

# Marine, Single Dad—Then Priest

Fr. Timothy Gahan's unusual journey to priesthood

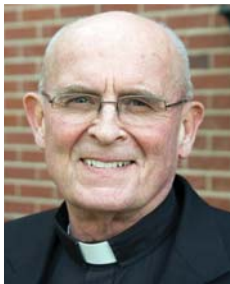
When Fr. Timothy Gahan first felt a call to the priesthood, he figured God had gotten his numbers mixed up.

In his late 50s, the father of two grown children, he didn't seem like the typical man entering the seminary. But he soon realized that God sometimes calls unlikely candidates.

When the thought of priesthood kept recurring, he thought, "You've got me confused with somebody else," said Fr. Gahan, who was ordained two years ago at age 62 and recently moved to St. Paul's in Spartanburg. "The more the idea started to wear on me, the more I thought God has a peculiar sense of humor. God calls the most unworthy to serve him priests."

Fr. Gahan likes to say his vocation was 62 years in the making. Before his ordination, he spent 27 years active in the Marines. During that time he became a widower after just 14 years of marriage, left to raise two young children alone.

"My wife died after a long illness," said Fr. Gahan. Afterwards, as a single father, he had his work cut out for him. "My only



Fr. Gahan's advice to men discerning priesthood is to ask the Blessed Mother, "We are all called to serve your son; help me to know the will of your son for my life."

goal was to do the many things demanded of me, in my profession and my vocation to raise children. It was an interesting time."

With God's grace, the family survived. "We got through it all—and handsomely too, I think," said Fr. Gahan. His son and daughter are grown and thriving, and they each have children of their own.

"I've been ordained two years, and before that had four years of seminary," he said. "When I started, I had no grandchildren, but six years later I have six! God is good."

Fr. Gahan encourages any man with even a remote tug on his heart to pray about the priesthood. "There's no substitution for taking it to prayer. Find a good spiritual director to help you discern whether you

are being called to the priesthood. And pray to the Blessed Mother," he encouraged. "Ask her: 'We are all called to serve your son, help me to know the will of your son for my life.'"

Ultimately, advised Fr. Gahan, you have to take a step forward. "For anybody struggling with their vocation, trying to discern—just go for it. There's something to that Nike commercial—just do it. Don't hold back."