

# Vocations



Photo by John Kalitz

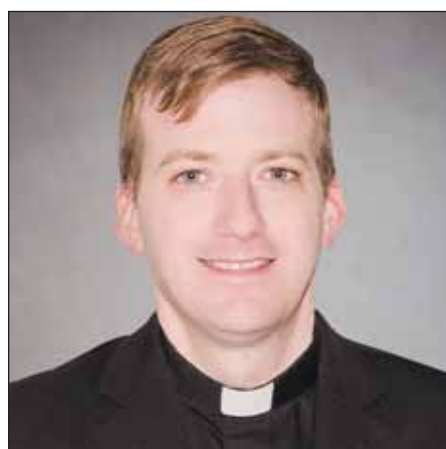
A SUPPLEMENT TO THE CATHOLIC STAR HERALD

## *Formed to be who God has created us to be*

By Father Adam Cichoski

**T**his past year, the sixth edition of the “Program of Priestly Formation in the United States of America” (PPF) hit the presses. This has been something in the works for years, as the Church and her bishops in the United States have seen the fruit that has come from our seminaries while also paying attention to the men who are entering formation now. They have worked together in reforming the process by which a man is formed into a priest. The goal for every seminary is to form good men into priests who will one day serve the Church. They have taken into consideration many different factors that are facing the Church and her ministers in the world today and have made some changes that will help to bear good fruit in the future for the Church.

It is interesting to see how this process has changed even since I was



FATHER ADAM CICHOSKI

a seminarian. We used to be able to distinguish or measure our journeys by our education level. Someone in first college would have about eight or nine years before ordination. Someone who entered with a four-year degree or above would enter pre-theology and have a journey of about six years

before ordination. None of this was set in stone, and thankfully we have had good vocation directors who have worked with our men and helped to form them so that when it came time for ordination, they were ready to begin this journey and continue their formation as a priest of Jesus Christ. This model was used for many years, and it has produced a good number of the priests who now minister to our Diocese.

Looking at our world now, there are many challenges for men who want to become a priest. There are challenges when it comes to education, life experience, immigration status and diverse family issues. The value of formation, as any of our seminarians could tell you, is that it is a lifelong journey. We are not completely formed when we enter the seminary, and we are not completely formed when we leave the seminary and are ordained to the priesthood. Our formation continues

through all of our assignments and responsibilities as we grow in our understanding of this great gift.

With this “Program of Priestly Formation,” the Church will now have four different stages to help form our men to be the missionary disciples we need in our communities: Propaedeutic Stage, Discipleship Stage, Configuration Stage and Vocational Synthesis Stage. All of these stages will have to be completed while a man is formed into a good candidate for the priesthood. This is a process that can be longer than what we were used to, as it will be different than anything before it. We will have some growing pains as we do our best to follow and implement this for our Diocese. However, even with all of these challenges, I believe we will see greater fruit come from all of this.

The different stages a man goes through helps him to grow in the four  
*(continued on page S2)*

# Experiencing God among the people

By Ricardo Lozano Cruz

Last year, during June and July, I was blessed to be at Holy Cross Parish, Bridgeton. There, more than merely serving in my pastoral assignment as a seminarian, I had a powerful experience of God through the vibrant and overflowing faith of the community. I would title this chapter of my life as my “Experience of God Among the People.”

At Holy Cross, I was immersed in different ministries, such as the ministry of the sick and homebound, catechetical formation, food distribution, sacramental preparation and small faith-sharing groups. A great highlight of this experience was working with the English- and Spanish-speaking communities, which let me grasp a greater understanding of the beauty, diversity and richness of our Catholic faith.

In June, I arrived at Holy Cross Parish with the expectation to serve and fulfill all my pastoral duties as best as possible. I arrived with the idea to offer and give myself to others by assisting the needs of people. Nevertheless, more than an experience of self-giving, my stay at Holy Cross Parish was an experience of RECEIVING. I witnessed to the transforming power that flows from being with the people of God. Such a transformation could be described as something that was gradually and powerfully touching my heart in unimaginable ways. I experienced God’s tender love through His flock! I felt God was uncovering my heart to talk in the deepest silence of my soul.

I remembered the day in which a non-Catholic lady said to me with evident joy in her eyes, “Thank you for becoming a priest.” It was one of those times where my spirit was unexpectedly shaken. From this time on, I felt God’s voice talking in a personal way to me, especially through the spiritual and physical needs of the community. I would even say that having a close interaction with the suffering of people brought my heart closer to Jesus. Furthermore, I would describe such an inspiring experience by recalling Mother Teresa’s words: “Pain and suffering have come into your life, but remember pain, sorrow and suffering are but the kiss of Jesus – a sign that you have come so close to Him that He can kiss you.”

After prayerful reflection, I came to see that people were actually teaching me something about myself, as God himself was affirming my call to the priesthood through the faith of people. As a result, during the last days of my assignment, I felt as if I walked in my spiritual journey through the green pastures of gratefulness for my vocation, but I also felt like walking through the

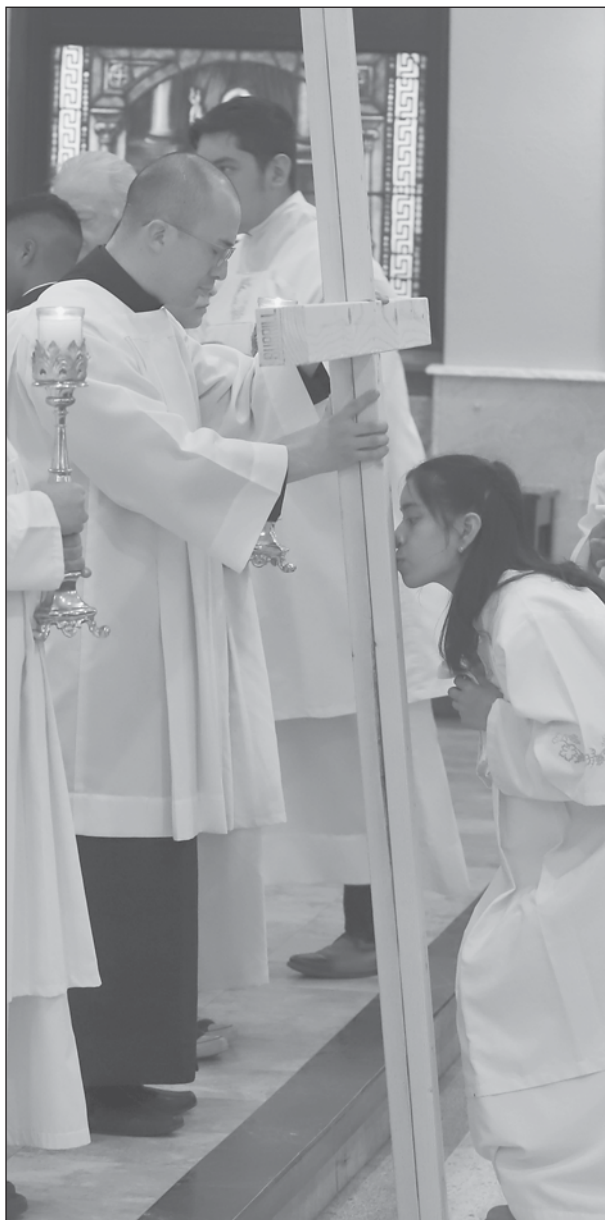


Photo by Mike Walsh

Ricardo Lozano Cruz holds a cross for veneration during the Good Friday service April 5 at Saint Michael Church, the Parish of Saint Monica, in Atlantic City.

gloomy, yet providential feeling of unworthiness. Through this beautiful and faithful community, God said to me, “I am with you. There is nothing to be afraid of.” Through the people’s vibrant faith, I had the assurance that God perfectly knew, even before I was born, about my vocation and my future to come. If at some point



The Most Reverend Dennis J. Sullivan, D.D. announces that he intends to ordain Mr. Ricardo Lozano Cruz to the Sacred Order of Deacon on Saturday, the 20th day of May, 2023 at Saint Damien Parish in Ocean City, New Jersey.

The faithful of the Diocese of Camden are asked to pray for Ricardo. At the same time the faithful are obliged to reveal impediments to sacred orders, if they know of any, by contacting their pastor before the ordination in accord with the norms of cc. 1043 and 1051.2 of the Code of Canon Law.

Mary Immaculate, patroness of the Diocese of Camden, intercede for Ricardo and for an increase in vocations to the priesthood here in South Jersey.

*Rev. Adam J. Cichoski*  
Reverend Adam J. Cichoski  
Director of Vocations

somebody asks me to summarize my experience at Holy Cross Parish in three words, I would say: gratefulness, unworthiness and trust.

On the last day of my pastoral assignment, with a joyful heart, I thanked God for the gift of this experience. I thanked Him for His people, and I asked Him to model my heart as a faithful instrument of His burning love. I also feel honored and truly happy to serve, God willing, the people of the Diocese of Camden in the future. Once again, I ask for your prayers, upon which I rely on so much. I also encourage all of you to pray for the ministers of our Diocese as they continue to be courageous heralds of the Gospel and faithful Shepherds of God’s flock.

*Ricardo Lozano Cruz is third theology at Immaculate Conception Seminary at Seton Hall University, South Orange.*

## Formation a process that begins before seminary

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dimensions of the formation process. A man still needs to be formed in the human dimension, spiritual dimension, intellectual dimension and pastoral dimension. There will be different benchmarks or thresholds a man must reach in each of these dimensions before moving on to the next stage of formation. These four dimensions are essential to the process, and I believe we see how our seminarians have grown in each through the articles they have shared with us on the following pages.

Formation is a process that begins before seminary, in a man’s family. This is where he learns what it means to be a man and a father. As he grows, he encounters his second family in his parish community, where again he sees the life of a priest and the life of a community growing together and building each other up. Through the different ministries and diversity of parish life, a man hopefully falls in love with the Lord, who calls him to help sanctify the world. As a man grows in the spiritual and pastoral life of his parish, especially in his love of

the Eucharist, a man will continue to grow and be formed by his religious education and his practice of the faith.

Our seminarians are all at different points of their journeys, and have all been formed by the people around them. From their families, to their schools and seminaries, and to their home parishes and assignments, there is a lot that goes into forming men for the priesthood. I am grateful for their openness to this formation, and I am also very grateful for the formation they have received from their seminaries and parishes. These are great gifts,

and I know that God will continue to work through all of them to help form great priests for the future. We are in need of many more, so please pray not only for men to be open to this call, but for the perseverance of the men in formation. We pray they will endure and continue this great process, listening to the Lord who calls them to be His priests!

*Father Adam Cichoski is director of vocations for the Diocese of Camden and rector of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Camden.*

# Call to religious life a blessed vocation from the start

By Sister Linda Taber, IHM

**M**y vocation to religious life will always be a mystery of God's infinite love for me. I was born into a Navy family, living in one place and putting down roots were not part of my formative years! My earliest recollection of learning about God was when we were stationed in Florida. Every night my mom read stories from the Bible to me and my older brother before we went to bed. Little did I realize that this was the work of the Holy Spirit.

I attended Catholic school from fourth grade through high school, as we were finally able to set up roots in Virginia Beach. I was introduced to the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in grade school. There was something about these sisters that caught my imagination. However, the thought of joining a religious community was not a part of my plan at this time!

My years at Norfolk Catholic High opened my eyes to the many possibilities of being of service. I regularly attended Mass on Sundays and enjoyed an active social life with my friends. However, the stirring to serve God as a missionary was starting to ferment. The Immaculate Heart sisters shared pictures of their sisters working with children and adults in Chile and Peru. Those pictures were the path that



SISTER LINDA TABER

God used to lead me to who and where I am today.

Needless to say, my parents were a bit surprised when I shared my dream with them. Midway through my first year of college, I completed my application for the community and was accepted. At that time, I had no idea of what the future held for me! My life as an IHM has been blessed and formed by knowing and living with many holy women.

Since entering the community, I have had the opportunity to teach and minister in three states, enjoying the diversity of each area. My dream of being a missionary was also fulfilled by ministering in Peru. Living in Peru and serving the Peruvian people



Photo by Mike Walsh

Religious sisters who serve in the Diocese attend Mass for the feast of the Assumption last year. Serving as a religious can uplift one's life in unimaginable ways, writes Sister Linda Taber, IHM.

change my life in unimaginable ways. My vocation continues to be enriched daily by the loving example of the faithful men and women who serve at the Cathedral Parish in Camden.

I am grateful to my God and to my

community for the many opportunities to serve God's people.

*Sister Linda Taber is a religious of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, who serves in Camden.*

## Family support a blessing in vocation to diaconate

By Deacon José René Zayas

As I reflect on my vocation to the diaconate, I recall one day, while still in formation, a phone call I received from my mother. We conversed about her health, my daughters' activities and accomplishments at school, and then she said, "Mi hijo, do you remember when we were at Mass one day and you told me, 'Mamita, I want to be like the father who is celebrating Mass.'"

We joyfully reminisced about that moment. A few days following this conversation, my mother died, sitting in the living room quietly and peacefully moving her rosary beads in her hand as family surrounded her in prayer. I was 7 years old at the time, but I clearly remember this desire to be a priest. It was at that moment that my call to be at the altar, serving God and his people, began.

Years later, I arrived in this country and joined the parish of Holy Name in Camden. It was at my parish where my spiritual director invited me to join the diaconate program. After some time of discernment, listening to the voice of God through great friends and encouraging mentors, I entered formation in 2004.

Initially, I honestly never asked God if this was what he wanted from me; I just knew it was a good thing, therefore, it came from God. It was through the process of formation and discernment when things became clearer, and I knew this was the life God was calling me to live.

They were six very intense years, oftentimes filled with the desire not to continue, but ultimately my longing to serve and do God's will drove me on. After many personal trials, I was finally ordained a deacon by Bishop Joseph Galante on Sept. 25, 2010.

I feel great joy in my vocation. Although there continue to be challenges, I trust that God is the owner of the vineyard; I am only a worker trying to serve. With the help, prayers and support of my beloved wife, Maritza, without whom I could not do all I do, I have continued onward by the grace of God. My ardent desire to help others encounter Christ, His Peace, His Love, His Mercy, is the fire that keeps my heart burning for the Lord.

I know that I came to this world to serve others, and every day I ask the Lord for the grace to serve as He does. While listening to others' stories often plagued by hurt and frustration, helping families practically broken by pain to reconcile with one another, I say, "My God how great you are."

This year, I celebrate 13 glorious years as a deacon. I discover more and more that "God is God." My family has always been with me; without their support, it would be impossible to fulfill my vocation to the diaconate. As men discern their call to this beautiful vocation, I would say first and foremost to build a life of deep personal prayer with Our Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, seek a trusted spiritual director to help you discern the call. Thirdly, listen to the voice of God's people. Many times, others see in us

what we cannot see in ourselves. Lastly, take a risk, and in faith, give an unconditional "yes" to God as Our Lady did.

*Deacon José René Zayas serves in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Camden.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. This year's celebration is April 30. Also known as Good Shepherd Sunday, the purpose of this celebration is to publicly fulfill the Lord's instruction to, "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest." (Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2). While appreciating all vocations, the Church concentrates its attention this day on vocations to the ordained ministries (priesthood and diaconate), consecrated life in all its forms (male and female religious life, societies of apostolic life, consecrated virginity), secular institutes in their diversity of services and membership, and to the missionary life.

*For more information, visit [usccb.org](http://usccb.org).*

# 'Be encouraging and ready to listen,' parents say

By Peter G. Sánchez  
Staff Writer

Even from a young age, Kevin Mohan was leading others to Christ.

As a kindergartener at Blackwood's Saint Jude elementary school, he came home to his parents, Maryann and Kevin, disappointed in the day's events.

"He told me, 'The teacher wanted to know who goes to Church, and I couldn't raise my hand,'" Maryann recalls. "After that, we started going

back to Sunday Mass."

Now pastor of the Parish of Saint Monica in Atlantic City, Father Mohan's influence has spread, and his mother couldn't be happier.

"I realized that everything I expect a priest to do for my family – say Mass, hear confessions, give counsel, anoint the sick, officiate at weddings and funerals – he would be doing for countless people," she says. "To realize that his hands would hold up the consecrated host and give blessings to so many ... I'm in awe that he can do

these things."

The faith journeys of priests and religious – from early childhood to discernment, ordination to ministry – are not completely theirs alone, but shared with those who loved them long before they made their first vows, and continue to do so today.

## 'The Faith Around'

Diane and Joe Camaioni of Williamstown made sure their children "grew up with the faith around them."

Communicants at both Our Lady of

Peace Parish, Williamstown, and Mater Ecclesiae Mission, Berlin, their witness had an impact on their youngest daughter, Nina, who would "make a career of working for the Church," Joe said. Her service included time as a Catholic Campus Minister for the Diocese of Camden at Rowan University, and also in the Diocese of Harrisburg, Pa.

When Nina, in 2019, told her parents of her intention to enter the convent of the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia in Nashville, Diane admits, "It was a bit of a surprise, but I did see it coming. She had been discerning for a time."

Haddonfield's Ann and Kevin Gallagher had an inkling of their son's Peter's path while he was a middle-schooler at Christ the King Regional School.

"He was an altar server, he was Jesus in the school's Living Stations, and when he found out his father was going to Eucharistic Adoration from 2 to 3 in the mornings, he wanted to go with him," Ann recalls.

As well, Kevin says, the priesthood track was "in the family business," as Peter's great-uncle, Msgr. Paul Gallagher, served in the Diocese of Camden for more than 40 years beginning in the 1950s.

## 'Never second-guessed'

The Camaionis recently returned from a three-day visit in Nashville with Nina, now Sister Lily Anne, and are already looking forward to later this year when they go back.

"We get six days a year with her, so we like to split it up," Diane says.

She admits these limited visits, along with the only other communication allowed for non-emergencies being snail mail, "are a big adjustment. When I want to say something, I can't just call her," Diane says of Sister Lily Anne, whose new name represents purity and new life.

Sister Lily Anne professed first vows last summer, and in the next few years, as she completes her master's degree in secondary education from Aquinas College, she will be assigned to one of the 53 schools in the United States and abroad to continue the community's teaching tradition. In about four years, final vows will take place.

Despite this uncertainty for Diane and Joe, "When we walk into the motherhouse, she looks so happy and content; it's where she should be. The community, with its ever-present joy, has brought out the best in her," Diane says.

Coming back to New Jersey after their visit was difficult, she says, but "I feel good, too, because I know she's in the best place for her."

(continued on page S10)



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# Knights, students team up to bolster seminarians

By Christina Leslie  
Correspondent

Three groups of Catholics, all on different steps of their faith journeys, are once again uniting to strengthen their bonds with God and faithful with the aid of a simple, heartfelt letter via the Knights of Columbus Seminarian Letter Project.

The project, instituted in 2000 by the New Jersey State Council of the Knights, guides students in Catholic schools and parish religious education programs in sending letters of encouragement to men studying for the priesthood. Created by John Tirado, a Knight of the Saint Jude Council #12092, Bellmawr, the project nurtures vocations in the young while providing men journeying to the priesthood prayerful support from their future flock.

## 'Essential and Grateful'

"This is my pet project," admitted Thomas Kohler, Grand Knight of the Villa Marie Council #6342, Absecon, about the letter project. "We had another banner year."

Kohler enlists the aid of Joan Dollinger, principal of Assumption Regional School, Galloway, to generate letters of support, encouragement, curiosity and even humor from the students. This year, 40 letters were divided amongst the eight seminarians of the Camden Diocese.

One such missive, addressed to Nicholas Esposito, was written by a student who wanted to know if the decision to study for the priesthood was "hard to tell your elders" and "challenging to do all the regulations and rules." Nonetheless, the young scribe assured him the priesthood "is essential to the Catholic Church. ... Everyone is proud of you and is grateful."

"The seminarians really enjoy [the project]," Kohler said, "and we did get some responses back."

Kohler noted the letter project's goal to keep vocations at the forefront perfectly dovetails both with the messages broadcasted from the Assumption Regional School public address system and those heard from the pulpit on Sundays.

"Kids relate [to vocations] when they see a priest in church or hear the prayers," the Knight said. "They get the idea it is important. There is a need for priests; their letter could make a difference."

## 'Courage, Strength and Dedication'

The K of C Saint Vincent de Paul Council #3451, based in Mays Landing, has been participating in the



Photos by Rich Hundley III

Father Adam Cichoski, director of vocations for the Diocese of Camden, visits Saint John Paul II Regional School in Stratford in mid-March to pick up letters the students wrote to the Diocese's seminarians. During his visit to teacher Brenda King's third-grade class, Father Cichoski also spoke to the students about faith, prayed with them and gave them goodie bags that contained, pencils, scapulars, saint information and more.

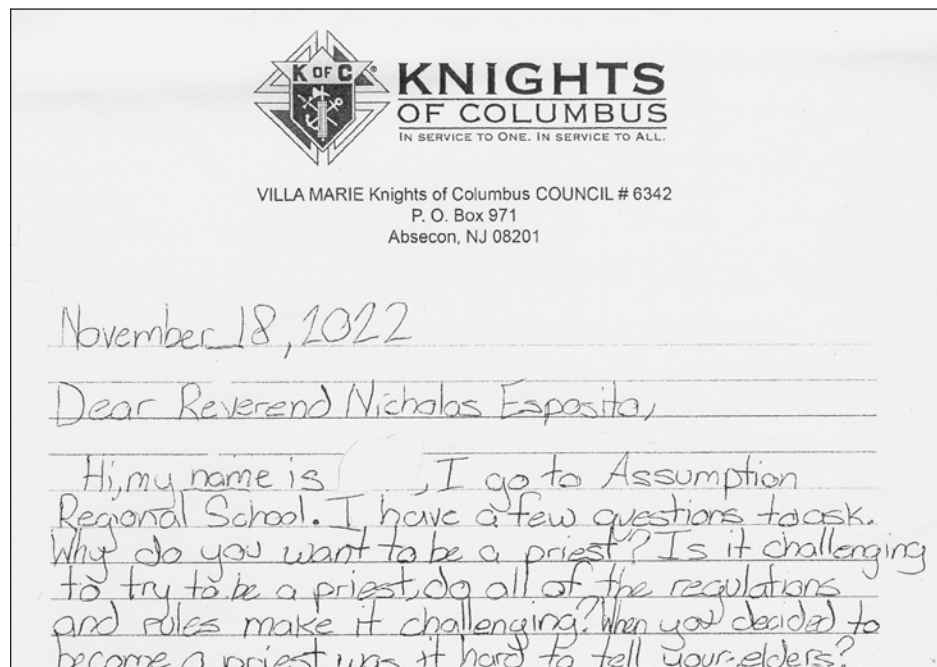


Father Cichoski receives letters from third-grader Zoey Lauri.

project for the past couple years, Financial Secretary Matthew Gagnon said. Earlier this year, Principal Linda Pirolli enlisted the talents of Saint Vincent de Paul Regional School eighth-grade students to compose 16 letters, two each intended for the seminarians.

One eighth-grade author sent "humble gratitude and encouragement" to seminarian Vincent Asselta, writing, "Not many Catholics have the courage, strength and dedication to take on the path of priesthood. However, you have chosen this sacred and blessed career, and we are forever thankful for that sacrifice."

Gagnon asserted that the letter-writing campaign has value for the seminarians, students and Knights alike, saying, "It gives the seminarians encouragement and lets them know we are thinking about them and praying for them." The Knight enclosed a letter



Courtesy photo

A student from Assumption Regional School, Galloway, asks questions of seminarian Nicholas Esposito in his letter.

of spiritual support to each seminarian on behalf of his council.

## Support From Afar

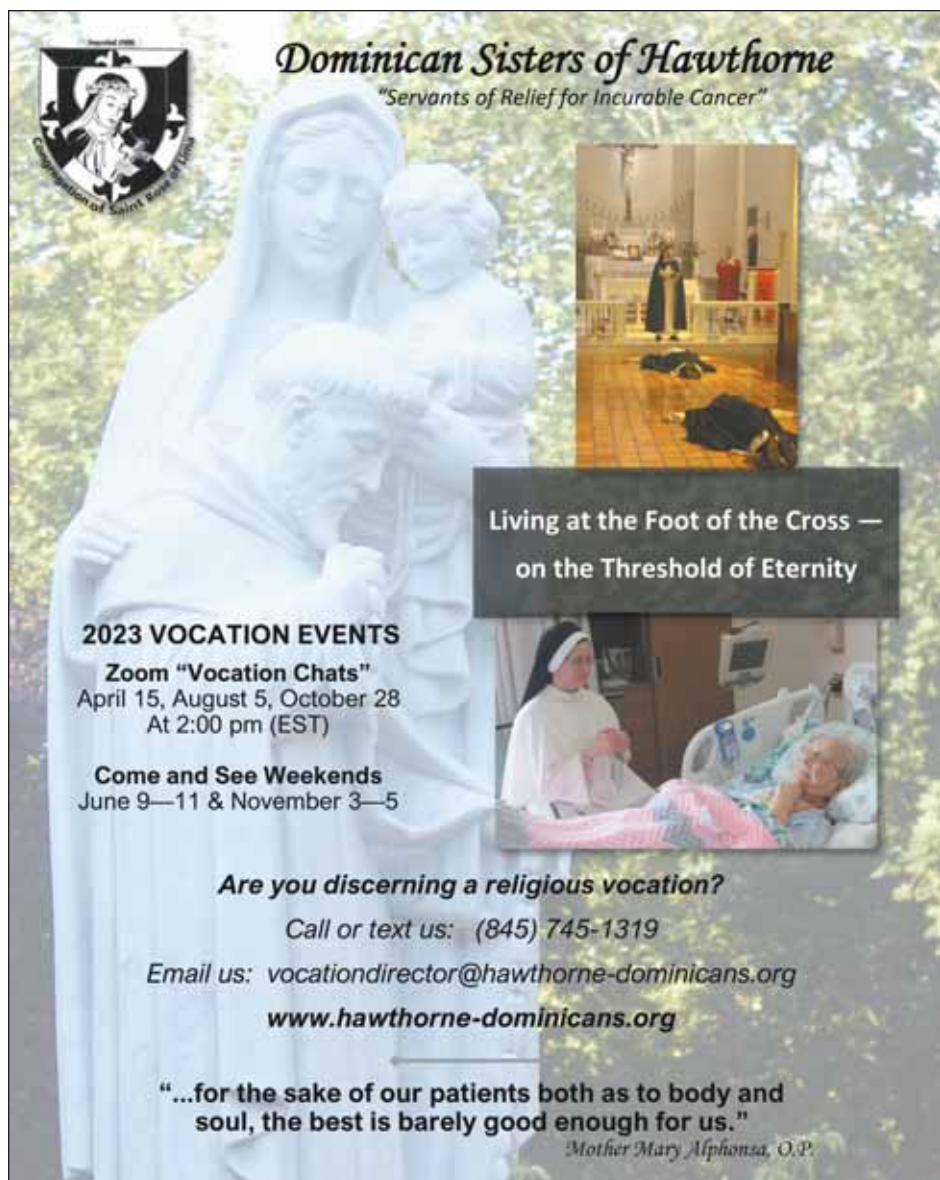
The Knights of the North Cape May-based Saint John Neumann Council #3546 have been partnering with the parish's religious education students in passing along prayerful support and well-wishes across the country for the past decade, trustee James Fath said. This year, in addition to the 71 letters to Camden Diocese seminarians from students in grades two through eight, other groups of religious were recipients of the students' letters.

"[Immaculate Heart of Mary] Sister Kathleen Nuckols, Saint John Neumann Parish director of religious

education, came up with the idea to add sisters-in-training to the campaign," Fath said. "The children sent a total of 32 letters to seven [postulants] in training around the country."

The final group of religious are close to Fath's heart though they minister more than 4,300 miles from his shore community – the clergy of Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska. Their priest shortage is so severe, reports their diocesan website, that only five of their 46 parishes have full-time pastors.

"[My council] also sent a few letters to their director of vocations: my nephew, Father Robert Fath," the Knight recounted. "That diocese covers an area about the size of Texas with 20 priests."



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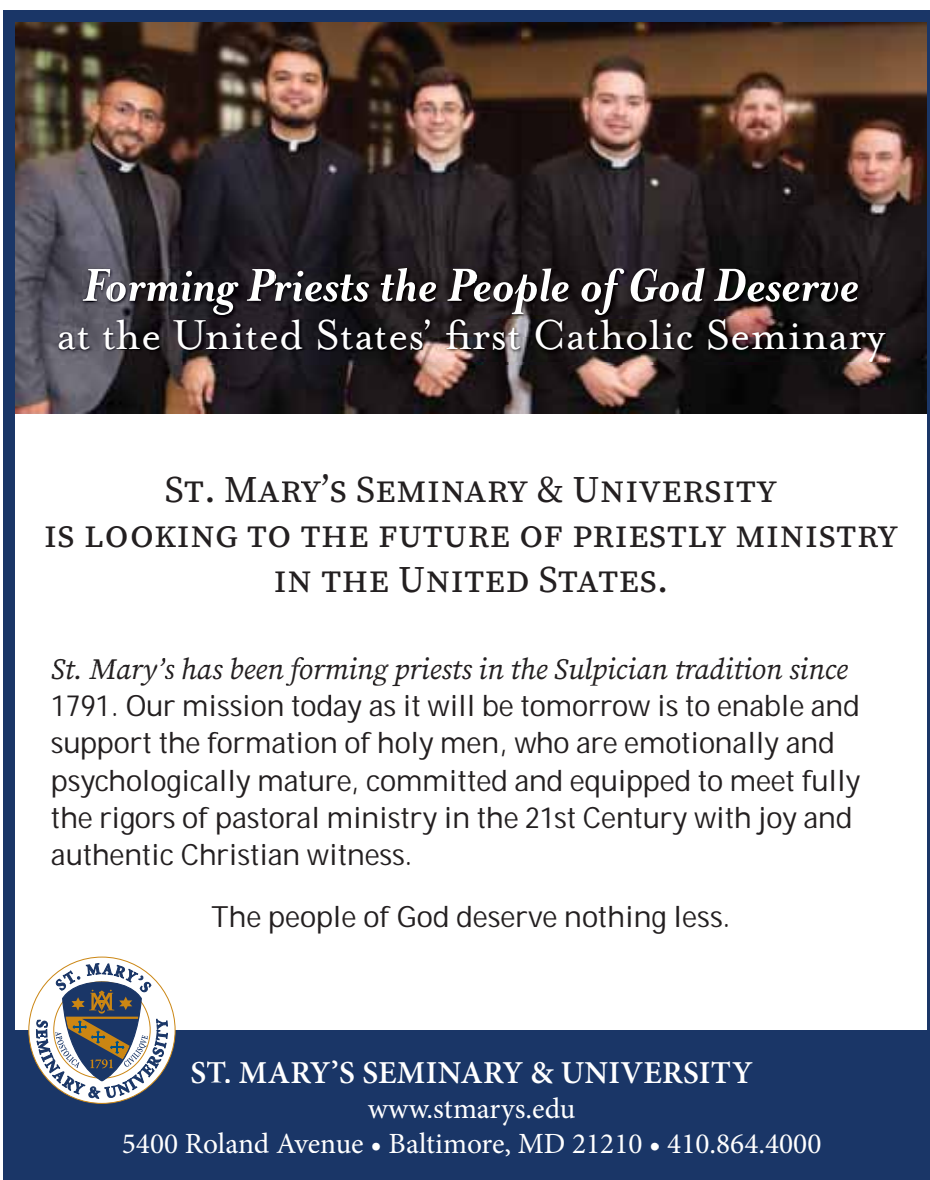
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# Fruits of formation lend clarity to worry

By Nicholas Esposito

In the fall, on the first weekend upon returning to the college seminary, the seminarians go on retreat to spend some time together as a community and to prayerfully prepare for the upcoming year in formation. Each retreat has a theme, and this year's was "Rebuild My Church." This retreat challenged us to look within ourselves and determine where we can grow. As I was reflecting on my life to this point, I began to realize the growth that one year in the seminary can produce.

Last summer, I experienced many graces, and many of these experiences would not have been possible if I did not place my trust in the Lord and allow Him to work through me. While I was on that fall retreat, one event in particular stood out as I was spending time in prayer. In the seminary, we are all given assignments outside of the seminary community – whether it be in a parish, a soup kitchen, other work with youth, the poor, etc. My assignment last spring was teaching a group of seventh-graders religion on Monday nights at a nearby parish. When I learned I would be given this assignment, I was a little hesitant, as I had never worked with the youth much in the past.

On the retreat, the monsignor who led the retreat made a very wise observation: 90% of the things we worry about do not happen, and the



Photo by Rich Hundley III

Seminarian Nicholas Esposito shares his vocation story earlier this year with students at Camden Catholic High School, Cherry Hill.

other 10% that does happen, we find the strength to do it. That was certainly the case with my spring

assignment! Once I started, I really began to enjoy teaching the seventh-graders. I would look forward to fin-

ishing classes at the seminary on Monday afternoons and going directly to the parish to teach the young students.

Taking that experience from my seminary assignment, I then was able to have the confidence to speak to students at my home parish over the summer. During those weeks, I had the privilege to speak to each class in my parish's summer religious education program. Every grade from first up to eighth provided me with a window into the lives of children and young adults today. Though it was not that long ago that I was in their shoes, it is easy to forget the struggles, challenges and temptations that young people face in today's world.

One main aspect of priestly ministry is understanding the struggles people in all stages of life are facing. In order to be an effective minister to God's people, one should be able to work with the different groups of people and assist them no matter their stage in life or the situation they are faced with. The life of a priest is not an easy one by any means, but we do the best we can despite any limitations. We make the effort to carry out God's will as best we can, but in the end, the results of our work really belong to God.

*Nicholas Esposito is second college at the College Seminary of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Andrew's Hall, Seton Hall University, South Orange.*

# Life's path can be found in Adoration

By Nickolas Naticchione

In May 2022, I graduated from Seton Hall University, South Orange. This completed my time at the College Seminary of the Immaculate Conception, Saint Andrew's Hall, and began a transition into the next stage of my formation at Saint Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y.

Making this transition into the major seminary, now called the "configuration" stage of formation, was not all that easy, as there are many differences from living at Saint Andrew's to living at Saint Joseph's. Among these differences were new people, a new and very different building, a new schedule and a new level of academics. What was not new or different, however, was Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

At Saint Joseph's, we have an opportunity to go to Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the evening on

most days during the week. These opportunities for me to stop into the chapel at the end of my day were my anchor during the transition between seminaries. No matter how many changes I needed to adapt to as I continued to settle into Saint Joseph's, I was always able to turn to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and be with the one constant that I have had since before I even entered the seminary.

When I began to truly discern entering the seminary during high school, it was Adoration that really started the process. It was in Adoration that I was able to develop a relationship with Jesus and begin discovering how He is calling me to serve Him. Now, in my fifth year of formation, being with Christ in Adoration is still that constant where I know I can go to be at peace, certain that He is in control.

During Adoration in my first weeks at Saint Joseph's, I frequently meditated on how truly grateful I am for my



NICKOLAS NATICCHIONE

time at Seton Hall, for all the priests, professors and brother seminarians who helped me there, and how that time at Saint Andrew's was all part of God's plan for me to continue to discern His will.

For anyone who wants to discern how and where God is calling you to

serve Him, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is the place to be. In Adoration, as we gaze on Christ truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament, we are able to enter into a foretaste of our end of the Beatific Vision, seeing God in all His glory. Discerning and living out our individual vocations are how God guides us to our end of heaven. There is no better place to discover that path than in Adoration.

Go to Adoration and be with Jesus, who is always there and is never changing in His readiness to guide us to Him. Let Him be your anchor through the challenges of change and discernment that come with living out His will, because no matter what changes in your life, He will always be there.

*Nickolas Naticchione is first theology, Saint Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, N.Y.*



Photo by Mike Walsh

Bishop Dennis Sullivan and seminarian Vincent Asselta greet parishioners at the Mass of the Lord's Supper outside Saint John of God Church, Saint John Neumann Parish, North Cape May.

## Pray without ceasing to reach full potential

By Vincent Asselta

A common morning for me looks roughly like this: I wake up and pray in the chapel for about 15 minutes. Then, we will pray Morning Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours as a community. After meditating for about 15 minutes, we have Mass.

While this starts the morning off to a great start, this prayer needs to be continued throughout the entire day. I cannot make this prayer and Mass in the morning my only time with God because then I wouldn't be fully living for God. I need to continue my prayer and my time with God, or else I will not have a strong foundation for the day.

Just as I am called to carry out prayer throughout the entire day, not just in the morning, so is everyone else. If you just pray in the morning and live your life like God isn't a part of it for the rest of the day, are you living for God? If you do not think of God, pray to Him, and live your life for Him outside of your main prayer time and morning Mass,

you are not serving God to your full potential.

We should all, as Saint Paul says, pray without ceasing. Saint Francis de Sales presents a three-step process for working-class people who want to be with God always. This process is Ask, Offer and Accept.

We should start by asking God to be present and attentive to us. When we ask God to be attentive to us, we are being attentive to Him. Then, we should offer whatever we are doing at the moment to God. If you are going for a walk, offer any pain to God, as well as any blessings you might receive, like good weather or good sights. Finally, we should accept whatever comes out of this time with God.

By constantly doing these three things, we can effectively spend more time with God and pray without ceasing as Saint Paul tells us to do.

*Vincent Asselta is first college, the College Seminary of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Andrew's Hall, Seton Hall University, South Orange.*

## Words of advice: Be a good father

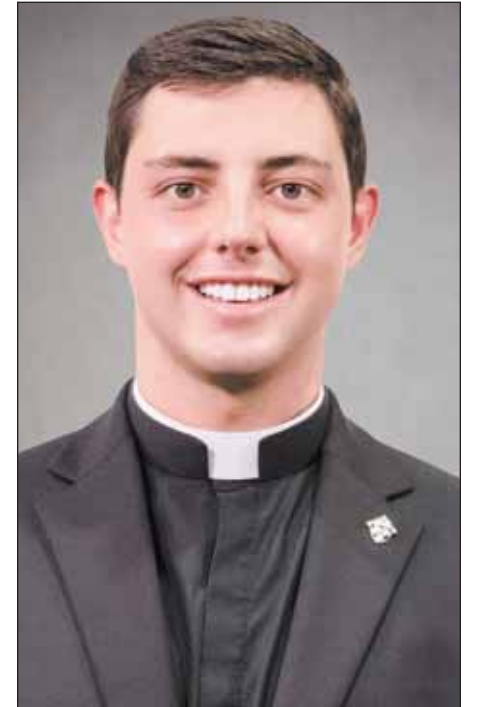
By Thomas Piro

One of the most satisfying duties of a seminarian is being in your home parish during academic breaks. I always enjoy going back home and visiting the parish office on weekdays or visiting my alma mater, Wildwood Catholic Academy. It is a good reminder of where you came from and reminds me why I am spending eight years of my life away from the Diocese.

Every time I go back home, I always hear how much the parishioners appreciate what I am doing, and they always wish me luck. One of my high school teachers, Mrs. Gras, always gave me one of the most important words of advice. Every time I visited the school, and we were wrapping up our conversation, she always looked me in the eyes and said, "Tom, just remember, be a good father."

These words have been cemented into my prayer life since I was a first-year college seminarian. "Be a good father." What does this mean?

Spiritual fatherhood is a common phrase we hear in the seminary. A good spiritual father is a priest who loves unconditionally, chastely and non-possessively. A priest who freely gives himself to the community entrusted to his care. A priest who feeds his flock spiritually through the sacraments and preaching, and shares the love of God with everyone he encounters.



THOMAS PIRO

Every time that phrase from Mrs. Gras pops into my prayer, I ask the Lord to give me the graces needed to be a good father. I ask that you keep all the men in seminary formation in your prayers and ask the Lord to provide more men to be potential good fathers as priests. Always know of our prayers for you, the people of the Diocese of Camden.

*Thomas Piro is second theology, Saint Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, N.Y.*

### Thinking about Religious Life? You ARE called to love and serve God and His People.



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# Parents of priests, religious share stories of accompaniment

(continued from page S4)

The Camaionis also feel the fruits of not only their daughter's vocation, but that of her entire religious community.

"To see these young women dedicate themselves to God, it makes us realize we should focus more on Him," Diane says. Adds Joe, "The amount of time [Sister Lily Anne] prays now, we hope to get the most from."

From seminary studies at Seton Hall University in South Orange and Rome's North American College, to a 2020 ordination and assignment as parochial vicar at Holy Angels Parish in Woodbury, now-Father Peter Gallagher has "never second-guessed" his decision, Kevin Gallagher says.

One of the only changes in his son, he notes, "is that he's calmer than he used to be. He's still energetic, enthusiastic and sincerely happy."

Profound moments during Father Gallagher's priesthood for the family, Kevin Gallagher says, were some of his first. "Hours after his ordination [to the priesthood], he administered the Anointing of the Sick to his grandmother, and 10 days later, celebrated her funeral Mass."

For Maryann Mohan, seeing her son as he underwent seminary studies at Saint Charles Borromeo in Wynnewood, Pa.; Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio; and Saint Mary's, Baltimore, "my husband and I were extremely proud and happy that he was taking the next step in discerning his vocation. We just wanted him to be content and happy in whatever choices he made."

Noting a standout from Father Mohan's 2013 priestly ordination, she mentions the tradition when, after anointing the new ordinand's hands with Sacred Chrism, the ordaining Bishop wipes his hands with a white linen towel called a maniturgium.

"This [maniturgium], as well as the stole worn when he heard his first confession, were given to me and my husband, to be buried with us," Maryann says. Therefore, when the parents reach the gates of heaven, when the Lord asks them what they have given them, they can hold out the maniturgium and stole, signs that they gave their son to Him and His work.

"This is a great blessing," Maryann says.

Another blessing: witnessing her son's ministry these past 10 years throughout the Diocese. "Grateful parishioners still take the time to talk with me about how much he meant to their parish and their own lives. I know with the help of the Lord, he will continue to do good work, and I pray for him to have the strength of body, mind and spirit to know and do God's will."



Courtesy photos

Dennis and Maryann Mohan, along with their son Colin, celebrate Father Kevin Mohan's priestly ordination in 2013.

## 'What a Wonderful Gift'

From prayer to encouragement, tithes to outreach, these parents continue to support not only their child's vocation but those of others, with advice on how to build up and cultivate a culture of discernment.

When a son or daughter speaks to a parent about a life to the priesthood or religious, "Be supportive, pray and realize what a wonderful gift God has given you, a child who wants to serve Him," Diane Camaioni says.

Kevin and Ann Gallagher will be found April 30 at iRace4Vocations, helping to register walkers and runners like their son. As well, the two contribute to the Diocese's seminary fund, because "their education is expensive, and they need our support," Kevin says.

He also advises parents of discerning children to reach out to the diocesan vocations directors: "Speak with them, and even see if there are parents of priests willing to speak with you."

"It's important to show support, which brings confidence [to your child's vocation]," he adds.

In addition, Maryann Mohan adds, "Let your child continue to just be themselves."

"Be encouraging and ready to listen. Pray for your child," she says. "Be proud of all of your children and encourage each one to pursue the vocation where they can serve the Lord and His people best. When you use the gifts from the Holy Spirit, you are fulfilled."



Diane and Joe Camaioni take a photo with their daughter, Sister Lily Anne, a Dominican Sister of Cecilia, at the order's Nashville motherhouse.



The Gallagher family, parents Kevin and Ann, and daughter Aileen, stand with Father Peter Gallagher, parochial vicar of Holy Angels Parish, Woodbury.

# Experimentar a Dios entre la gente

Por Ricardo Lozano Cruz

El año pasado, durante los meses de junio y julio, tuve la bendición de estar en la Parroquia de la Santa Cruz, en Bridgeton. Allí, más que simplemente servir en mi tarea pastoral como seminarista, tuve una poderosa experiencia de Dios a través de la fe vibrante y desbordante de la comunidad. Titularía este capítulo de mi vida como mi “Experiencia de Dios entre la gente”.

En la Santa Cruz, estuve inmerso en diferentes ministerios, como el ministerio de los enfermos y los confinados en casa, la formación catequética, la distribución de alimentos, la preparación sacramental y los pequeños grupos para compartir la fe. Lo más destacado de esta experiencia fue trabajar con las comunidades de habla inglesa e hispana, lo que me permitió comprender mejor la belleza, la diversidad y la riqueza de nuestra fe católica.

En junio, llegué a la Parroquia de la Santa Cruz con la expectativa de servir y cumplir con todos mis deberes pastorales de la mejor manera posible. Llegué con la idea de ofrecerme y entregarme a los demás atendiendo las necesidades de las personas. Sin embargo, más que una experiencia de



RICARDO LOZANO CRUZ

entrega, mi estancia en la Parroquia de la Santa Cruz fue una experiencia de RECIBIR. Fui testigo del poder transformador que fluye al estar con el pueblo de Dios. Tal transformación podría describirse como algo que fue tocando mi corazón gradual y poderosamente de maneras inimaginables. Experimenté el tierno amor de Dios a través de su rebaño. Sentí que Dios estaba destapando mi corazón para hablar en el silencio más profundo de mi alma.

Recordé el día en que una señora no católica me dijo con evidente alegría en los ojos: “Gracias por hacerte sacerdote”. Fue uno de esos momen-

tos en los que mi espíritu se vio inesperadamente sacudido. A partir de ese momento, sentí que la voz de Dios me hablaba de manera personal, especialmente a través de las necesidades espirituales y físicas de la comunidad. Diría incluso que haber interactuado de cerca con el sufrimiento de la gente acercó mi corazón a Jesús. Además, describiría una experiencia tan inspiradora recordando las palabras de la Madre Teresa: “El dolor y el sufrimiento han llegado a tu vida, pero recuerda que el dolor, la pena y el sufrimiento no son más que el beso de Jesús: una señal de que te has acercado tanto a Él que puede besarte”.

Después de reflexionar en oración, me di cuenta de que la gente me estaba enseñando algo sobre mí mismo, pues Dios mismo estaba afirmando mi llamado al sacerdocio a través de la fe de la gente. Como resultado, durante los últimos días de mi asignación, sentí como si caminara en mi viaje espiritual por los verdes pastos del agradecimiento por mi vocación, pero también sentí como si caminara por el sombrío, aunque providencial, sentimiento de indignidad. A través de esta hermosa y fiel comunidad, Dios me dijo: “Yo estoy contigo. No hay nada que temer”. A través de la

fe vibrante de la gente, tuve la seguridad de que Dios sabía perfectamente, incluso antes de que yo naciera, mi vocación y mi futuro por venir. Si en algún momento alguien me pide que resuma mi experiencia en la parroquia de la Santa Cruz en tres palabras, diría: agradecimiento, indignidad y confianza.

El último día de mi encargo pastoral, con el corazón alegre, di gracias a Dios por el regalo de esta experiencia. Le di gracias por Su gente, y le pedí que modelara mi corazón como fiel instrumento de Su ardiente amor. También me siento honrado y verdaderamente feliz de servir, si Dios quiere, al pueblo de la Diócesis de Camden en el futuro. Una vez más, les pido sus oraciones, en las que tanto confío. También los animo a todos a orar por los ministros de nuestra Diócesis mientras continúan siendo valientes heraldos del Evangelio y fieles pastores del rebaño de Dios.

*Ricardo Lozano Cruz está en tercer año de teología en el Seminario de la Inmaculada Concepción en la Universidad Seton Hall, South Orange. Será ordenado diácono transitorio, sirviendo en la Diócesis, el 20 de mayo en la Iglesia de San Damián, Ocean City.*

## Apoyo familiar una bendición en la vocación diaconal

Por Deacon José René Zayas

Al reflexionar sobre mi vocación al diaconado, recuerdo un día, mientras aún estaba en formación, una llamada telefónica que recibí de mi madre. Conversamos sobre su salud, las actividades y logros de mis hijas en la escuela, y luego ella dijo: “Mi hijo, ¿recuerdas cuando estábamos en misa un día y me dijiste, ‘Mamita, quiero ser como el Sacerdote que está celebrando misa.’”

Recordamos alegremente ese momento. Unos días después de esta conversación, mi madre murió, sentada en la sala en silencio y pacíficamente moviendo sus cuentas de rosario en la mano mientras la familia la rodeaba en oración. Yo tenía siete años en ese momento, pero recuerdo claramente este deseo de ser sacerdote. Fue en ese momento que comenzó mi llamado a estar en el altar, sirviendo a Dios y a su pueblo. Años más tarde, llegué a este país y comencé a asistir a la parroquia de Holy Name en Camden. Fue en mi parroquia donde mi director espiritual me invitó al programa de diaconado. Después de un tiempo de discernimiento escuchando la voz de Dios por medio de grandes amigos y mentores que me animaban, entré en formación en el 2004.

Inicialmente, honestamente, nunca le pregunté a Dios si esto era lo que quería de mí, solo sabía que era algo bueno, por lo tanto, venía de Dios. Fue a través del proceso de formación y discernimiento cuando las cosas se hicieron más claras, y supe que



Foto por Rich Hundley III

El diácono José René Zayas se dirige a los fieles en la iglesia Saint Joseph, Camden.

esta era la vida que Dios me estaba llamando a vivir. Fueron seis años muy intensos, a menudo llenos del deseo de no continuar, pero, en fin, mi anhelo de servir y hacer la voluntad de Dios me impulsó. Después de muchas pruebas personales, finalmente fui ordenado por el Obispo Joseph Galante el 25 de septiembre de 2010.

Siento una gran alegría en mi vocación. Aunque sigue habiendo desafíos, confío en que Dios es el dueño de la viña, solo soy un obrero tratando de

servir a Su Maestro. Con la ayuda, las oraciones y el apoyo de mi amada esposa, Maritza, sin quien no podría hacer todo lo que hago, he continuado adelante por la gracia de Dios. Mi ardiente deseo de ayudar a otros a encontrar a Cristo, Su Paz, Su Amor, Su Misericordia, es el fuego que mantiene mi corazón ardiendo por el Señor. Sé que vine a este mundo para servir a los demás y todos los días le pido al Señor la gracia de servir como Él lo hace. Escuchando sus historias, a menudo plagadas de dolor y frustración, ayudando a familias prácticamente rotas por el dolor y ayudándolas a reconciliarse entre sí, cuando presencio estos milagros, digo “Dios mío, qué grande eres.”

Este año celebro 13 años gloriosos como diácono. Descubro cada vez más que “Dios es Dios.” Mi familia siempre ha estado conmigo, sin su apoyo sería imposible cumplir mi vocación al diaconado. A medida que los hombres discernen su llamado a esta hermosa vocación, yo diría que primero y ante todo construyan una vida de profunda oración personal con Nuestro Señor Jesucristo. En segundo lugar, busca un Director Espiritual de confianza que te ayude a discernir el llamado. En tercer lugar, escucha la voz del pueblo de Dios. Muchas veces, otros ven en nosotros lo que nosotros no podemos ver en nosotros mismos. Por último, arriégate y en fe dile un “sí” incondicional a Dios como lo hizo La Virgen María.

*El diácono José René Zayas, sirve en la Catedral de la Inmaculada Concepción en Camden.*

# FOLLOW OUR JOURNEY



Ricardo Lozano Cruz  
3<sup>rd</sup> Theology



Timothy Mulranen  
2<sup>nd</sup> Theology



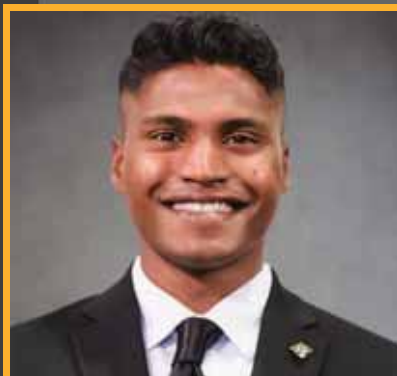
Thomas Piro  
2<sup>nd</sup> Theology



Nickolas Naticchione  
1<sup>st</sup> Theology



Michael Leason  
3<sup>rd</sup> College



Theodore Deluhery  
3<sup>rd</sup> College



Nicholas Esposito  
2<sup>nd</sup> College



Vincent Asselta  
1<sup>st</sup> College

# PRAY FOR VOCATIONS

## PRAYER FOR PRIESTLY VOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, we ask you to bless the Diocese of Camden  
with an increase in vocations to the priesthood.

We pray that young men from our parishes and families will  
hear your call and be both generous and courageous in their response.

May more young men serve you as priests who teach the faith,  
preach the Gospel, celebrate the sacraments and  
make you present among us through their ministry.

Encourage them to embrace the joy-filled and fulfilling life of a diocesan priest.

May parents support priestly vocations in their families by prayer and good example.

We entrust these prayers through Mary Immaculate, our patroness, hopeful that you will bless our  
diocese with more priests in the near future, who live and reign forever and ever.

AMEN

Office of Vocations  
[www.camdenpriest.org](http://www.camdenpriest.org)

