Rev. Sunil Kumar Thumma, Parochial Administrator of the clustered parishes of St. Peter's in Winter, WI., and the Sacred Heart Parish in Radisson, WI.

Fr. Sunil keeps himself busy with those two parishes in addition to helping his brother priests in the Ladysmith cluster by celebrating Mass, one weekend in Bruce at St. Mary's Parish and alternating another weekend at St. Peter and Paul's Parish in Weyerhaeuser.

Fr. Sunil is from the Southern part of India, close to the town of Hyderabad, in the Diocese of Warangal. His parents are still living, and he is a middle child with one older and a younger brother. His parents reside in a good village where there is 100 percent Catholics. His parents pray the Rosary and attend Mass daily.

He was ordained on April 13, 2009 and has been a priest for 12 years. Fr. Sunil states, "I never thought I'd be a priest." My older brother had been in the seminary and withdrew from his studies, returned home and is now leading his own life.

While Fr. Sunil was studying and working on his degree, he had to be a farmer, helping with the crops, and helping the family. He always had the same recurring question over and over in his mind. The question of what does God want me to do with my life? He felt God was calling him and kept putting this call in his heart and his mind. He approached his parish priest and told him of his situation. The parish priest advised him to wait for a year to make sure he felt the calling by God. After the time passed, Fr. Sunil was invited to join the diocese. He proudly states, "I have never felt regret over my decision." One of his favorite scripture passages is in the Gospel of Luke, when Jesus talks about his would-be followers. Fr. Sunil quotes verse 62 in chapter 9: "*No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks back to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God.*" Fr. Sunil remarks – that was me! I took my hand off the plow and I never looked back. I feel so blessed by God. I view my becoming a priest a miracle.

His vision and mission are to get all people, all churches praising, honoring, and adoring God. People need to come; they need to come to church. There is space in my church in Winter. Fr. Sunil's biggest challenge is bringing more people to the Catholic Church. In India all the churches are flourishing with many people.

Fr. Sunil has been in Winter, WI for three years and had to learn to drive. He laughs as he tells how helpful the people in the parish were in teaching him to drive. He is still getting used to the winters in Wisconsin. He comments on the wind chills and the frostbite in his fingers from shoveling snow. He relates the parishioners in Winter

are ready to help him with snow shoveling and with whatever he needs. Summer by far is his favorite time of year. He proudly states he does his own lawnmowing and has plans to plant a vegetable garden this summer.

He tells how he really enjoys the community and the people in Winter. They are calm, serene, peaceful people. The people are friendly and always helpful. He describes the Catholic women in the parishes as “doing very outstanding work” and they do much to take care of the poor. When he arrived at the parish, he didn’t know the names of the women, so he just called them all, ‘Mom,’ – they were all like his mother. He remarks, the people – they are my happiness. He so enjoys being in small parishes and serving the people

Fr. Sunil is learning to enjoy American cuisine, especially mashed potatoes, and baked chicken. He is the first one to grab a dish of green salad.

Fr. describes his hobbies as being a part of spiritual groups and helping find solutions to his parishioners’ health concerns or other troubles. He finds some solutions on YouTube. He is trying to learn more words and improve his English language by watching documentaries, the Smithsonian, and the history channel on television.

What a delightful, and interesting phone interview I experienced when talking with Fr. Sunil. He laughs readily and you can almost see the smile on his face. He has a kind and gentle manner and is very appreciative of the opportunity to speak with me. He mentions the people are his happiness – I believe he has found his place in Winter and Radisson, sharing the love and light of Christ.

Jane Schiszik, SDCCW President

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