

Priest

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lic priest,” he said. “It was a two-fold thing. I was on vacation, so I wanted to relax and chill out. And I wanted them to choose me because of my dancing and not because I was a priest and they thought it was cool or something they needed to do.”

Actually, Sohm was completing unfinished business just by getting into the “Live!” studio audience.

“When I was in the seminary, one of my seminarian friends and I went to New York City,” he said. “We were in line to see the (‘Live!’) show when it was with Regis (Philbin) and Kelly. We were really excited because we had stand-by tickets and thought we were going to get in, but they cut the line right at us. That was about 15 or 16 years ago.”

This time, Sohm wasn’t going to be denied.

“This (show) was on my to-do list,” he said. “This time, I made sure I had my own tickets in hand. I requested tickets and got them.”

A DREAM COME TRUE

Sohm has regularly followed the long-running show, which has seen changes in the hosts through the years. Strahan is the most recent addition, replacing long-time host Philbin who retired from the show.

Ripa is currently in her 12th year with “Live!” She previously appeared as Hayley Vaughan in the ABC soap opera “All My Children” from 1990-2002. She joined the ABC prime time sitcom “Hope & Faith” in 2003 and starred for three years.

After Philbin’s retirement from “Live!,” Ripa co-hosted with 59 different men and women during a nine-month period to find Philbin’s replacement. Strahan was selected and joined “Live!” as the permanent replacement in September 2012.

Strahan, a retired professional football player, won a Super Bowl championship during his 15-year career with the New York Giants. He has been inducted into the National Football League’s Hall of Fame.

In addition to his “Live!” co-host role, Strahan serves as special co-host of “Good Morning America” and as a FOX NFL Sunday analyst.

“I’m a fan of the (‘Live!’) show and really like it a lot,” Sohm said. “I really didn’t know Michael since he was all new to the scene (for me). I was watching when Regis (Philbin) was on the show, and he’s a really cool guy. I wanted to meet Regis the first time we were in New York City, but it didn’t work out.”

This recent trip to NYC was special in a couple of ways, Sohm said.

“I had a long desire to go to New York City during Christmastime. I went with three people – two parishioners from Ponca and one of their friends,” he said. “I’m 39, and my friends were in their 70s. It’s a really crazy thing. You think they wouldn’t hang out with a priest, but we’re good friends. It worked out beautifully. God really blessed us that week. The weather was perfect.”

New York’s normally brutal December weather instead produced balmy temperatures in the 60s. But



COURTESY PHOTO
The Rev. Andy Sohm of Newcastle, Nebraska, busts a move as the trivia dancer during a recent taping of the national talk show “Live! With Kelly and Michael.” Sohm, a Catholic priest, auditioned for the dance spot while attending the show with friends.

the blessings continued in more ways than one.

Sohm and his friends attended the Wednesday (Dec. 16) live show, which featured actor and comedian Will Ferrell. The audience received a two-for-one special, as the live show was followed by a second show taped for later viewing.

The next blessing actually came from the misfortune of a woman in Sohm’s group.

“The studio had around 200 seats. They had steps leading to the top tier of the studio, but a woman in our group had difficulty walking. She was using a cane and couldn’t go up the steps,” he said. “They let us sit on the bottom level, close to the front. It was all random. Her cane turned into a real blessing.”

Sohm’s quartet was seated near the area where the show’s guests enter the studio and give “high fives” to audience members. “We could see everything really well,” he said.

LET’S DANCE!

The next blessing came when the show’s producers asked if any audience members wanted to audition for the trivia dancer’s spot in the program’s opening segment.

Had Sohm ever aspired to becoming the trivia dancer?

“I knew about it and thought about it, just because it’s really fun and really awesome,” the priest said. “(‘Live!’ executive producer Michael) Gelman selected three or four of us. We went down and did a dance-off. The audience voted, but Gelman held the final word.”

Sohm was selected as one of two finalists and then as the trivia dancer. He received a roar of approval from the two hosts – particularly Strahan – and the audience during his appearance.

“People were asking if I was doing the ‘pogo stick’ dance. No, I was just doing a total free-for-all,” the priest said. “Once I was selected, we went backstage and then I came out to dance. While I was dancing, they gave me a selfie stick and one of those cameras that you hold.”

Sohm tried to gauge the audience reaction.

“I could barely hear what they were saying back there (on the rear stage), but I saw Michael’s head bob up and down, and I know he lost it. He was enjoying it. It was really neat to get energy from that (moment) and see it now,” he said.

“I also saw the joy that everyone received (in the audience), and it was really cool. I didn’t want it to be all about me. I wanted it to be about each of us being who we are, loving ourselves for who we are and receiving that joy. You can enjoy the wonderful things in life, even if you’re a priest.”

Sohm grew up on an Iowa farm, where his family enjoyed dancing as fun and stress relief. He has continued to “shake a leg” on a variety of occasions.

“I go to a lot of youth retreats, and I dance with the kids. They love it. We also have things like wedding dances. There are a lot of opportunities for (dancing),” he said. “For me, it’s fun and brings a lot of joy and happiness. Right now, there is so much negative in the world.”

Sohm takes the same approach to life as he takes to dancing.

“In life, you don’t always get out and perform a set choreography. I just get out there for the joy and the fun,” he said. “You enjoy the goodness that comes from being able to get up there and not be embarrassed. Sometimes, with the Lord, you just need to approach Him as you are and find joy in it.”

Then again, dancing on national television is a little different than “hoofing it” at a local event. He professed to nervousness but then went with the flow.

“I thought, ‘Oh, my Lord, did I actually do that?’” he said of his post-show reaction. “But then I watched the video and was excited that I did it. I was just feeling all the joy of the Lord. I didn’t know what I was doing. I had no clue, nothing planned out.”

Sohm enjoyed meeting and taking pictures with Ripa and Strahan.

“It was cool meeting them. I talked to Michael Strahan, and I may have told him that I was a priest. We also took pictures (with the hosts) during the show,” Sohm said. “It was interesting, because (the hosts) would come up to the audience during commercial breaks.”

Sohm was amazed at the energy – and the rapid pace with little room for error – on a live show.

“Kelly and Michael were so good at thinking on their feet. They had questions coming right at them, and they knew how to respond. They would bounce off each other,” he said. “When I went into the back room, there was this constant movement where everything just flowed. Gelman was adding stuff, but

it all came together and you could see how polished it was. Gelman kept things moving and flowing. He would give the clue for the things he wanted.”

People back home knew Sohm held tickets to the “Live!” show, but they didn’t know he was appearing on it. Because of the one-hour time difference, Sohm let some people back home know about his appearance as it aired in the Central time zone. Other people learned by the sheer luck of watching the show and witnessing the parish priest as the trivia dancer.

“They couldn’t believe I was on, so they were a little bit surprised,” he said.

MORE NYC FUN

The “Live” show wasn’t the last time Sohm’s group would see Strahan. They went the next day to ABC’s “Good Morning America” where Strahan serves as one of the hosts.

Strahan came past Sohm, who was waiting in line by 6 a.m., recognized the priest and acknowledged him with a humorous look.

“Michael had his entourage and security guards, but he saw me and responded positively,” the priest said. “I was impressed with Michael Strahan. He’s cool and just lifted people’s spirits.”

Sohm and the other “GMA” audience members were escorted into the

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plans to move its headquarters to Chicago from Omaha, eliminate 1,500 office jobs and unload roughly two-thirds of the company by selling a division that makes store-brand food and spinning off its frozen potatoes business.

Finishing eighth in the AP members’ voting was the fracking water disposal decision. State regulators approved a disposal well that will let a Colorado energy company discard oil and natural gas wastewater underground in northwest Nebraska. The decision prompted state lawmakers to re-examine the state’s oil and natural gas regulations, which critics say are too lax.

In ninth place was the Legislature’s decision to raise fuel taxes. Lawmakers override Ricketts’ veto of a 6-cent-per-gallon tax increase. The proposal was expected to generate an additional \$25 million annually for the state and \$51 million for cities and counties once fully implemented.

Finishing 10th in the voting was bird flu, which swept through Midwest farms in the spring, leaving roughly 48 million birds either dead from the virus or euthanized to prevent its spread. The virus affected farms in 15 states, but Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska lost the most birds.

The Nebraska volleyball team’s final victory in the national championship tournament received several write-in votes.

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