

Climbing the “Tree of Life”

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In the past and present, I find myself climbing the “tree of life.” For me, climbing the “tree of life” is synonymous with life in the Church. For me, it is the Church where I find “life.”

As a priest for a little over two years, I now realize that I am living on “branch three” of my life.

“Branch one” was marked with a *naive desire to know*. I wanted to know who I was, what life was all about, and how all of this related to Christ. These were my high school days. There were some satisfying answers, but many more to come.

“Branch two” is best described as *the time of idealism*. This branch lasted for seven years. Many professors, liturgical services, discussions with classmates and choir trips to hundreds of parishes marked this branch. It was a time when I sought and I found. It was a time when I experienced and believed. I knew that through this experience, I had acquired basic satisfying answers to my questions about myself, life and the Church. I realized that the Church does not just imply institution, but rather a “way of life.” I realized that my life, and the life of my brothers and sisters of creation are mysteriously linked together because of this “way of life.”

Now I live on “branch three,” and I call it *reality*. For me, desire led to experience, and experience led to idealism, but it is only in “reality” where it can be implemented. Reality for me means the possibility of continuing my quest for a deeper understanding of Christian ideals. But above all, reality for me means having the opportunity to help others climb this very same “tree of life.”