



HOLDREGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

Giving Back to Education

HHS Alumni Recognition Feature!

Dear HHS Alumni and HPS Foundation Supporters,

Holdrege High School is fortunate to have many very successful graduates. We are excited to continue sharing the stories of some of those HHS Alums thanks to the journalistic talents of Kristine (Long) Jacobson, Class of 1990.

We also welcome your suggestions and comments and encourage you to join the Duster Alumni Association (*see form below*).

Sincerely,

*Matt Allmand, Chairman
HPS Foundation Committee*

Chris Goodwin - Class of 1994

Valedictorian speaker becomes Catholic priest.

by Kristine Jacobson

The class of 1994 selected Chris Goodwin to give the valedictory address at high school graduation. Chris recalls that during his speech, he joked about current events and the trivialities of daily high school life. He then applied the lyrics of the class's walk-out song by Smashing Pumpkins to what they were experiencing on graduation day. "In hindsight, I would like to have used that opportunity to craft a more substantive and heart-felt address," Chris said.

His chance to craft a better message comes over and over again now that he is Father Chris Goodwin, a Catholic priest for the diocese of Lincoln. "I hope that my Sunday preaching is better than my valedictory address," Father Goodwin joked.

He moved to Holdrege right before his junior year in high school when his father accepted a job as the Special Education Director for ESU No. 11. He and his family, which included four younger siblings (an older sibling was already in college), moved to Holdrege from Wichita, Kan., where he had attended Catholic schools from fourth to tenth grades.



As a child, Father Goodwin remembers playing priest and acting out the Mass, reciting the priest's prayers while he was playing. He then began to consciously consider being a priest while in junior high.

At HHS, Father Goodwin said he "met high school students in Holdrege who were unabashedly Christian even when it wasn't popular. Those students' personal commitment to Jesus left an impression on me that later contributed to my own deeper conversion to Christ."

He also appreciated how welcome he felt when he moved to Holdrege. "Moving to a new school in a smaller town in a different state in the middle of high school isn't easy," Father Goodwin said. "I appreciate how welcome my Holdrege classmates made me feel. They accepted me as a peer and a friend."

Father Goodwin jumped into sports and studies at HHS. He enjoyed Mrs. Cheryl Ellingson's English classes and the creative writing and composition assignments she provided.

"I also liked Mr. Brestel and his physics class," he said. "He challenged each of us to construct a device that would hold an egg and prevent it from breaking when dropped from the back of the football bleachers."

Father Goodwin has always had a passion for sports. His new Holdrege friends persuaded him to go out for football. He also played basketball his junior year and tennis his senior year.

After graduating from Holdrege, he attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for three years, majoring in Mathematics and Statistics before switching to Communication Studies. While at UNL, he enjoyed the social life, playing intramural sports and following the great Nebraska football teams of the mid-90s. "But I lacked a sense of vocational direction, and no program of study or career path strongly attracted me," Father Goodwin said. "Meanwhile, my personal adherence to the Gospel had seriously slipped."

By the beginning of his junior year, Father Goodwin said he realized that his moral life was leading him to a spiritual dead end, and he needed to change direction.

"In October 1996, I had a powerful experience of God calling me to repentance, which led me to make a good confession and to begin seeking Christ and his truth once again," he said. "It was at that point of personal conversion that thoughts of the priesthood came back to me."

So during the second semester of his junior year at UNL, he entered the seminary for the Diocese of Lincoln. He attended St. Charles Borromeo Seminary to begin his undergraduate course in philosophy in 1997. The following year, he returned to Nebraska to complete his Bachelor's Degree at St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Seward, which was just opening. He graduated from there in 2000. He then attended Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md., for his theology studies. In May of 2004, he was ordained a priest.

As a priest of the Lincoln Diocese, Chris has served as an assistant pastor and high school religion teacher at St. Mary's Parish and Aquinas High School in David City as well as St. Cecilia Parish and High School in Hastings. He also has served as the administrator of the parishes in Benkelman and Stratton. He is currently the pastor of the parishes in Weston and Touhy and serves as the principal and superintendent of St. John Nepomucene Catholic Grade School in Weston.

Father Goodwin said that he enjoys "the satisfaction and joy of living the vocation to which God has lovingly called me. Being a priest is amazing and awe-



inspiring. Each day I am able, by God's grace, to stand in the Person of Christ and to make his body and blood present in the Eucharist. I am also able to absolve people of their sins in his name in the sacrament of reconciliation."

While school work has its challenges, Father Goodwin said he is grateful to be part of kids' lives as they grow and learn. "I love sports, so I have enjoyed

being a fan of some great athletic programs at Aquinas, St. Cecilia, and now Bishop Neumann," he said. He also has pursued his own love of sports with his participation in various running events.

"Running has been the most dependable way for me to keep my mind and body in shape for the last 15 years," Father Goodwin said. "It's funny that I said 'no' to cross country and 'yes' to football my first fall in Holdrege, but running is now my 'go-to' sport." Father Goodwin ran his first half marathon in 2007 and has run several more since then, and he has run the Omaha Marathon. He is currently registered for the Lincoln Marathon in May. He also has participated for four

years in the Market to Market Relay, an event that challenges teams to run from Omaha to Lincoln with individual team members running different sections of the race. In 2013, he started his own Market to Market team of priests. The Bishop of the Lincoln Diocese, James Conley, ran on his team, along with six other priests. "They enjoyed it so much that we're doing it again next fall," he said.



Father Goodwin said being a priest is a great adventure. "You never know what kind of job you're going to end up doing, and usually you're busy doing about four or five or six very different kinds of jobs. You're intimately involved in the most sacred mysteries on earth, and you're also very much a part of the secular world and its activities. Being a priest makes you a part of every family, yet without belonging completely to any one of them. You're called to be very much in this world, but all the while pointing to a greater world to come."

Holdrege residents may recognize the Goodwin name as the Connie Goodwin Memorial Tennis Tournament is played each year in August in Holdrege. "I was moved when I discovered that the Holdrege Tennis Association had chosen to honor my mother in this way," Father Goodwin said. His mother taught English

and Speech at Holdrege High School and French at the Middle School and coached speech, tennis, and softball. She died of breast cancer in October 2000 at age 51.

"My mom taught us tennis growing up, and we enjoyed playing it as a family," he said. His mom was involved in starting the tennis program at HHS. "It's neat to see that our mom's name lives on through the tennis tournament each year," he said.

About Us

The mission of the HPS Foundation is to support and enhance the educational efforts of students and teachers of Holdrege Public Schools by providing funding for innovative and challenging programs, learning experiences, and activities.

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