



"I NEVER WANTED TO BE A PRIEST – GOD WANTED ME TO BE A PRIEST."

IN HER

Shoes

Father H Setter

Words - Patrick Sean Moore
Photo - Darrin Hackney

You probably wouldn't think that Father H Setter, a priest at All Saints Catholic Church, is a cigar and scotch aficionado, but then again, he's all about humanizing the Catholic religion. Father H personally dispelled a lot of misconceptions I had about Catholicism, and I am grateful for such an education. While emphasizing the two pillars of the faith, Scripture and Tradition, he works to adapt with the many changes of a technologically driven society. He texts, emails, is well aware of Facebook and Twitter, and has his own interpretation of their influence on Catholicism. He dispelled the myth that Catholics think they're better than everyone and admitted that the idea of the church being inflexible is a misnomer. The Roman Catholic Church is a religion with over 2,000 years of history with a backbone of doctrines that cover a vast scope of concepts. "Cosmetic changes have been made," said Father H, "but the doctrinal part is not gonna change."

The most remarkable thing about Father H is his willingness to discuss his journey to God, and the vulnerability that comes with being a man of the cloth. "No man on the face of this earth is worthy of being a priest. We struggle with our own humanity and we're not immune to everyday trials and tribulations," revealed Father H. He described an "intense conversion experience" back towards God as a young man, when his love of music conducting began to push him away from the faith. After earning two degrees in music and experiencing success as a conductor, he was able to secure a highly competitive audition with famed composer Leonard Bernstein. "I felt an unusual pull away from conducting. I made an implicit bargain with God. If I didn't make it into Bernstein's school, I was gonna try the priesthood," Father H reminisced. Father H Setter will celebrate his 25th year of priesthood this May.

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No matter your beliefs or creed, the passion, dedication and curiosity that Father H exhibits is marvelous. That is to say, it stirs wonder, is

extraordinary and splendid. He showed me worn, distressed notebooks where he has handwritten every prayer request he has received since the 1990s. He admits to being "outspoken, loud and obnoxious." He is an authority on cigars, wine and scotch. The man is a humble representative of the Catholic doctrine, and in my opinion, a revelation.

Ever the wise observer, Father H realizes that this world of instant gratification presents an infinite number of distractions for his flock. He encourages his parishioners to take the time to dialogue with one another and with peers of different religions. No matter how hi-tech your smartphone is, Father H maintains, "There is no app for faith."

I would be remiss if I didn't highlight how his love for cigars ties in to his beliefs and teachings. Each year Father H throws a benefit cigar dinner for The Setter Foundation, a charity that assists various agencies in Wichita. In addition, he is involved with other cigar events around town and national conventions sponsored by *Cigar Aficionado* magazine and the International Premium Cigar and Pipe Retailers. "Cigars bring people together. When you have a cigar with 10 friends, the camaraderie is unparalleled," said Father H. With the cigar as the common denominator, time slows down, and an environment of comfort and sharing is created.

Just like cigar smoking or any other part of life, too much of one thing isn't productive. "Prayer is the life of a priest, but if all I did was pray, I'd be a bad priest," said Father H. In a world where excess is easily found and hard to shake, the humble Father likes to say, "Everything in moderation, including moderation."

An immensely talented and intelligent man of the cloth, Father H is as happy with sharing his faith journey as he is with just having a conversation about anything. As a man who cherishes friendship, he believes there is a time and place to shut out the noise and distraction of the modern world. "Being alone with God can be a rich blessing."

Amen to that.