



Father Andres Story

December 2021

Deus Meus et Omnia

Mi Dios y mi todo

My God and My All

The story of Father Andres begins in a small town outside of Guadalajara Mexico. He is the second child of four in a family with strong Catholic faith and strong sense of family and community. His Grandmother lived with the family and set the example for young Andres. Starting at the age of six, he would accompany his Grandmother to Mass each day. She needed a cane to walk, so Andres was her assigned helper. This was the beginning of Father Andres prayer life of daily devotion which stayed with this young man as he began to grow. He created a lifetime of praying the rosary each day and reading prayer devotions every morning and evening. His years in school and especially religious education were very positive experiences. His teacher was committed to serving the Lord and thus instilled this passion onto the students. They would visit nursing homes, those in jail and the hospital, bringing food and spending time with them. These actions brought meaning to the faith and a special appreciation for servitude as in the Beatitudes. Father Andres has a great passion for the Beatitudes, it is God's promise to his loyal followers of Christ. The community where Father Andres grew up was very strong in the Catholic faith, the Priests were close to the families and they spent meals and much of their time with the community. Their close connection to the Catholic faith, community and Priests are what got young Andres thinking about his own path to the priesthood.

One of Father Andres most beautiful memories, as a young child, is his 1st Communion, which was on one of the holiest of days - December 25th. Receiving this special sacrament, was truly a life changing event and truly an epiphany for young Andres as a call to the Priesthood. Although he didn't express this to anyone else at the time, partly because, he thought he was not deserving of such an honor to be a Priest. However, he carried this sense of calling in his heart until about the age of fifteen; when he attended a retreat in the mountains. It was during this time, when young Andres realized this was his calling. After returning home he told his Pastor that he wanted to be a Priest. He told his parents as well, and they thought he was being "crazy" since he had been considering other careers, like becoming a Doctor. When young Andres told his Pastor, the Pastor suggested he wait at least until he finished High School and perhaps even to give himself a year after graduating to pray and discern this calling. But his calling did not fade and in fact grew stronger. Well, in 1996 young Andres decided to attend a retreat on vocational discernment on priesthood at a seminary. The retreat was eight days and it was during this time his calling was confirmed. Young Andres was part of just one hundred candidates, out of five hundred, to be invited to join the priesthood. He received his letter and started on his path right after graduating from High School. He studied for the next nine years in Guadalajara and then the last two years in Mexico City. It was there that God brought new opportunities into his life. During his studies, he contemplated becoming a Capuchin Priest – that was his plan. But God had other plans and it was Bishop Tafoya who recognized his potential and invited Father Andres to come to the Diocese of Puebla. It was also in Guadalajara Jalisco where Father Andres met Monsignor Pierino Galeone, one of the few friends of Padre Pio, and Monsignor Carmine, both from Italy - but I will share more on this special meeting further in this story.

It was in the spring of 2007 when Father Andres made his first trip to the United States and became the official Seminarian (candidate to Priesthood in our Diocese of Pueblo, then in 2009 came to stay in the US. After a short time in Alamosa, Bishop Fernando transferred Father Andres to Gunnison to work under Father Steve. In March of 2009, Seminarian Andres was ordained as a Transitional Deacon at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. It was a great honor and he felt a strong presence to “Our Lady”.

At the end of November in 2010, young Andres left Gunnison and went back to Pueblo to be ordained on December 9th in the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, where he was blessed to receive a relic of Padre Pio and a letter from Pope Benedict XVI. It is one of the most beautiful celebrations of Father Andres life and truly an honor and a blessing. After his ordination he was reassigned to Alamosa with Father Derek. He was there three years before going to St. Josephs in Monte Vista and in August of 2014, Bishop Berg assigned Father Andres back to Gunnison as the Administrator for St. Peter’s, Queen of All Saints, and St. Rose of Lima Churches. It was on November 1st, 2014 – All Saints Day – that Father Andres celebrated his first Mass and on September 7th, 2017 he became our Pastor.

Father Andres has been blessed with a number of manifestations of God in his life, the first being when he made his 1st Communion on Christmas. Another which holds a powerful presence happened while on a trip to Italy in 2010. He was leading a retreat to San Giovanni Rotunda (this is where Padre Pio lays in state, still preserved). Just being at this holy place was very special, he could feel the Lord’s presence all around him. During this time in Italy, Father Andres was able to reconnect with Monsignor Pierino Galeone, whom he had met earlier in Guadalajara Mexico. Monsignor Pierino was a close friend and study of Padre Pio and has also the gift of reading souls. Father Andres met with Monsignor Pierino for a general confession, it was one of the most beautiful experiences for Father Andres and they spent two hours together in this sacrament. On another night, while still in Italy, Father Andres could not sleep, his mind was so consumed with the mystery of Padre Pio. So, he decided to get up and take a walk out in the square. He grabbed his rosary and started walking around, praying and thinking about Padre Pio. While in the square Monsignor Carmine approached him and they talked. The Monsignor gave Father Andres a book he had about Padre Pio and told him he should read it - but it had to be returned the next day because they were going to be leaving. Well, Father Andres immediately dug into the book on Padre Pio, completed reading it, and returned it to Monsignor Carmine the next day. Now Father Andres has a library of books on Padre Pio He was a man who was awe-inspiring and brought an overwhelming sense of peace to all those in his presence. A gift both Father Andres and Padre Pio share; an ability to bring comfort to others, no matter their own personal mood or feelings. Keeping in mind the words of Padre Pio, *“My past O Lord to your Mercy, my present to your Love, my future to your Providence.”*

Father Andres has a couple of favorite Saints, besides Padre Pio. As a young child, his very first statue was of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that was his first favorite Saint and his statue was proudly displayed in his bedroom. He also has a strong devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe and his favorite verse is from Saint Augustine; *“My God and My All”* and he has been grateful for this his whole life. Father Andre’s life has been devoted to *My God and My All*. It is what defines who he is, he recognizes that what he has is because God has given it to him. In his own words; “I am nothing without God. I love my family, my people, my little Choco, but ***My God is My All***”

We are all truly blessed to have Father Andres here in the Gunnison Valley. It is clear he loves being a Priest and appreciates his gift of voice, which fills the church with song and his gift from God to be called to the Priesthood.

Thank you Father Andres and Happy 11th Anniversary of your Ordination! May God continue to bless you!