Son of a roofer, much like son of a carpenter. 
Assisting and conversing, finding safety in the city, 
in the world that was shaping you.

Music and ministry and Marvel movies. 
Eating up Hebrew like it was the holy grail of cheesesteaks.

Car rides and plane flights. 
New Zealand. Fiji…Yellowstone…Berkeley. 
Stories of God’s faithfulness in the midst of waterfall jumping and listening to 
the wounded. Choosing to see Christ in all. Choosing to serve Christ in all.

Pentecostal preacher, prophesied over about his pastoral presence, 
a possible priestly call, 
…if the Spirit does what She does so well…
Modern-day mystic with a pension for Our Blessed Mother. 
Mentors and meetings and mundane tasks to listen together if this shape of life 
is the shape his would take.
The shape that the Spirit has been breathing into his life since he was fearfully 
and wonderfully made 
in his mother’s womb, 
knit together to 
Bear the burden of the people. 
The people. 
The people. Harassed and helpless. 
Hoping for healing, 
or at least a harbinger that help is on the way.
Though young in the eyes of the Episcopal Church, Daniel, your soul has often been cut open to reveal tree rings countable well beyond your years. As you have wrestled with this call and what it means to serve as pastor and priest, many have been witness to your searching eyes of presence and comfort and truth-telling, in hospital rooms and funeral masses, in hushed tones in hallways and in weeping in foreign prisons.

Teaching future pastors to pastor, finding yourself overlooked and oft misunderstood, being side-swiped by experiences of broken trust within the church, wondering if disillusionment would be the final meal served before execution, and resigning yourself to live faithfully as a Christ-follower, freedom as a lay person. Smoke still wafting up from the fresh bullets fired, as you bandaged your heart.

At a time when your mentor priest had beckoned you back into a church, gently nursing you back to the faith, to serving, to creating open space for your heart to receive God, death pulled the rug out, thrice that year, and while trying to hold the jagged pieces of your own heart, you found yourself trying to help a grieving community keep it together, let alone a grieving family.

“I will come down and talk with you there…so that you will not bear the burden of the people all by yourself.”

“No longer a child, tossed to and fro, but feet firmly planted in the knowledge of the Son of God.”
Church, do not mistake his youth or his kindness for naivety. He is no stranger to ministry, and he has thrashed in the waters of death and faced unanswerable questions about evil and mortality and “Why God?” for years. Both in parishioners and in his own soul. To sit in the ashes, in the belly of the fish, to wander in the desert for 40 days or 40 years, to wrestle with God in the middle of the night, asking for a blessing or at least a name to understand where he was and where he’d been, in order to know when it was time to move into where he would be. To find himself in holy, gritty, murky, middle space, that felt more like a muddy football field at best, or the remains of a sinking Death Star he could do battle on for redemption at worse. Not crucifixion. But not quite resurrection. The expansiveness of Holy Saturday, that liminal space between death and life.

And to find that this place, this unlikely sacred space, is where one encounters the Living God, and emerges, scanning surroundings, able to easily identify those who’ve been wounded in the battle because of his comfort with his own scars.

Because this is what the world needs of its priests. Priests who will not give superficial answers or half-truths. Priests who are willing to walk in the valley of the shadow of death with those they are entrusted with, because it won’t be their first time.

Priests who know what it is to feel harassed and helpless like sheep, so that they will always keep their hearts tender to responding with that compassion that wells up from a Source beyond one’s self.
Out of your priestly vows, Dan, you will proclaim that the things which were being cast down are being raised up, and the things which had grown old are being made new, as you offer God’s forgiveness and blessing—and often at the same time—seeking to remove any barriers between creation and the Creator.

To bring folks to the font and to the Table to share in the death and resurrection of Jesus and to participate in the divinity of humanity in allegiance as Christ-followers to help others understand that this life of shared joys and shared sorrows is worth risking all this bread-breaking, neighbor-loving, justice and peace-striving, and dignity-restoration.

And so, like those who have gone before, realizing your merits and accomplishments or your spiritual survival skills have not brought you here, but the Grace of God who has called you, depending only on the Love you were created from and on the Love with which you will return, today you will receive a new name: Priest. And though many will want to “kiss the metaphorical ring” as it appears you’ve “moved up”, as some have said, you will actually, as you continually point out, have “moved down”, as you become the servant of servants. It is you who will wash the beautiful and dirty feet of those who bring the Good News. It is you who will take the flack when worlds crash and someone is needed to blame. It is you who will wipe tables and mouths in expectation of the heavenly banquet, when the pressing crowds come up hungry and forgetful.
And it is you who will be invited into rooms and conversations and lives and thin space, where you will feel the tenderness of the Spirit so near that you will want to take slow shallow breaths not to miss the moment. And your heart will be pricked, over and over, as the people entrusted to you will come wounded from being harassed and helpless, and you will find yourself drawing on all of the moments of this day and of the great cloud of witnesses who point forever to the Light and Love of the world as your strength to move and respond with the kind of compassion that does not end.

It is fitting that within this first week of Epiphany, a season of the church year in which we celebrate the various manifestations of Jesus’ divinity, we find ourselves here at an ordination. Epiphany, where gifts fit for royalty and for the kind of king who would give his life for his servants are given, where heavens crack open and doves descend, where water is turned to wine, disciples are called, and miracles and teachings continue to produce double-takes. It is in this holy space that we find ourselves called to respond to Jesus in faith as we together witness Epiphany here at the ordination of a priest.

My prayer for you, Daniel, is that at the end of every day of this one wild and precious life of yours, you will find yourself whispering into the dark, “Thank you” as you shake your head in awe that you get to do this—and more importantly BE this—for the rest of your life. Because this is who you already are.

Sounds super romantic from someone only 28 days into priestly ordination, doesn’t it?
Perhaps, but it is this wide-eyed optimism that moves newlyweds into a lifelong marriage and it is this wide-eyed optimism that propels you, Dan—knowing fully that this life will be hard—to know that you go with the One whose messengers always dramatically (and a bit ironically) shouted, “Do not be afraid.” You are not alone. The Lord, your God and your King, defender of causes and worthy to take refuge in, will be with you and will go with you.

As you offer bread for the world, and as you invite the world to the bread, may the nearness of the One who has been blessed, broken, and given for the world, surprise and delight you in your own being blessed, broken, and given.

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Theological conversations while polishing silver at a shop down the street from here…The street he would still shake his head that he had returned to, not back at the shop rearranging antiques, but as a clergy member. All suited and collared and professional and such… But with the same rascally smile and glint in his eyes he always had.

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Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up.
In every way into him who is the head, into Christ.
Knit together.
Knit together.
Equipped.

Heads still tinging from hands placed on ours
Placed on ours
Placed on ours
Crosses traced on foreheads. Of blessings.

Church, let us midwife this priest.
Let us midwife the Spirit of God, who longs to be revealed in this season of Epiphany.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.