



What's your full name?

Alessandro Borraccia. In Italy we rarely use middle names. But I could add a "Father" in front of it few years ago.

How long have you been a priest then?

I was ordained on June 23rd, 2012; so a little over 5 years. My priestly ordination was in one of the 4 Major Basilicas in Rome, St. Paul's Outside the Walls (the one that has all the mosaics of the Popes, from the beginning till Pope Francis).

WOW. How did you pull that off!?



Well, if you couldn't tell from my name, I am not originally from Kansas. I was born and raised in Italy in a suburb of Milan. I was the only one being ordained that year from my community, the Priests of the Apostles of the Interior Life, and I asked Archbishop Naumann to have my ordination in Rome, to allow more family members and friends to be present.

So you were born and raised in Milan, but you were living in Rome, and now you live in Overland Park. I am confused...

Let me give you a little background. I come from a family of 5. My parents are both an only child, so we grew up very close to each other. My father Mario was born in Assisi and met my mother Rosy (short for Maria Rosaria) on a study abroad trip in Vienna, Austria. They fell in dated, fell in love and got married, and 3 children are the result of their love. My oldest sister is Sabrina, married with two kids (Lorenzo, 9, and Riccardo, 5) and my younger sister is Valentina, who has a 3 year old son, Liam.

Can we say: "Blessed are you among women" since you are the middle child?

I guess you could. Milan is a very expensive and a big city, about 3.5 million people if you consider the suburbs, so I grew up in a small apartment. I shared one bedroom with my sisters since I was born, I didn't know any different. So I lived through all the crazy stages of a teenage girl. I joke sometimes saying that that's the reason I became a priest! LOL I do love my sisters very much.

How did you discover your vocation to the priesthood?

I never thought of the possibility to be called to the priesthood until I was in college, when I was 24. I was born and raised Catholic and my family practiced every Sunday. We said prayers before meals, night prayers before going to bed, and family prayers, at times, during Advent or Lent. I was an altar server till middle school and for awhile I attended youth group. But despite all of these activities – I need to be honest here – God was not my number one priority, I didn't have a personal relationship with God.



And how did that change?

I went to Industrial Engineering for College in Milan for undergrad and grad school. At the end of graduate school, I had to write a thesis so I asked my advisor to send me abroad. He offered me the chance to go to Japan or Germany, but I really wanted to come to the States, to learn from the best and improve my English. So he had a connection at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. I went there in August 2005 for 6 months. When I was looking for a Sunday Mass, I ran into the Sisters of the Apostles of the Interior Life. One of them, Sr. Tiziana, became my spiritual director, talked to me about Jesus as a friend in such a real way, very relatable to me, that I wanted a relationship with Him, I desired her joy, I longed for more in my life. Do you know what sealed the deal?



What?

Initially my friendship with her. She invited me to come to the Catholic Center and pray with them and other students in front of the Eucharist for an hour each morning. Slowly, that time, united with a daily reflection on the word of God explained (I was using a book called "In Conversation with God" and tried to apply what I was reading to my life, in a concrete way), opened my heart to the possibility to ask God not simply for His blessing on my desires, but about His desires for me and my life? After all, he created me, and all of us, so how can he desire anything bad for us?

How did your family take it?

Well, I went back to Milan after 6 months, then I got an offer to start a PhD with the same professor and in 2006 I was in Madison, WI again. But after a little while, I knew I had to quit the PhD program because my heart was going in a different direction. So I left the United States, went back home, summoned the family and shared my heart with them. There were words of understanding, some tears (I guess moms cry, it's in their nature, right?), and some expressions that meant "let's see what happens". So at that time the male AVI community was only in Rome. So for the next 7 1/2 years (January 2007-October 2014) I lived and studied in Rome.

And how did you end up here in Kansas?

The community saw in Archbishop Naumann a great leader who really treasured (and still does) the importance of the interior life and a personal relationship with Jesus, for himself and for the people entrusted to his care in the Archdiocese. We took that as a sign from God's Providence that we were called to serve and minister here.



Great. Why don't you share something about you as a priest?

Being a priest and an Apostle of the Interior Life is such a blessing. I get to see the Holy Spirit at work so closely and so many times, that I know what is spiritual is almost more real than what you see physically. I am in love with Jesus in the Eucharist (both celebrating Mass and spending quiet time in front of Him in the adoration chapel) and I absolutely cherish the Sacrament of reconciliation, where Christ sets people free from their burdens and miseries out of His sheer goodness and love.