

Welcome Fr. Michael Baricuatro

Father Michael Baricuatro, 29, who was born in San Fernando, Cebu, in the Philippines, knew when he was an altar server in the third grade that he wanted to be a priest.

“I have priests on both sides of the family,” he said. “My dad always said that we are a priestly family.”

The eldest of 10 children, Fr. Baricuatro attended public elementary school when he was a young altar server, but he hastens to explain that public school in the Philippines is very different from what Californians expect.

“We went to Mass every Friday and had catechism classes every day of the week,” he recalled. “Graduation ceremonies were held in the church. Most important events were held in the church.”

“The church and state are not so separate in the Philippines as they are here,” he added.

Fr. Baricuatro attended a Catholic high school, however: Notre Dame Academy, headed by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

The sisters at his high school were very supportive of vocations, he said, and in fact the entire town is “a seedbed for the church,” with lots of established connections to the Sacramento Diocese.

Fr. Baricuatro entered the diocesan seminary in the Philippines right after graduating from high school at 16. After eight years of studying philosophy and theology, he interviewed to study for the Sacramento Diocese. He studied at St. Patrick’s Seminary in Menlo Park for another three years before his pastoral year at Sacred Heart Parish in Red Bluff.

That pastoral year was the best learning experience in all of the years he’s studied for the priesthood, he said. There were no other Filipinos in the parish, he noted, so he was immersed in the Hispanic and Anglo cultures of the parish, an experience that he clearly relishes.

He observed that the church in the United States is very different from the church in the Philippines—more varied in its parish ministries, more complex in its cultural traditions. “And there are more knowledgeable laypeople in ministry here,” he said. “At Sacred Heart I was always working with laypeople much more capable than I.”

“I’m looking forward to learning a lot in my first assignment,” he said. “I want to be ready.”