

Fr. John Vidal and his wife
Helene on pilgrimage to Rome



ST. LUKE'S ORDINARIATE PARISH ✠ WASHINGTON DC

The Epistle

MEET FATHER VIDAL — AN INTERVIEW WITH OUR NEXT PASTOR

When Father John Vidal becomes St. Luke's new pastor in October, we will be welcoming a priest whose journey into full communion with the Catholic Church might sound quite familiar to many parishioners. A former Episcopal clergyman, Father Vidal provided a sketch of how he came to be ordained a Catholic priest in 2012. As with most of us, Father Vidal's story hinges on a profound recognition of the role of papal authority in safeguarding the truth.

"If you read my bio," Father Vidal told **The Epistle**, "you will know that I grew up in Mexico. I was educated by Marist priests and brothers. I was one of only three Protestants in my entire school. But I was mostly accepted; I even went along to the barrios to teach catechism. One of the things I noticed was that many people seemed to worship the Blessed Virgin Mary. That always bothered me. They also did what the Church told them and believed it blindly, and that also bothered me.

Volume 3, Issue 7
July 2017

I was appalled that they would believe that one man could actually be infallible! But in general, while I had serious reservations and misunderstandings, I believed I basically understood Catholics.”

“I lived comfortably with my view of Catholics,” Father Vidal continued, “until I started to be aware of how wrong things were headed in the Episcopal Church. I began to think that maybe I had it wrong all along. The leadership of the Episcopal Church (and the Anglican world in general) was changing the faith to suit their needs and desires. There needed to be some authority to defend the truth! Wouldn’t it be good if we still had the Apostles?”

“That’s when I realized,” Father Vidal continued, “that we did. Go figure, Jesus knew what he was doing! He gave us Peter and his successors and he gave us the Apostles and their successors to deliver the faith to us. I realized I needed to trust the Apostles and Peter, and that they were there, in the Catholic Church, just waiting for me to come to them. So I started to seriously look into those things that I had misunderstood. Once I did that, it was a no-brainer.”

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Father Vidal was ordained a deacon in the Catholic Church by the Washington Archdiocese's Donald Cardinal Wuerl. (Father Rick Kramer, Father Mark Lewis, and Father Vidal were ordained deacons together.) A week later, Father Vidal, who had been serving as an Episcopal priest at Mount Calvary in Baltimore (another former Episcopal church that is now Catholic), was ordained a Catholic priest with two other former Episcopal priests.

“It really boils down to understanding of Scripture,” Father Vidal explained to the **Baltimore Sun** newspaper. “We believe that the Catholic Church is following the early church teachings.”

It seems that Father Vidal had felt a call to the priesthood in high school. But he was having none of it.

“I avoided it like the plague,” he said laughing. One of his Episcopalian priestly mentors advised him, “Run from it as long as you can, and, if it is meant to be, it will be.” Father Vidal added, “It's not that I didn't want to do it but I just didn't think I could do the vocation justice.” Fr. Vidal made a compromise with the Lord: “I’ll meet you half way and become a deacon.”

As deacon, Fr. Vidal was asked to work with Hispanic people and eventually established a mission church. The running stopped when the people he served at the mission went to the Episcopal bishop and said they wanted a real priest to serve them—and that they wanted that priest to be John Vidal.

“I like to tell people ‘The Holy Spirit always wins’,” Father Vidal said.

Father Vidal continued to work with Hispanic congregations but was troubled by developments in the Episcopal Church. He spent eight months in the Anglican Church in America before joining the staff at Mount Calvary and shortly thereafter becoming a Catholic priest. Father Vidal is currently a civilian chaplain for the Navy and priest of St. Anselm of Canterbury Ordinariate Community in Corpus Christi, Texas. He will join us at St. Luke's after his contractual period of service to the Navy is up in October.

Father Vidal, now 57, is married to Helene Vidal, a medical technologist. The couple has three grown children. Jean-Luc is a Navy lieutenant stationed in Washington state, Gisele is a restaurant management trainee in Austin, Texas, and Renee is a nurse who lives in Pueblo, Colorado.

“All three are pleased that we are moving to DC since it means we will be close to Baltimore where they grew up and have many friends,” Father Vidal said. “Helene has mixed emotions about moving to St. Luke’s. On the one hand, she is excited



about being in a Church where we will have the resources to do justice to a well-executed Solemn Mass, but as you might expect, is sad about leaving the friends we’ve made in Corpus Christi and the wonderful ministry we’ve had amongst young Naval aviators. Professionally Helene looks forward to the many opportunities in DC for a medical technologist which she believes will bring a more satisfying challenge than she has been able to find in Corpus Christi.”

When **The Epistle** asked Father Vidal how his business and scientist background will influence his ministry at St. Luke's, he replied, “I might turn

this question around as I recall when my VP of Marketing told me that he had never had a pastoral boss before. I remember the statement caught me off guard because I never considered my ‘hard-nosed’ business stance as pastoral. At that time I didn’t think my business experiences influenced my priestly ministry (I was always a dual vocation minister because my Hispanic flocks were never able to support a priest). But the reality is that I bring a different perspective to the way I look at leading a congregation. I am goal oriented. I like to get things done. I expect those working with me to be the same. I focus on things that need change, and I trust my leaders in areas that are running smoothly to keep things that way. Since I have a lot of experience working with start-up businesses, I tend to think out of the box. I think these skills are the ones Bishop Lopes recognized and why he asked me to lead St. Luke’s,” Father Vidal said. “While you are not a start-up congregation, your unique situation and challenges have many things in common with those of a start-up.”

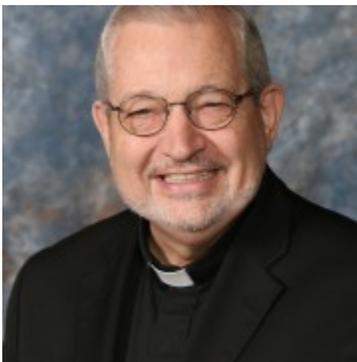
“I’m excited to work with you to share the beauty of the Anglican Patrimony with our fellow Catholics but more importantly, to grow our congregation and share the Gospel with those who are not committed to their faith, and those who have yet to learn about our Lord. I hope, and expect, that each one of us will apply our God given unique skills and take on a dedicated part in this mission.”

What does Father Vidal see as the mission of the Ordinariate?

“I believe His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI saw in us a people eager to not just be in communion with his see, but a people with a passion for liturgy and a passion for evangelism,” Father Vidal replied. “I believe he has given us the mission to preserve the beauty of the Anglican patrimony and to share it with the greater Catholic Church. I also believe he expected we would bring that evangelistic fervor along with us as well. This is the bigger challenge. It is easy, when facing difficult times, to focus on that which gives us comfort, namely our liturgy. But the reality is that the only way for the Kingdom to grow is for the faithful to turn outward in charity and service and sharing the Gospel. Only then will our liturgy come to life and only then will we thrive. That is the mission of the Ordinariate and that is the mission of St. Luke’s. What a glorious task!”

FATHER CHRISTOPHER PHILLIPS IN DC

*Famed Figure in Anglican Movement to Full Communion with Rome
Will Be Our Celebrant July 2*



Father Christopher Phillips, one of the key figures in the historic movement of former Episcopalians into full Communion with the Catholic Church, will be the celebrant at St. Luke's regular Sunday Mass July 2. Father Phillips, who was ordained a Catholic priest under Pope St. John Paul II's "pastoral provision" for former Episcopal priests, recently stepped down as pastor of Our Lady of the Atonement in San Antonio, Texas, where he had served as pastor since the parish was erected in 1983. Our Lady of the Atonement famously started out with Father Phillips and eighteen souls and grew from these meager beginnings into a flourishing parish with approximately 1,500 average Sunday Mass attendance, an award winning academy, an outstanding musical program, and a liturgy renowned for its grace and reverence. The Holy See transferred Our Lady of the Atonement from the Archdiocese of San Antonio to Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter earlier this year. Father Phillips is a prolific author, including of several hymns (one of which was sung at Bishop Lopes' consecration). St. Luke's own former pastor Father Mark Lewis is replacing Father Phillips as pastor at Our Lady of the Atonement.

CORPORAL ACT OF MERCY FOR JULY: FEEDING THE HUNGRY



As you may have guessed, we have frequent requests for help with food at St. Luke's and Immaculate Conception. It is heart-wrenching to think of families that have to worry about whether they will have enough to eat and to feed their children. Thus our corporal act of mercy for the month of July is restocking the parish pantry. Contributions should be non-perishables and not in glass containers. Welcome contributions include canned

vegetables, canned fruit and beans and canned meats such as tuna, chili, or Vienna sausage. Canned soups, spaghetti and canned spaghetti sauces, rice, pasta, mac & cheese, peanut butter and jelly, and cereals are also welcome. It is a good idea to check and make sure butter or other expensive ingredients are not called for to complete packaged foods. Please be generous. You can leave your donations in the vestibule or at coffee hour after Sunday Mass.

THE DEACON-CANDIDATE'S DESK

by Mark F. Arbeen



When I was assigned, in 2015, to St. Luke's, to work within a parish structure, under the supervision of a wonderful priest, I did not know very much about the parish and its history. Then I received an assignment in class, where I had to write about a parish program that reflected our interpretation of Catholic Social Teaching.

Not only was this assignment teaching me about Social Teaching, but also to learn about our past outreach ministries. I found out that we had a robust partnership with the Capital Area Food Bank, ran a food pantry, were members of the SHARE program, provided Christmas Gifts for 75 children in 3 schools in Bladensburg (which is one of the poorest of the poor communities in Prince George's County). We also held coat drives, served Thanksgiving dinner to a retirement community, and provided financial assistance to areas affected by natural disasters. God truly was working within you as you discerned your calling to full communion with the Catholic Church.

So, I am very proud to be assigned to you, and serve you these past few years. We are now at a time of change, where we had to say goodbye to our beloved pastor, Father Mark Lewis, and prepare for the arrival of our new pastor, Father John Vidal.

The reason I bring all this up is to reflect on where we once were, and what we accomplished. Outreach and charity work is embedded in the DNA of St. Luke's and I don't want to see us lose that. But, we have some limitations. We don't have the building structure to host a food pantry. We don't have the financial depth to provide large support to the outside world. And, we don't have the membership numbers to work more than a few, directed, ministries.

But, what we do have is faith. We have faith in Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother, and trust them to guide us. We have a deep spiritual and liturgical foundation that has provided strength and sustenance to lead us during our time of wandering. We have lay leadership that is strong and filled with the Holy Spirit. We have committed parishioners that pray for St. Luke's daily, give from their heart, and know that St. Luke's is their spiritual home, no matter where we meet and pray.

So, I am asking you to give me your thoughts as to the future of St. Luke's. Where do you want to see us grow? What ministries would you like us to undertake? What are your hopes and aspirations for our parish? And most importantly, what would you like to work on to accomplish these goals?

May Almighty God continue to bless St. Luke's, her wonderful people, and our new pastor.

Oremus Pro Invicem

RECENT EVENTS AT ST. LUKE'S



← **FR. LEWIS' LAST MASS**



After a beautiful and moving Corpus Christi Mass, well-attended by parishioners and friends of the parish, Fr. Lewis bade farewell to the flock he has shepherded for the past 12 years. The parish gave him a confessional stole embroidered with the keys of St. Peter to remember us by.

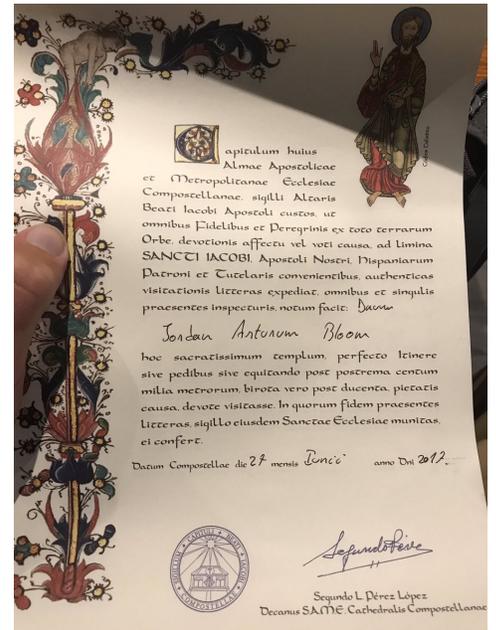


← FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

On Sunday, June 18th, the feast of Corpus Christi, Micah McNeil made his First Communion. What a blessing for our newest Communicant!

↓ HONEYMOON PILGRIMAGE

Our newlyweds, Jordan and Kelsey Bloom, have completed their honeymoon pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. We wish them much joy in the next adventure of their married life.



Saint Luke's at IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

8TH & N STREETS NW
WASHINGTON DC 20001

Very Rev. Timothy Perkins
Interim Administrator

Rev. John Vidal
Incoming Pastor [October 2017]

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St. Luke's at Immaculate Conception is a parish of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter, which was established on January 1, 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI in response to repeated requests by Anglicans seeking to become Catholic. Ordinariate parishes are fully Catholic while retaining elements of their Anglican heritage and traditions, including liturgical traditions.

**THE PERSONAL ORDINARIATE
OF THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER**

That we all may be one

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It was six years ago, in June of 2011 that I read in the Washington Post that St. Luke's was going to come into communion with the Roman Catholic Church. I was in Baltimore at the time, with Mt. Calvary Church, patiently waiting for the formation of the Ordinariate so that we could make our move. We would finally be able to enter into the fullness of the Body of Christ—without reservations. Finally, St. Luke's made the move (you guys actually jumped the gun and hopped in before the Ordinariate was formed! Nice move...). Mt. Calvary made the move. Christ the King made the move...

Those were exciting days. New visions. New hopes. New dreams. New sacrifices. Eventually leaving that beautiful church in Bladensburg was heartbreaking, but Immaculate Conception Church was inviting and friendly, and that made it less painful. And so, under the wise and gentle leadership of Fr. Mark Lewis, you all moved into a new reality.

So much has happened! The congregation has stabilized and regained its footing. You are financially healthy (reasonably so, anyway) and, Praise the Lord! with a beautifully celebrated Eucharistic liturgy.

So why do we have to change pastors? It's a natural question. Fr. Mark and Vickey were happy and content where they were. Helene and I are happy and content where we are now. You are happy and content where you are. So why rock the boat?

The same question could be asked of our Lord. I'm positive he was happy and content to be with his disciples, teaching them, curing people with all kinds of ailments. But the Father had given him a mission that he must accomplish, no matter how uncomfortable it may be. Obediently, Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem.

We too have been given a mission and we have a shepherd who helps us discern it.

So Bishop Lopes asked Fr. Mark and Vickey to head down to San Antonio where Our Lady of the Atonement had need of his skills at this time in their journey. And, as we say in Texas, bless their hearts, they left their comfort and went. How their mission will develop, we don't know; they'll have to work with their new parish family to figure it out.

The same is true for us. Helene (phonetically more or less pronounced L-N; say it fast) and I will be arriving at St. Luke's in time for our first Sunday together on October 1.

How will our mission together develop? I don't know. But what I do know is that I'm excited to figure it out with you. I look forward to hearing about your dreams and aspirations for yourselves and for St. Luke's; about your love for the Lord; about your fears and concerns.

To follow those dreams and aspirations will require some of that dreaded change, but I'm confident that together we'll find the path our Lord wants us to follow, and that we'll follow it together with joy, love, and hope. I would expect that we will move slowly at first; with only minor changes, if any, and then, after we set the course, those changes will no longer be dreaded but welcomed with great anticipation. That's why it is with great joy and anticipation Helene and I wait with painfully strained patience until October when we can begin our journey together. Please pray for us as we make this transition, and be ever assured that you are also in our daily prayers.

Fr. John Vidal