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Possible pull quote:

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A First Blessing

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Working at the Pastoral Center (the main offices for the Diocese of Fargo) has very distinct advantages. Besides being blessed just to have a job I love, I get to meet many of the priests, deacons and laity of the diocese.

The afternoon before ordination, one of the deacons who was to be ordained a priest the next morning was chatting with a co-worker and me in the lobby of the Center. His excitement was evident about his upcoming ceremony, and the topic of blessings came up. He mentioned to be sure to see him and get a ‘First Blessing’ from him.

A first blessing? This was something new for me. I soon found out that a ‘First Blessing’ from a newly ordained priest is quite special indeed. Being blessed by a priest is a wonderful thing, but it turns out there is a special indulgence that goes along with a ‘First Blessing.’ A ‘First Blessing’ can bestow upon the person receiving the blessing a plenary indulgence. WOW! So what, you may ask, is a plenary indulgence?

According to the Apostolic Constitution on Indulgences by Pope Paul VI, an indulgence is the “remission before God of the temporal punishment [time spent in purgatory] due sins already forgiven...An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due sin.”

To acquire a plenary indulgence, the person must “fulfill three conditions: sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion and prayer for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff. It is further required that all attachment to sin, even to venial sin, be absent. If this disposition is in any way less than complete...the indulgence will be only partial,” Pope Paul VI wrote.

Now I have received a blessing from a priest before. The thing I noticed the most was that his hands got amazingly hot as he held them on my head and he said his blessing for me. The next thing I noticed was how heavy his hands felt. But as the blessing continued, they seemed lighter and lighter until I couldn’t feel them at all, just the heat emanating out from them. Then I noticed how light my shoulders felt as he was finishing with the blessing. Lastly, I felt almost euphoric

as he lifted his hands, and I opened my eyes and looked up at him, and he smiled at me.

All of this and more happened to me upon receiving my first 'First Blessing.' It was from Father Darin Didier. As I stood there, his hands upon my head, he began his blessing. Right away I felt the 'hot hands,' but then my knees felt as if they wanted to buckle. I was truly concerned that I was on the verge of falling down as Father Didier quietly gave me a 'First Blessing' in front of the altar area in St. Mary's Cathedral. As he was praying for me, I was listening as best as I could while silently praying that I would not fall down! Besides the wobbly knees, tears sprang to my eyes. The emotions I was feeling were overwhelming. It was one of those moments when you feel so very small, like when, as a child, you gazed up to the stars and realized how vast the universe really is, and how little you are in comparison. The power of the Holy Spirit emanating from this new priest and his hands was immeasurable, like the stars in the heavens. After Father Didier was finished and my knees restored their strength to hold me up, I felt exhilarated and absolutely wonderful. It was as if I was floating.

Maybe now, perhaps, you are feeling that you might want a 'First Blessing,' too? Not to worry, a newly ordained priest has up to a year to bestow upon you a 'First Blessing.' And if you cannot seem to connect with one of the five men ordained to the priesthood this year, next year after ordination, get in line early. You may have to wait a bit for a 'First Blessing,' but it is so worth it. I can't wait to receive my second 'First Blessing.'

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