



Seminarian Directory

Diocese of Green Bay
2015-2016



Year of Mercy



Raising up Ministers of Divine Mercy *Seminarians and the Jubilee Year of Mercy*

St. John Vianney, one of the saintliest priests to ever walk this planet, defined the priesthood very simply when he wrote, “The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus.”

The heart is where we feel love and affection as well as pain and sorrow. There are various devotional images of the heart of Jesus featuring flames of fire, crowned with thorns, pierced, or emanating rays of red and blue. There is a lot going on inside of the heart of God. When Jesus gave us his body and blood, he gave us his heart and all of the other good things that are stored there.

To be a priest is to go directly to the heart of God and bring all of those healing gifts to those who want them and even those who do not. In my humble estimation, that is what St. John Vianney meant. Our priests love the heart of Jesus, and by doing what he told them to do, they bring forth grace from eternity into time and space. This happens through the priest’s life of prayer, his preaching, his mere

presence, and the offering of the sacraments.

The greatest gift in the universe is mercy. Mercy is unearned forgiveness, the warmth of love, and the renewal of an unbreakable covenant. Who does not need this profound love? Each of our seminarians is a student at the school of mercy as they prepare for the priesthood. They are growing in love of the heart of Jesus Christ. A seminarian attempts to spend an hour each day in silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. They speak to the Father in order to be close to Jesus’ heart. As a fruit of their prayer, I asked each seminarian to share with you a short definition of mercy as we enter into this Jubilee Year of Mercy. I hope you enjoy their answers, as well as the other information contained in their biographies. May you find hope and healing in their responses.

The intention of this booklet is to be a prayer tool. You can both laugh at their light hearted answers and get to know them through their stories. Ultimately I hope you use the “Morning Offering for Vocations” every day, and get to know the saints that are mentioned by the seminarians. As you read this booklet and pray, may you be touched by mercy.

Without priests, mercy becomes just a concept or an idea. With good priests in our parishes, especially priests who love the heart of Jesus, mercy becomes present before our very eyes in the Sacramental moments. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy are the signs that someone is living a life of discipleship. We have also listed them in this booklet. Those are the duties of every person in every parish no matter their vocation and state of life. The power to boldly perform those works of mercy come from Jesus who said, “Without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). We need his heart, and we need priests who love his heart, and reach into his heart to bring forth the mercy that will lead all souls to heaven. Thank you for supporting our future ministers of divine mercy.

Rev. Daniel Schuster
Vocation Director

Daily Prayer Calendar

Please Pray for Our Seminarians

1st Rev. Mr. Michael Thiel	2nd Rev. Mr. Scott Valentyn	3rd Adam Bradley	4th Mark Mleziva	5th Matthew Rappl	6th Jon Thorsen	7th Zach Weber
8th José López	9th Gregory Parent	10th Kyle Sladek	11th Matthew Faucett	12th Michael Picard	13th Connor Schlaack	14th Benjamin Johnson
15th Cassian Utrie	16th Kevin Ripley	17th Jon Hynek II	18th Samuel Schultz	19th Stephen Zepp	20th Patrick Costello	21st Ziggy Gross
22nd Michael Koepfel	23rd Eric Rudd	24th Branden Timm	25th Aaron Hietpas	26th Nathan Runde	27th The Most Rev. David L. Ricken, DD, JCL, Bishop of Green Bay	28th Rev. Daniel Schuster, Vocation Director
29th Rev. Quinn Mann, Associate Director & CYE	30th For Parishes in Need of a Pastor	31st For Vocations to Religious Orders	<i>“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” - Mt 5:7</i>			

Morning Offering

for Vocations

O Jesus, in union with Your Most Precious Blood poured out on the cross and offered in every Mass, I offer You today my prayers, works, joys, sorrows and sufferings for the praise of Your Holy Name and all the desires of Your Sacred Heart, for the conversion of sinners, the union of all Christians and our final union with You in heaven.

I especially ask by the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary that You grant that the Diocese of Green Bay have more priests ordained each year; and so I lift up to You this special intention:

~ Mention the Intention of the Day ~

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the hungry
Give drink to the thirsty
Clothe the naked
Shelter the homeless
Visit the sick
Visit the imprisoned
Bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

Counsel the doubtful
Instruct the ignorant
Admonish sinners
Comfort the afflicted
Forgive offenses
Bear wrongs patiently
Pray for the living and the dead



Rev. Mr. Michael Thiel

Seminary

St. Francis de Sales Seminary
3257 South Lake Dr
St. Francis, WI 53235-3702
Theology IV

Birthday

December 9

Parish

St. Raphael the Archangel Parish
Oshkosh

Contact

mthiel@sfs.edu

Intercessor

Blessed Chiara "Luce" Badano

Motto: As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This past summer I traveled to a Steubenville conference in Missouri with about a hundred teenagers from our diocese. At the event we prayed, ate, and had fun with thousands of other teens from around the country. At the end of the conference eleven people who were not yet baptized said that they wanted to be baptized. Then hundreds of young men indicated they would consider being priests, and even more young women said that they were open to a religious vocation. It is incredible to watch young people respond positively and immediately to the Lord.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

When I recognize fears about the priesthood, I do not push them aside, but rather acknowledge that they are real and then bring them to prayer. I give them to Jesus. If I am truly called to be a priest, Jesus will calm any storm of fears. Up and down the Scriptures, He instructs us, "Be not afraid." He does not desire that anyone, including priests and future priests, remain in fear. To have fears arise about priesthood, or any vocation or major decision for that matter, is normal. However, if they remain unaddressed, fears can paralyze us. Jesus consistently beckons for us to trust Him, step out of the boat, and draw near to Him. So I give any fears to Jesus. Typically, after some time in prayer, I find my fears consoled. But whether I find consolation or not, after bringing any fears to prayer, I will also discuss them with a trusted priest, usually a spiritual director or mentor. It is helpful to have the chance to talk through any fears, and the experience of praying through those fears with someone who can relate to them. Usually he will be able to provide some practical advice or nugget of wisdom for appropriately handling what makes me afraid. Acknowledging the reality of fears about priesthood and then praying about them and discussing them with a priest has helped me trust the call to be a priest.

What is mercy?

Mercy is a heart that gives itself to those in misery. The greatest misery we could experience is being separated from God the Father, which happens when we sin. Mercy is our God who never tires of forgiving us. Without the misery caused by our sin, there is no need for mercy, because if we have not done anything wrong, there is no need for a merciful response. The limitless mercy of Jesus is experienced most profoundly in Confession, the sacrament of mercy, when we acknowledge that our sins have left us in misery, broken, wounded, and scarred. Then we turn to Jesus, who is in the business of forgiving sins, and open our hearts to His infinite grace.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

When I was in sixth grade band, I switched from playing trombone to the drums. Since I thought that the drums were the coolest thing ever, and felt that I would have been totally destroyed if I could not have played them, I convinced the director to let me switch.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

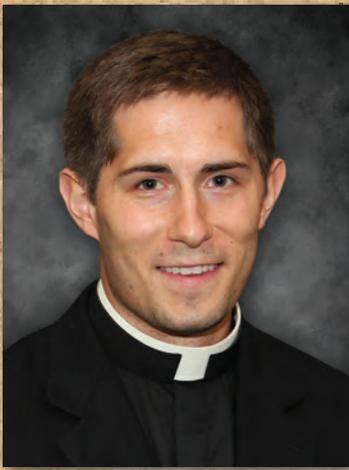
If you looked at a seminarian's calendar, you might think there is no time to read theology books! In all seriousness, while studying theology, I have also been assigned to work in a parish. It has provided a range of opportunities to learn, serve, and teach. This is the primary way I get to practice applying what I learn.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

On a beautiful morning, I like to be found outdoors. I will be hiking, boating, or having some other adventure. I prefer to be somewhere peaceful and quiet. It would be a bit early to have a campfire, but I might fire up the grill for lunch.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

Blessed Chiara "Luce" Badano. Chiara was an Italian teenager who died the year before I was born. She courageously chose to accept the pain caused by her cancer as a way to remain close to Jesus on the Cross. This heroic response to suffering by a teenager is inspiring.



Rev. Mr. Scott Valentyn

Seminary

Pontifical North American College
00120 Vatican City State
Europe
Theology IV

Birthday

June 20

Parish

St. John Nepomucene Parish
Little Chute

Contact

svalentyn@pnac.org

Intercessor

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Motto: God is Love.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This summer I had the incredible experience of meeting one of my favorite authors: Joseph Pearce. He strayed far from the faith as a young man. However, through his encounters with the love of God in others and personal research, he found his way to the Catholic Church. I had read one of his books about Shakespeare while I was in London and was impressed with his writing style and ability to defend the Catholic faith. It was great to meet a man whose writing I like so much, but I also really enjoyed seeing his obvious love for Christ.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

When dealing with fears about the priesthood, it is helpful to remember that there is nothing wrong with having some fears and reservations. The reality of the situation is that the priesthood can be difficult. It is such a countercultural vocation and it seems to fly in the face of everything the world tells us. Plus, it points towards fulfillment in the next life, not this one. In my opinion, it would be strange not to have any fears. Even being as close as I am to priestly ordination, I still have some. I think the most important thing to do in dealing with these fears is to never let them paralyze us. We have to acknowledge them without letting them overwhelm us. The way I handle the fears about the priesthood that I still sometimes have is to entrust them to the Father. When there are days that I find myself particularly afraid of this vocation, I make sure to spend enough time in prayer telling God the Father all about it. This vocation comes from Him. He intended this for me since before I was born and He knows that it is the vocation in which I will be most fulfilled. If I have fears about this calling, it is only in turning to Him that I can have the confidence I need to continue down this path.

What is mercy?

It is impossible to talk about mercy without talking about love. In my theological studies I have been taught that mercy is having compassion for others and, if possible, striving to alleviate others' misfortunes. It is a perfect example of putting another before oneself. This is what it means to love. God's mercy for us is so great because it is intimately tied in with his infinite love for us. In His mercy and love for us, He never ceases to forgive us. In the same way, we are called by God to be loving and merciful towards our neighbor in forgiving them.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

When I was in middle school I made a half-court shot at an alumni basketball tournament for my dad and won a year's supply of Big Macs.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

In seminary we definitely spend a lot of time studying theology because it is an important component in preparing to be a priest, but the intellectual component of our formation is only one of four. We also spend time doing volunteer work in parishes, shelters, and schools. Plus, most seminarians spend the summer back in the diocese doing other work.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

On a beautiful Saturday morning, I would probably sleep until I woke up without an alarm. Then I would go through my normal morning routine and sit down with a big mug of coffee. After that I would probably take advantage of the weather and get outside for a run.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

Please ask St. Thérèse of Lisieux to intercede for me in my vocation. I do not have a very strong devotion to her at this point, but since her feast day will also be the day of my ordination to the diaconate, I think I should begin to cultivate one.



Adam Bradley

Seminary

St. Francis de Sales Seminary
3257 South Lake Dr
St. Francis, WI 53235-3702
Theology III

Birthday

January 24

Parish

St. John the Evangelist Parish
Antigo

Contact

abradley@sfs.edu

Intercessor

Venerable Solanus Casey

Motto: His Love endures forever.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This summer I had the opportunity to be a chaplain in a hospital at Rockford, IL, as part of a unit of clinical pastoral education. It was a summer of growth, learning how to handle high stress ministerial situations ranging from helping people work through life's problems to walking with somebody who is in the final stages of life. All these different experiences helped me grow in the desire to be with people in their brokenness and help them to see the mercy and love that God the Father has for each individual and how that changes their lives.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

Fears about priesthood are difficult to struggle with and many times lead to men leaving seminary prematurely or failing to even try seminary. Having fears about priesthood or any vocation for that matter is a normal part of the discernment process. The best advice I can give about dealing with fears in general and especially about the priesthood is "be transparent." If one is open and honest with themselves and with the people who are helping them along the journey towards priesthood (Vocation Director, parish priest, seminary staff, friends, etc.) it is easier to deal with the fear because I am not going at it alone. It is when we keep our fears to ourselves and never expose them to the light of Christ that they can become a great discouragement. It is also important to remember that God is never the voice of discouragement. When I have fears and feelings of discouragement I first and foremost pray. I tell Jesus all about my fears and discouragements – every last detail. Then I ask Him to show me the truth about my fear and allow His love to work in my life. I also express my fears to those whom God has placed in my life to help form me to be the person and the (God-willing) priest that He is calling me to be.

What is mercy?

Mercy is God's love extended into the lives of all persons, particularly into those areas of our lives where we are broken. This is most profoundly displayed in Jesus' self-gift on the Cross, where even though we did not deserve to be freed from our sins, God Himself sent His only son to die for us. This is true not only for us as a human race but for each one personally. God wants the areas of our life that are broken and those we may not think are fixable to experience His mercy. It is mercy that forgives all, heals all, and at the end of our lives has the last word in terms of our salvation.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

I was in middle school when I first began to participate in my favorite pastime. Waterskiing has provided a great outlet for me to relax and recreate with friends and family. This pastime has provided me with many opportunities to teach people the sport I love, which is another area of joy in my life.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

Reading theology books is only a small portion of what we do in seminary. It is necessary for us to read for academics but we also work on our character, spiritual lives, and future ministry as pastors. This is a more holistic view of seminary and avoids minimizing what we do to only academics.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

On a Saturday morning I would love to get up and have a big hot cup of coffee and pray for an hour and then go out and waterski until noon and spend the rest of the day relaxing or spending time with friends and family. That is my idea of a good day.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

I would like people to pray to Venerable Solanus Casey for my vocation. Venerable Solanus is a great example of humility and in what it means to trust in God. He was even so bold as to say "thank God ahead of time." The reason for this is because it shows that you fully trust in His love for you.



Mark Mleziva

Seminary

Pontifical North American College
00120 Vatican City State
Europe
Theology III

Birthday

October 24

Parish

Immaculate Conception Parish
Luxemburg

Contact

mmleziva@pnac.org

Intercessor

St. Francis de Sales

Motto: Unprofitable Servant.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

I had the privilege of being able to serve at the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help for the Solemnity of the Assumption. Growing up very near to it, I had never gone for the big Mass, which is followed by a Eucharistic Procession, so it was a great to be able to be there and experience it for myself. Despite the hot weather, many came out for the day. For me, it was a great witness to the strong Catholic faith still very much present in the Diocese.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

There are certainly many different fears that can creep in when it comes to the priesthood. For instance, one can feel that they do not have enough knowledge about the faith, or that they will not know what to say in a difficult situation. Yet, despite all this, it is important to remember that the priest is the instrument of God, and as long as he is docile to the Holy Spirit and a man of prayer, the Lord will help him in those challenging situations. Whenever we allow fear to creep in and take control of our thoughts and feelings, we can lose sight of God and His abiding Presence with us. I was told that in the Bible the phrase “do not be afraid” is present 365 times, one for each day of the year. I think that is for a reason. We are reminded always to be not afraid, and if we place all our trust in God, there is nothing that we cannot overcome with His grace. So many of the great saints have told us this throughout the centuries. One of my favorite quotes, coming from one of the more recent ones, is from St. Padre Pio who said, “pray, hope, and do not worry.” If we do this, we can be sure that we will be able to accomplish all that the Lord wills us to do.

What is mercy?

Seeing as how the Extraordinary Year of Mercy will occur this year, it is important to have a good understanding of what mercy is. For me, mercy is that free gift from God that brings us back into relationship with Him. I love at the end of the Sacrament of Reconciliation when the priest begins the words of absolution saying, “God the Father of mercies,” because I imagine God the Father pouring out not just mercy in the singular, but mercies in overflowing abundance. God will never be outdone in generosity, and it is no different with His Divine Mercy.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

Growing up, we would show pigs at the State Fair in Milwaukee. One time as we were driving there, we stopped for gas and a newspaper, and one of the pigs jumped out the back of the truck. We got him back in, but it was quite the experience.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

Seminary does not consist purely of reading theology books because the priesthood does not consist purely of knowledge from theology books. The priesthood certainly involves knowledge of the faith, but it is so much more. Priests have to counsel people, pray, visit the sick, etc., and all of this simply cannot be learned from reading a theology book.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

I would begin by getting up early and going for a run as the sun comes up. Then, I would spend some time in prayer as I cooled down, and then proceed to make myself a stack of about 10 pancakes.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

St. Francis de Sales is the saint that people should ask to intercede for my vocation. He is a great example of what it means to be a pastor who leads with the Heart of Christ, always concerned about his flock.



Matthew Rappl

Seminary

St. Francis de Sales Seminary
3257 South Lake Dr
St. Francis, WI 53235-3702
Theology III

Birthday

March 23

Parish

St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish
Neenah

Contact

mrappl19@yahoo.com

Intercessor

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

Motto: He must increase, I must decrease.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This past summer, I spent time in Chicago as a hospital chaplain and had some time off for the 4th of July weekend. I visited our family cabin in northern Wisconsin. I grew up roaming the forests and lakes with my two older brothers, and once again we were all together enjoying each other's company. I have always enjoyed being outdoors and spending time on the water skiing, fishing, and just having a good time relaxing on the water's edge.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

When I was in high school, I sometimes fell prey to the temptation of thinking that I was the only one who was sensing, even in a small way, that God might be calling me to offer my life as a priest. Surprisingly, when I opened up to some friends about what I was thinking of doing after high school, they told me they thought that I would make a good priest. We just had never talked about it before. Some friends even told me they were having similar thoughts about being a priest. There was a real sense that this was something we could pursue together and that we would not be alone in asking the Father to show us His will. It helped me to talk to someone I trusted and knew would not ridicule me. Another deeper concern was about my own unworthiness to be a priest and wondering if I had what it takes to live as a priest. I came to learn that no matter what, I would never be worthy, and I would never be "perfect" enough to be a priest. Jesus calls us to follow Him, and he calls us in the midst of our ordinary lives, much like He did with Peter and Andrew as they were casting their nets by the side of the sea. All Jesus asks is if we are willing to trust Him.

What is mercy?

Mercy touched my heart in a deep way during my first year of seminary. It is simply an invitation to be loved by God, most especially, in an area of our lives that is a place of weakness. The mercy I experienced was liberating because I slowly came to realize that the Father was drawn to me and longed to accompany me on my life journey, particularly through the Sacraments and the intimacy of prayer. I came to know myself as loved by a Father who delights in forgiveness, and desires to share gifts with His children. If we let it be, it is a journey that deepens through the passing years.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

My family loves being outdoors and the best vacation my family ever went on was a trip out West through the Badlands of South Dakota into the mountains of Yellowstone Park in Wyoming. We saw all sorts of wildlife and scenic views that never ceased to amaze.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

I do not always read theology books. Sometimes I read philosophy books too (j/k). Seminary has given me some beautiful opportunities, like living in Mexico for a summer learning Spanish, studying in Italy for a semester, visiting other European countries, and experiencing unique cultures and languages. We also enjoy getting to play sports with each other.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

While living in Milwaukee at the seminary, I would walk along the Lake Michigan shoreline, come back for a bite to eat at the seminary, and then play some sports with the other seminarians. Soccer is a favorite around here. Then I would pick up a book and read.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. Her total surrender to God allowed her to respond to God with great conviction and courage to seek the poor and spread God's love with the outcast of society. Even as a religious woman, she is a wonderful example for priests.



Jon Thorsen

Seminary

Mundelein Seminary
1000 E Maple Ave
Mundelein, IL 60060-1967
Theology III

Birthday

November 24

Parish

SS. Peter & Paul Parish
Green Bay

Contact

jnthorsen@gmail.com

Intercessor

St. Francis Solanus

Motto: In you alone is my soul at rest.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This summer I was in Ann Arbor, MI, for a hospital chaplaincy internship. While I worked in the hospital, I lived in a parish rectory in Ann Arbor. It was a wonderful experience living in community with four priests. One of the highlights was our Wednesday dinners together. One time in particular I recall sitting down for dinner with the parochial vicar, two hospital chaplains, a missionary priest from Kenya, and a Holy Cross priest who had just gotten back from Egypt. We had a wonderful time exchanging stories over a meal. The stories from Egypt and Kenya were fascinating!

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

I have experienced several fears in deciding to pursue priesthood. They sound like, "I am not worthy of this calling," or "Priesthood is too much responsibility. I cannot possibly fulfill all those duties and be a good priest," or "How can I really be sure God is calling me? What if I make the wrong decision?" I have experienced all of these. In response to the first fear, I need to remember that none of us is worthy of this vocation. I think any priest would admit he was not worthy to receive ordination. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is a free gift from Christ to the priest to be shared with the whole Church. To the second fear I admit that responsibilities seem daunting, but seminary formation helps and encourages me to grow in the virtues necessary to carry out these duties to the best of my ability. Of course these duties require more than just natural virtues like diligence, courage, and perseverance. They also require God's intervention, His grace, because this is Jesus' work; it is not simply a job like being an engineer. The work of a priest must be rooted in prayer – in a deep relationship with Jesus. Finally, the sense of my calling has always had an element of mystery. I cannot scientifically analyze my "call" and say, "I definitely have a vocation to priesthood!" Rather, I must go to seminary and engage the process so the Church can discern my call.

What is mercy?

Mercy is that mysterious love which our heavenly Father pours out to us. St. Paul describes this divine love in his letter to the Romans, "Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." When the soldier pierced Jesus' side, divine mercy flowed out like Niagara Falls! All of us need this mercy. The Father offers so much mercy, greater than Niagara Falls, so that no one can do something so terrible or wander so far from God that he/she is no longer able to receive divine mercy.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

When I was twelve years old, I completed Hunter's Safety Education and went deer hunting for the first time. I am sorry to say I did not get a deer that year, but that did not keep me from going back every year until I left for college.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

Besides reading theology, I usually have a weekly ministry assignment. One year I taught religious education. Another year I did hospital visits. There are all kinds of activities to get involved in here at Mundelein Seminary, including chop wood to support a crisis pregnancy center and help with ministries that feed and clothe the homeless.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

I would begin enjoying the morning by praying the Office of Readings with a fresh cup of coffee in my hands, watching the sunrise. Then going for a bike ride or run enjoying the outdoors and getting some exercise in the process. Then going to breakfast with some friends would cap off an excellent Saturday morning.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

Please pray for me through the intercession of St. Francis Solanus. He was a zealous missionary priest who worked tirelessly for the reign of God's Kingdom. I pray that I may share his zealous spirit to work in the Lord's vineyard.

St. Francis Solanus, pray for us!



Zach Weber

Seminary

Mundelein Seminary
1000 E Maple Ave
Mundelein, IL 60060-1967
Theology III

Birthday

June 9

Parish

St. John the Evangelist Parish, Kohler (Origin)
St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish,
Greenville (Home)

Contact

z.andrew.weber@gmail.com

Intercessor

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

Motto: Let the game come to you.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

During my time as a hospital chaplain I had the opportunity to meet for seven weeks with a mother and her premature son. The doctors wanted to perform surgery, but the mother did not feel comfortable with it. I asked the mother if she would be interested in praying a "fly novena" (a prayer technique of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta). The mother said yes and we prayed for the healing of her son. In three days the surgery was cancelled and the mother brought her son home after spending over 120 days in the hospital. The mother jokingly said, "Why didn't you tell me about this fly novena earlier?"

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

First, being patient is always important. When dealing with fears it has been helpful to do a few things such as: boxing, praying the Rosary, talking it through with a best friend, reading the story of Peter walking on water, finding good spiritual counsel from someone holy, consecrating the fear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and asking the saints to intercede. Fears come and go, but take time to find out where they stem from. I was given some good advice on praying with fears when a priest once told me, "Search for the root of the fear. Pray around where the fear is rooted and ask Christ to help you there. Too often we spend time dealing with our fears on the branches and leaves of life, but the Lord desires to heal you and give you more trust in him by mending the fear at the root." These words have served me well when experiencing fear with the priesthood. Last, Solanus Casey recommends spending time thanking God ahead of time for helping you deal with fears. Adding any prayers through the intercession of St. Raphael, the patron saint of providential encounters, also helps a lot. I call him the "spiritual domino layer" because he lines up the right people in your life to help you deal with the fear you are experiencing. Recognizing providential encounters helps fear go away.

What is mercy?

Mercy is the assurance that the love of Jesus Christ is greater than any sin. Mercy seeks out the greatest sinner first because that person is in most need of the forgiveness of God. Many times people think a certain sin is too big for God to forgive, but mercy is the divine fact that someone who has the greatest, biggest, darkest sin has first right to God's forgiving embrace. Often we struggle to forgive the biggest sinners, yet God desires to give them his mercy first. Saints such as St. Augustine or St. Paul sinned greatly, yet God's mercy is what allowed them to accept the truth of Jesus Christ.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

In 8th grade I used to be a DJ at weddings, dances, and sporting events.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

At seminary you can find men playing baseball, soccer, basketball, and volleyball on any given day. You might even find some working at the wood shop, playing board games, playing pool, or lifting weights. On the weekends you might find seminarians helping at the homeless shelter, chopping wood for the homeless, or praying in front of an abortion mill. These are just a few things that seminarians do besides reading theology books. The list could go on and on, but hopefully it is apparent that we are normal people.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

Watching the sunrise and then going for a brief walk in or near the woods. Then go to Wildberry Restaurant for breakfast and drink coffee for a few more hours with some of my brother seminarians. I would close the morning by listening to music by Joe Zambon.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. I ask for her intercession to grant me a burning heart for Jesus that flames out of love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Also, to receive her gift of communicating complex issues clearly with simple, yet deep convicting truths.



José López

Seminary

St. Francis de Sales Seminary
3257 South Lake Dr
St. Francis, WI 53235-3702
Theology II

Birthday

June 29

Parish

St. Philip the Apostle Parish
Green Bay

Contact

jlopez@sfs.edu

Intercessor

St. Joseph

Motto: Total surrender to God's mercy & love.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This summer I was blessed with the opportunity to travel to Rome. There were a lot of different great experiences, but one of the most powerful was celebrating the feast of Corpus Christi with Pope Francis. It was the first time I had the opportunity to see a pope in person. Pope Francis was shining with his joy and kindness. At the end of Mass, there was a procession with the Blessed Sacrament and thousands of people followed Him. It was an amazingly powerful experience.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

First, I pray about those fears. In prayer I bring those fears to the feet of Jesus. In prayer the Lord helps me walk over those fears so I can move them out of the way in order to come closer to His Sacred Heart where I am deeply loved. The Lord is able to change those fears into hope, joy, and great consolation.

Second, I bring those fears to my spiritual director and people I trust. My spiritual director does a great job at helping me find where the Lord is within those fears. It is interesting how once I open up and share those fears with others, those same fears seem to disappear. I also quickly learn that other seminarians share those same fears, so we help and encourage each other to overcome those fears with the Help of God.

Last, I read about the life of the saints and I realize that the saints had a lot of the same fears I have. This gives me tremendous hope and encouragement to persevere in my path towards the priesthood. The saints also help me realize that my struggles are doable with God's grace. Ultimately, I come to the conclusion that fears come from the Evil One, who is trying to prevent me from doing God's will. When you bring those fears to prayer, the Lord takes care of them.

What is mercy?

According to my own experience, mercy is a channel through which the heavenly Father offers His most pure, sincere, and extraordinary love. It is through mercy that we can experience how much and how infinitely the Father loves us. Under the light of His mercy, our failures, our weaknesses, and our brokenness are completely healed and redeemed. Offering mercy to others is liberating because we allow God's love to flow to others through our hearts. Then we experience mercy as a feeling of being loved and cared for. In those times we can only elevate our hearts to the Lord. In a word, it is through mercy that the Lord is present and manifests himself in our humanity.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

My first full school year in the U.S. was seventh grade. I had recently moved from Mexico and I needed to learn English. It was in middle school that I had my first real encounter with the English language.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

At major seminary we have an opportunity to study a lot of theological books but we also get a lot of pastoral experience through the "teaching parish" program here at St. Francis de Sales Seminary. We also have a semester of societal ministry in which I am spending eight hours each week in a food pantry feeding the poor.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

I would gather friends to play sports together to build stronger friendships and to have fun. I would go out for a walk to admire the natural beauty of the lake or the woods and I would bring a good spiritual book to read and meditate on.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

Please ask the intercession of St. Joseph for my vocation. He gave tremendous witness of love, fidelity, and total surrender to God's will. He faithfully cared for Jesus and showed him to love and serve others. For me, St. Joseph is a great example of obedience and trust in the Lord.



Gregory Parent

Seminary

Pontifical North American College
00120 Vatican City State
Europe
Theology II

Birthday

August 9

Parish

SS. Peter & Paul Parish
Green Bay

Contact

GParent66@gmail.com

Intercessor

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Motto: Love is repaid by love alone.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

Most of the summer I participated in a weekly small group of Catholic college students. One week a retired missionary priest spoke to us. He has spent most of his priesthood in Africa serving in pretty intense and dangerous places. It was really inspiring to hear him talk about his mission work. It was a good reminder that, although evangelization can be difficult at times, we really have no excuse to avoid it when our brothers and sisters in Africa and the Middle East are being persecuted so violently.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

There are two main ways that I deal with fear when it arises. First and foremost I bring it to prayer, especially through the intercession of the Blessed Mother. I also bring it to a priest or other seminarian whom I trust. Usually saying it out loud puts my fear in perspective and it does not seem so catastrophic anymore. It is also helpful because chances are he is experiencing, or has experienced, the same fear. It is encouraging to see that my fears are nothing new. Other people have had them and have dealt with them. Fear comes and goes, but these two ways of dealing with it help me to remember that fear should not dictate my actions. There is something profoundly human about making decisions in spite of fear. Our gift of rationality allows us to make decisions in defense of virtue despite fear telling us to act otherwise. Obviously we should not all become daredevils because that takes what I am describing to an unreasonable level. But I think of a firefighter running into a burning building to save others, or a soldier engaging in a firefight to protect those who are too weak to protect themselves. That is heroic. In a similar way, a man called to the priesthood can, by God's grace, decide to make a gift of himself in the service of others despite the fear that accompanies that decision.

What is mercy?

St. Thérèse of Lisieux used to trade letters with a seminarian named Maurice. In one of his letters to her, Maurice gave her an account of his faults; lamenting how undeserving of God's love he felt. He finished by describing how he would crawl to the feet of Jesus as an unworthy beggar, rather than throw himself into His arms as would a beloved child. This was the response of Thérèse: "[Jesus] has forgotten your infidelities now for a long time.... I beg you, do not drag yourself any longer to His feet; follow that 'first impulse that draws you into His arms.' That is where your place is." Mercy is "that first impulse" placed in our hearts by God that draws us into His arms.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

Like many Wisconsinites, I started hunting in my middle school years. I had an abnormally successful start, because exactly 12 minutes into opening day, a nice eight-point buck ran up and stood broadside about 60 yards away. It has not been quite so easy since then, but I still love hunting.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

I think the easiest way to dispute that claim is to say that I would go crazy if that is all I did all day. We have a lot of opportunities to get out of the classroom and into the real world, working with people in their lives and going through things in our own lives just like anyone else.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

It depends what time of year it is. In November I would spend it up in a tree waiting for a deer to walk past. In the winter I might spend it tinkering in a wood shop. In the summer I would love to spend it fishing in a trout stream.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

St. Thérèse of Lisieux. I am inspired by the intensity with which she approached her mission, but also by the subtlety and precision with which she directed that intensity. She knew how to channel her sense of mission to avoid pride, yet embrace her identity as a child of God.



Kyle Sladek

Seminary

Mundelein Seminary
1000 E Maple Ave
Mundelein, IL 60060-1967
Theology II

Birthday

December 2

Parish

St. Francis Xavier Cathedral
Green Bay

Contact

kylesladek@gmail.com

Intercessor

St. John Vianney

Motto: Happy, Healthy, Holy, Normal.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

When I was in Mexico I visited the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe twice. I prayed in front of the tilma, which is the garment Mary put her image on for St. Juan Diego to show to the Bishop to prove that he was actually seeing Mary. I went to Mass there and climbed to the top of the hill where Mary appeared. I also visited all the wonderful churches on the way up. The prettiest church was at the top. Guadalupe was very peaceful. There was even free lunch and a live band!

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

I think my biggest fear about priesthood is the unknown. I am used to seeing the priesthood from a distance: from the pews, from this side of the confessional screen, and as the one who is being ministered to. What is it to be a priest? What is the essence of the priesthood – the bread and butter? I am hopeful that my internship this spring will help me deal with this fear. I have other fears. I am afraid – at times – of the loneliness of celibacy. What will it be like to never enjoy the goods and fruits of marriage? I am afraid that my assignments will be boring or under-challenging. I am afraid that I will get ordained and realize I made the wrong choice. I deal with these fears in prayer and in spiritual direction. Often in prayer, I tell Jesus or Mary or the Father my fears, and usually – sooner or later – I experience an answer in the form of a comforting presence. I have found that my fears are invitations to trust more deeply that God does have a plan for me and that all that matters at the end of the day is doing His will. Talking about my fears with other seminarians, priests, and friends has also helped. I find that being with God's people is a reminder of why I am here and what my life is about. Despite my fears, the Lord continues to call.

What is mercy?

To borrow a line from one of the prayers seminarians pray every morning, mercy is “knowledge of salvation.” It is knowing that you are loved despite your sins and sinfulness. Mercy is an experience of God's forgiveness, especially in the sacrament of confession and sometimes even before you can get to confession. Mercy is also something you can give to others just as God has given it to you. It is like love: in order to give it, we first have to receive it. One of my favorite saints, Thomas Aquinas, wrote that mercy is the most Godlike virtue because mercy is God's greatest quality. God is all about mercy, and the more we are about mercy, the more we are like Him.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

For whatever reason, my male classmates and I used to trade pens and pencils. I became quite an avid trader, and I got pretty good at making advantageous trades. I probably ripped off some people. I hope the Lord will use my salesmanship/swindling skills only for His glory in ministry.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

Politely, I would point out that we do other things as well. We pray in community and personally, we do ministry in the community, we spend time together to grow as brothers, we play sports and exercise, we work jobs at the seminary, we watch movies, and we go out to dinner, to name just a few things.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

I would celebrate Mass with my family and friends, take a walk around the lake, have a delicious brunch, read the newspaper and a little bit of whatever I am currently reading, drive around the countryside with the windows down, play tennis, and maybe listen to a bit of favorite music.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

Please pray for me through the intercession of St. John Vianney. He had a lot of patience and compassion, which are two things I could use more of. He can help me better understand the essence of the priest and of priesthood. He was a good parish priest.

St. John Vianney, pray for us!



Matthew Faucett

Seminary

Pontifical North American College
00120 Vatican City State
Europe
Theology I

Birthday

January 12

Parish

Holy Family Parish
Marinette

Contact

mfaucett@pnac.org

Intercessor

Blessed John Henry Newman

Motto: Heart speaks unto Heart.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

Because I had to leave in early July to begin Italian studies here in Rome, I had the opportunity to spend some time with my family before I left. One of my favorite moments was the vacation we took to a small town in the Upper Peninsula called Paradise. That part of Michigan is absolutely beautiful and we were able to stay on Lake Michigan, just across from Canada. It was an excellent opportunity to soak in a beautiful piece of America before leaving for studies.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

We are blessed today to have some excellent seminaries that allow men to discern their vocation and grow into the men who they are called to be. The reality of seminary is that it is not an event but rather a process or period of growth that forms the entire man. Therefore the faculty, vocation director, and the bishop are advocates for you as you grow and discern your vocation. This environment has allowed me to work out my fears in a healthy way by talking to priests about my fears and learning from their spiritual and pastoral experience. The relationships I have made with the priests involved in my formation have been excellent ways of communicating fears about the priesthood, and they help keep me grounded in a spirit of prayer and service. Also, the seminary community is an excellent place to build trusting relationships with other seminarians. Many older seminarians have helped me deal with my fears by their knowledge of life in the seminary. Healthy and open friendships with priests and other seminarians are the two major ways I have dealt with my own fears about the priesthood, but the most important way to deal with fears – any fear – is to take such thoughts to God in prayer. My life hasn't gotten easier since I entered the seminary, but through prayer and the supports mentioned above, the Lord has been able to dispel the fears I initially had about priesthood when I entered seminary.

What is mercy?

I have found it helpful to reflect on mercy in two ways: mercy reveals God to humanity, and mercy also enables human beings to come to know themselves more deeply. Most of us can relate to the first point, as God saves rather than punishes Israel on many occasions in the Old Testament, and of course shows His perfect mercy in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. An encounter with Christ in prayer with the Scriptures should reveal to the person how to live a life of mercy, which is to say, a life of loving compassion. Second, mercy shown to us as human beings reveals we are beloved daughters and sons of God, and furthermore connects us to a larger community of compassionate believers.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

Some of my favorite memories of my middle school years involve Boy Scouting and going up to Gardner Dam Scout Camp for summer camp. I am still very good friends with some of the guys I went through scouting with and it has had a positive effect on my life.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

Seminary is not so much about receiving the technical knowledge of theology, but rather it is a place where the seminarian encounters and is formed by Jesus Christ in extraordinary – as well as very ordinary – ways. Seminary for me is about being formed not only intellectually, but pastorally, spiritually, and humanly through summer experiences, friendships, and most importantly, prayer.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

After some prayer, I would read, preferably outside if there is good weather. Depending on the season, I would probably walk the woods or around the city for a bit. I enjoy cooking, so a large brunch would have to be included in the day.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

I would ask people to pray to a great English saint named Blessed John Henry Newman for my vocation. I have prayed to Blessed Newman throughout these years of seminary, and his writings and prayers have led me into a deeper relationship with Christ and His Church.



Connor Schlaack

Seminary

St. Francis de Sales Seminary
3257 South Lake Dr
St. Francis, WI 53235-3702
Theology I

Birthday

February 27

Parish

Most Blessed Sacrament Parish
Oshkosh

Contact

connorschlaack@gmail.com

Intercessor

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

Motto: Abundant Life in the Word Made Flesh.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This summer I had the opportunity to be at Creighton University for the Institute for Priestly Formation. Among so many things, we had a pastoral assignment at an assisted living facility. I was really inspired and impressed by the people there and grew to love them. One of the most memorable experiences was washing the residents' walkers and wheelchairs. It seemed a little silly to me, but it really meant a lot to the people there, and was a simple way to serve. It was a great place to love in an utterly simple way.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

When I was in high school, it was easy to think that I just had to do what God wanted and enter the seminary, and that any fears I had were bad, and just something I had to get over. That was not helpful. Then I would get angry with God about having the fears, like about celibacy or ministry or loneliness or public speaking, or whatever, and be frustrated about how I just could not "get it," how I was weak. That was not helpful either. Now, though still a work in progress, I come to the Lord in my weakness and am just real with Him, and trust that He loves me and wants me exactly as I am. Even in the silence He works, and this has become a deeper place of union with Him. So, that place of fear is a place where God is waiting to find me, something He wants me to give to Him, a place where we can be real to one another. It is not a process of just going and praying about it, as if I just need to say the right words and God will fix me. God wants to encounter me in my weaknesses and use them. God does not want someone who is perfect, He wants me and you exactly as we are, and we can trust Him. Also, it helps to talk to a holy priest about fears, because he knows what it is like.

What is mercy?

When I think of mercy, I think of the image of the Divine Mercy. The message in that image of mercy is love. Mercy is not just God forgiving where we mess up, but really Him coming into our lives out of love. Jesus is the Divine Physician, and mercy means that He is not only there to heal, but that He loves and is attracted to those places we hurt. In the image, the color of the rays coming out of Jesus' heart represent Baptism and the Eucharist, which are places where the Lord meets us with His mercy, and these along with Confession, of course, are places I look forward to most encountering and, God-willing, being a minister of His mercy.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

In middle school I went on a retreat where all the boys got up really early to "build" pancakes for the girls on the retreat to surprise and serve them. It was a lot of fun and really showed me what guys actually can do when they put their heads together.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

I would reply that academics or chapel time, though very important, are not the only areas of priestly formation. At my seminary, we work in a parish most of the weekends of the month to gain the pastoral experience we need, working with solid priests to gain the pastoral experience we need to minister well.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

I would spend a beautiful Saturday morning taking a walk and enjoying the world around me, reading a good book outside, and spending some time with friends. These are all places where I see God and really feel re-created.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini. She was an amazing missionary and trusted in where the Lord was sending her. She had a lot of fears, and trusted the Lord to use her despite her fear. I visited a relic of her in Rome, and it was a very powerful experience.



Benjamin Johnson

Seminary

Sacred Heart Parish
321 S Sawyer Street
Shawano, WI 54166
Pastoral Year

Birthday

June 22

Parish

Most Blessed Sacrament Parish
Oshkosh

Contact

johnson.ben@outlook.com

Intercessor

St. Ignatius of Loyola

Motto: Think logically, but act lovingly.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This past summer I was able to attend the Institute for Priestly Formation at Creighton University in Omaha and for me it was one great, unforgettable, lasting experience. I was able to grow closer to the Lord during an eight-day silent retreat, as well as engage in genuine leisure, free of distractions and worries. I enjoyed meeting so many other seminarians from across the states, who are all on the same journey as I am on. Having a completely prayer-centered schedule was also very refreshing, especially after a year full of philosophy readings, assignments, and thesis research.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

Over the past few years, I have learned that it is much easier to place everything in God's hands than to worry and hold fears about the future. After all, at the end of the day, how much does worrying actually accomplish? If anything, it is only counterproductive, causing us to hold back and not give everything we have. Sure, there are inevitably some moments when fears will arise, and demand to be addressed. "What if I can't deal with celibacy?" "What if my future parishioners don't love me?" It is precisely in such moments that we need to return to prayer and say to the Lord in genuine honesty: "These are my fears, and I don't know how to answer them, so I'm handing them off to you." Does that mean I will walk away from prayer with all the answers? Of course not. But that is okay. I will not have to worry because now it is in God's hands. The ball's in His court, and now my only job is to be attentive to His actions. I am not arguing that one should ignore fears. I am arguing the opposite: present them plainly to the Lord, and entrust it all to Him.

What is mercy?

The English poet Alexander Pope wrote: "To err is human; to forgive, divine." I agree wholeheartedly with that statement, and since mercy is more than simple forgiveness, I believe mercy is divine. It is something super-human. Things like justice and logic come naturally to us as human beings. But mercy and love are higher than justice and logic. Mercy doesn't contradict justice, it transcends justice, in the very same way that love transcends logic. For anyone who has ever wondered why it is so hard to forgive, to be merciful, and to love all others (especially your enemies) here is the answer: because mercy is, in a sense, not as natural to us as justice is.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

Middle school was where I first learned to love trying new things. Our band class had way too many percussionists, and so, to our instructor's delight, I volunteered to learn a new instrument. I never expected I would enjoy playing the saxophone so much.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

Although it is true that we have somewhat less free time compared to the average college-aged student, we still find time to enjoy our hobbies. Just ask my little sisters –they have had years to practice MarioKart and Super Smash Bros., but they still cannot quite beat me because I have kept my skills sharp.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

If I have got a free Saturday morning, it begins with sleeping in to make up for sleep that was lost during the week, followed by four cups of black coffee while praying morning prayer (outside, if the weather's nice). After that, I would either enjoy a few chapters of Game of Thrones or meeting up with friends or family.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

I ask people to pray for St. Ignatius of Loyola's intercession for me. His rules for the discernment of spirits were a central theme of the Institute for Priestly Formation and they have positively and permanently improved my life of prayer.



Cassian Utrie

Seminary

Mundelein Seminary
1000 E Maple Ave
Mundelein, IL 60060-1967
Pre-Theology II

Birthday

August 1

Parish

St. Pius X Parish
Appleton

Contact

cutrie@usml.edu

Intercessor

St. Alphonsus de Liguori

Motto: Well done is better than well said.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This past July, my Totus Tuus team was assigned to the Lakewood parish up past Crivitz, WI. Between the commute northwards and the standard intensity that accompanies Totus Tuus throughout the summer, it was an exhausting week, but everything that could have gone right, went right. Our host father was an eighty-nine-year-old retired pilot whose hospitality was only surpassed by his devotion to the Church, and his life stories. Both the day and night programs were full of enthusiastic participants who were especially open to the Sacraments. In one week I witnessed how faithfulness can enliven any community.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

I ask questions, I pray, and I trust. I do not have all the answers, nor does the Internet, so I ask people who know better: Vocation Directors, spiritual directors, fellow seminarians, and family members. Whenever I receive any advice about discerning my vocation, I think about it. Actually I think about it a lot. But then I realize that I will never be fully satisfied with whatever advice or consolation any person, no matter how respectable they or their words are, gives me. Every doubt and fear needs to be directed towards God. What do I mean by this? During periods of prayer, I tell God my fears or worries, and I ask that He takes them away or does whatever He pleases. He knows better after all. Holding onto a concern can be like a poison. One must recognize it is there and then expel it or cure it. Trust is difficult for me. I like to imagine that I can be completely self-sufficient, self-reliant, and independent, but to live like that is limiting. Just as teachers need to be trusted to provide quality education, or a professional installer to put Wi-Fi in a house or business, we cannot do every task ourselves. I have discovered discernment is only possible when I allow others to help, and that requires trust. When I begin by trusting God, all the other pieces fall into place.

What is mercy?

Well done is better than well said. Mercy is love in action. The perfect example is the Lord's mercy towards every person by enabling the path of salvation. Do we deserve heaven, eternal life, or perfect happiness? No, we are fallen creatures just as prone to sin as we are to virtue. However, God saw fit to send his only begotten Son ... whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Almost every Christian is familiar with that famous quote from the Gospel of John, and we can use it as a template for mercy. Those who have the capability to love, nurture, and aid should take action to comfort and protect. Our love need not be perfect, only active.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

I went to South Dakota and finally discovered where Wall Drug is located. I also saw several thousand bison and the largely unfinished Crazy Horse memorial.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

Currently I am reading nearly all philosophy books. The last few weeks I have taken canoes, kayaks, and rowboats around St. Mary's Lake, biked several Illinois trails, played tennis against all challengers, and helped to host a celebration for Bishop Robert Barron. I have also met dozens of quality seminarians from over ten states and six continents.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

Wandering mountain trails and taking photographs, visiting local historic landmarks, and delving into the history behind them.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

St. Alphonsus de Liguori, because of his devotion to Mary and the excellence of his writings. He was also notable for overcoming distractions in his work and prayer life.



Kevin Ripley

Seminary

Mundelein Seminary
1000 E Maple Ave
Mundelein, IL 60060-1967
Pre-Theology II

Birthday

October 10

Parish

Assumption BVM Parish
Pulaski

Contact

kripley@usml.edu

Intercessor

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Motto: Thank you for all things.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This summer I was at Creighton University for the Institute for Priestly Formation. It included an eight-day retreat, apostolic service (for me a nursing home), conferences, daily Mass and prayer, and classes on the priesthood, celibacy, prayer, and liturgy. One memorable experience was participating in a Eucharistic procession on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. Thousands of Catholics, led by the Eucharist and the Archbishop, sang and prayed for 1.4 miles in adoration of Our Lord. At the ending church we were met with fireworks and flower petals showered from the roof.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

When I was first considering the priesthood, a book that helped me a lot was "To Save a Thousand Souls" by Fr. Brett Brannen. He went through and dispelled many common fears, leaving me free to discern if Jesus was calling me to apply to seminary. It also helped to regularly meet with a group of men on the same path and to go on a discernment retreat. Along with that, going to Mass more often than on Sunday and praying each day began to align my will more closely to God's. What really eased my soul was taking the question straight to Jesus in Adoration. I found to be true the psalmist's experience in Psalm 34: "I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." Nonetheless, I do sometimes have a concern or worry about the priesthood. When they arise, I find myself doing four things: 1) I try to understand whether the thought has the loving tone of God, 2) I call to mind the fact that there are saints in Heaven and religious orders throughout the world interceding for us and for priests, 3) I consider the lives and writings of heroic priests such as St. Augustine, St. John Vianney, St. Maximilian Kolbe, Venerable Fulton Sheen, and St. John Paul II, and 4) I speak with my spiritual director so he can give clarity to my thinking.

What is mercy?

Mercy is the way in which God loves us. Jesus wants us to experience His mercy. He loves us with merciful love and is knocking at the doors of our hearts at every moment for us to open up to Him so He can transform us. Can you think of that one relationship, childhood memory, addiction, grudge, or sin that you think is off limits to Jesus? If not, ask Jesus what it might be for you. That is exactly where He wants to be let into. When we let Jesus into those areas of our hearts from which we have been fending Him off or which we did not know He cared about, He transforms them with His merciful love.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

Thankfully, I began playing the French horn in sixth grade (and still do in seminary) because I could not make any noise on the clarinet – my first choice.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

There are many opportunities to enjoy time with others, such as sports, music groups, and evening get-togethers on campus. We are also assigned to practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy each weekend. Last year I visited very sick patients at a long-term acute care hospital, and this year I will serve a weekly meal to the poor.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

First I would go to early Mass and stay to pray for an hour, after which I would head to the refectory to eat breakfast. Then I would go with a group of seminarians to the woods for a couple hours to chop firewood, for which local residents donate to the local women's center.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

Please ask St. Thérèse of Lisieux to intercede for me, and if you would, please ask her to give St. John Paul II a tap on the shoulder for me as well. Thérèse's doctrine of the "little way" has been an endless source of benefit to me this past year.



Jon Hynek II

Seminary

Conception Seminary College
P.O. Box 502
37174 State Hwy VV
Conception, MO 64433-0502
College IV

Birthday

September 9

Parish

St. Francis of Assisi Parish
Manitowoc

Contact

jhynek@conception.edu

Intercessor

St. Maximilian Kolbe

Motto: A man trying to live out God's call to discipleship one day at a time.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

While teaching Totus Tuus this past summer we had a student who had a great deal of difficulties in his life. His grandmother told me on the first day all that had happened and that he hated Jesus. During that week his participation in Mass kept getting better and better each and every day. On the last day Father asked the children one thing they will remember the rest of the summer, and this boy answered: "that God loves me." This is a memory I will never forget and a reminder that God can work through each of us if we allow Him.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

I try always to remember that God loves me, and God will not leave me high and dry. God will always give us the grace to do our vocation, and to do it well. Grace after all is a gift from God, but until we accept the gifts God offers us, we cannot use them. So if God is calling me to the priesthood, He will give me the gifts or graces to not only become a priest but to live out priesthood as well. But if we do not accept those gifts we cannot do what God is asking of us. For instance, if my father asked me to mow the lawn and I go out and starting cutting the grass with a pair of scissors, it would take a very long time to cut the whole lawn, and I would not be able to cut the whole lawn at the same level. At the same time my parents own a lawnmower that is sitting in the garage. We can only use the gifts given to us if we accept them. If we rely on God and God's gifts, we can live out any vocation God is calling us to.

What is mercy?

Mercy is God's love for us. It is God telling us that He loves us more than He hates our sins. It has nothing to do with mere pity, but everything to do with love. I see mercy as being like a mother who forgives her three-year-old for breaking something and the child not knowing what they did wrong. A mother knows that her child cannot know what they did wrong at that age, just as God knows that we are not perfect and will fail in being perfect as He is. Without mercy no one would be able to enter into Heaven. We see that powerfully when Christ died for our sins so that we may be forgiven. Mercy is love.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

All through middle school I was in choir. In my last year of middle school I had one of the main solos in a song.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

We as seminarians do way more than just reading books. We go out and serve the local communities around us either through their RCIA programs, going to nursing homes, visiting patients in a psychological rehabilitation center, or teaching the younger generations with faith formation. We try as seminarians to gain as much experience in guiding others to Christ as is possible while in seminary so we do not let down our own parishioners one day.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

I would have a couple cups of coffee while praying the Liturgy of the Hours and go to Mass. Afterwards I would enjoy the weather by playing a round of golf with some friends. If for some reason I did not have enough time to go golfing I would go biking throughout town and along Lake Michigan.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

St. Maximilian Kolbe. He is a great witness to true discipleship and letting God's will be done. He was also a man who showed great devotion to Jesus, Mary, and the priesthood, as well as not being afraid to lay down his life for God's children.



Samuel Schultz

Seminary

University of St. Thomas
2115 Summit Ave #0788
St Paul, MN 55105-1048
College IV

Birthday

June 11

Parish

Holy Spirit Parish
Kimberly

Contact

sjschultz@stthomas.edu

Intercessor

Venerable Bruno Lanteri

Motto: Prayer is the safest place in the world.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

I had a powerful experience on my Spanish immersion assignment in Guatemala. One day after class, a couple seminarians went to an orphanage for handicapped children. There we took a tour of the large campus and spent time with the children. Although it was difficult to communicate with them in words, we connected in smiles and laughs. I could see how excited the kids were to have visitors from America, but the honor was truly ours to spend time with them. I felt that I experienced Jesus in a new way through their poverty and joy.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

I had many fears about priesthood when applying for seminary. Would people take me seriously as a priest? How do I know that this vocation will make me happy? Will life without an immediate family be lonely? These are all legitimate fears that need to be answered. An important thing that I like to do is admit that I have fears and then bring them into the light with a priest or friend. It also helps to sort through these movements in the heart and name them. There are two types of fear that we experience as human beings. The first is rational fear, which is a natural movement within us to keep us safe from danger (like a natural fear of heights). This is healthy and is given to us by God. But then there is irrational fear, which is never from God, and which causes anxiety (like fear of making commitments, for example). My spiritual director always tells me not to make decisions in a spirit of irrational fear, but rather to act out of a place of strength. If a fear is irrational, then I know it is definitely not from God and that I should disregard it. Concerning fears about the priesthood, I first bring it before the Lord in prayer and then try to find where the undercurrent of strength and peace is in my heart. From there I can act in a spirit of strength as to which direction Jesus is calling me.

What is mercy?

Mercy is an invitation for healing. In the Gospels, many people approach Jesus seeking a cure to their physical ailments. In those times, it was believed that people received their sicknesses because of their sins. But instead of condemning, Jesus shows mercy by forgiving those who approach him with repentant hearts. It is through this forgiveness, this mercy, that we are healed. Some of my most powerful experiences in prayer have been receiving the forgiveness and mercy of Jesus. But in order to receive forgiveness and healing, I first need to forgive others who have hurt me. Jesus explains the importance of this when he said, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Mt. 6:14).

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

When I was in fourth grade, my family went to Deadwood, South Dakota, – an old western town known for its reenactments of cowboy shootouts. When I was there, one of the actors picked me out of the crowd and assigned me to be in a performance with Wild Bill Hickok.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

False. Last year I went to Tennessee for an evangelization conference with nine thousand other college students. Seminarians go out to teach religious education, visit the sick, and run Bible studies. We have opportunities to serve Mass, travel, and speak on retreats. And in free time, we go camping, biking, skiing, practice sports, play instruments, and yes, read theology books.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

I would wake up in my tent from camping the night before and enjoy a hot cup of coffee over the fire while praying the Office of Readings. Then I would go mountain biking and jump in the river afterwards.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

Please ask the Venerable Bruno Lanteri to pray for me and my vocation. He was from Italy and focused his ministry on spiritual direction for the laity. He used the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius to encourage others to continually turn back to the Lord in their daily work.

Venerable Bruno Lanteri, pray for us!



Stephen Zepp

Seminary

University of St. Thomas
2115 Summit Ave #2262
St Paul, MN 55105-1048
College IV

Birthday

August 10

Parish

St. Pius X Parish
Appleton

Contact

zepp8137@stthomas.edu

Intercessor

St. Ignatius of Loyola

Motto: Live for Christ through others.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This summer I was in Mexico learning Spanish. While I was there, I had the chance to go to Mexico City and make a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. While I was there, I had a conversation with two women from a little ways away from where my host family lived. They were really nice people who truly cared that others learn the beauty of Our Lady. Just having the conversation in Spanish with these women was great since that is what I had been learning to do all summer.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

When I have fears about the priesthood I often try to talk with a priest. Of course, the best priest is Jesus himself, the High Priest, so I often simply tell Him my fears or concerns about priesthood and try to allow Him to work in me. The first thing about this is that I find it helpful to put words to my fears and admit that I have them. This act in itself can help make them less daunting and take away some of their power over me so that I am not driven by fear. What's more, these fears can actually help show me the things I care most about. This is because the fears of priesthood are often about losing or not having something (including the ability or worthiness to be a good priest). Really, finding these can help give me self-knowledge. I do not want to be afraid though, so often I ask Jesus to take away the fears that fill me and could keep me from following Him. Of course, asking a priest if he ever faced those same fears often helps me to know if they are even substantial. Most priests seem to have a story about himself or someone he studied with that relates to my situation. I find that most of my fears do not seem to be substantiated in the priesthood, but are worthless fears or misunderstandings on my part.

What is mercy?

Mercy is forgiving someone who does not necessarily deserve it. One common form of mercy is a second chance. After someone has done something wrong, giving them the chance to redeem themselves even though they may fail again is a merciful act. Otherwise, not enforcing a punishment that someone deserved because of what they did, or reducing a punishment already given can be merciful. Yet mercy is even more than forgiveness. Mercy works for the good of the person toward whom mercy is shown. In the end, mercy is a type of love for those around us; it is an important part of living a good Christian life.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

I played a lot of football when I was in middle school. On my sixth grade flag football team, Samuel Schultz (seminarian) was my teammate. We managed to go undefeated that year. It was the last year he and I were on the same team.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

Well, I am finishing my undergraduate degree, I regularly attend Nacho Bingo, go to UST football games, pray every day, play pickup sports (and partake in some tournaments in the seminary), volunteer, chill, and generally live a well-rounded life. I actually stay busy with a variety of things.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

On most Saturday mornings at this seminary, we have a Holy Hour and Mass together in the chapel. Oftentimes I enjoy chatting with the guys, watching football, and going over to the Student Center to eat. Sometimes I will go with a group for disc golfing or to play some other sports.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

People could ask the intercession of St. Ignatius of Loyola for my vocation. He is a very inspiring saint who learned and shared a spirituality that is very rich and which inspires me and draws me on to holiness and closeness with God.



Patrick Costello

Seminary

Mundelein Seminary
1000 E Maple Ave
Mundelein, IL 60060-1967
Pre-Theology I
Archdiocese of the Military
Co-Sponsorship Program

Birthday

April 15

Parish

St. Margaret Mary Parish
Neenah

Contact

pcostello@usml.edu

Intercessor

St. Joan of Arc

Motto: In Him we live and move and have our being.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

In June, the USS Bonhomme Richard made a 5,000-mile transit from our homeport in Sasebo, Japan, to Perth, Australia. My shift on the ship's bridge was each night from 2200 to 0200. In the Indonesian Archipelago we crossed the equator and soon the night sky turned full of new stars. The southern hemisphere's night sky lets you see the center of the Milky Way instead of the outer bands. The result is a stunningly beautiful view of millions of stars. All the way to Perth we could follow the Southern Cross, a constellation that looks like a cross and points south.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

There are a number of fears that have accompanied my discernment and formation for priesthood. The fears are mostly questions that can echo around in my head and sometimes in my heart. What if I am not called to priesthood? Can I truly be a priest with my tendency to sin and with my many imperfections? How can I ever help in the most painful moments of peoples' lives? Will I stay faithful to Christ if I am really tested? What if I fail? We learn in formation that we can never go it alone. We always need help from others to deal with the fears and troubles in life. As a seminarian I have a priest who is my spiritual director. His role is to help me navigate through it all. In confidence we discuss freely all these fears, questions, and troubles. He helps me to see the workings of grace in my life so I can respond to and more fully live out the will of God every day. I always have to remember to bring my fears to prayer. Often I would rather leave them in the dark and just speak to the Lord about other things. The Devil wants us to ignore the fears because that allows him to continue his work in the dark. But God is the Divine Physician and he will heal us as long as we let Him, as long as we tell Him where we hurt.

What is mercy?

Mercy is a second chance. Mercy is God's inexhaustible forgiveness and invitation to turn all our faults and failings over to Him so He may make all things new. Mercy is stronger than sin. Mercy is our ticket to heaven. Mercy restores all things in Christ. When Pope St. John Paul II told us to "Be not afraid" and to "Open wide the doors to Christ" he was also encouraging us to accept and trust in Divine Mercy. We are a people of mercy and mercy is a way of life: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy."

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

I started taking flying lessons during middle school. My grandfather was a pilot and introduced me to the beauty of flight at a young age and in eighth grade my parents were very kind to give me flying lessons for Christmas. I earned my private pilot license in high school.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

Actually, I have yet to read any theology books at seminary. In the pre-theology years we aim to build a solid foundation of the God-given gift of reason by studying the great thinkers of philosophy and their questions and explanations of the human experience. This way we learn to always seek the Truth through fides et ratio (faith and reason).

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

For me a beautiful Saturday morning is a good time for a walk, either with family and friends or alone to experience the stillness and relative quiet of the morning before all the world is awake.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

This summer I happened to go to a talk by a St. Joan of Arc scholar and then read a little more about "The Maid of Orleans." Joan's devout life and trust in the Lord are very inspiring. Please ask her to pray that I may be courageous as she was.



Ziggy Gross

Seminary

Conception Seminary College
P.O. Box 502
37174 State Hwy VV
Conception, MO 64433-0502
Pre-Theology I

Birthday

January 18

Parish

Good Shepherd Parish
Chilton

Contact

zytgross@gmail

Intercessor

St. Pio of Pietrelcina

Motto: In His Name.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

For the first time ever, I was able to visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help since its approval as an apparition site. I was privileged to participate in the Mass for the Feast of the Assumption in August, where I also encountered my first Eucharistic procession, which I loved. To be exposed to the only approved Marian apparition site in North America was amazing to me. Time spent in prayer at the Shrine was an awesome experience I plan on continuing for years to come.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

The short answer is prayer. Then again, that is how I deal with any fears – taking them to God in prayer. Specifically with the priesthood, I like to find the nearest tabernacle. Sitting near Christ in the tabernacle cannot be beat! In my twenty-four years of living, I realize that in each life stage (typically plagued by peer pressure and cultural expectations) I had a tabernacle near me. This includes high school in Wisconsin, college in Ohio, professional life in Florida, and now seminary in Missouri. Both then and now, I was and still am always drawn to pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament either in Mass or in adoration/holy hour. A lot of times I bring Him my worries, both big and small, especially about discerning my vocation to the priesthood, and He responds in silence with the words of His loving demands. I have never left Christ in the Eucharist, whether in the tabernacle or exposed in adoration, and not been completely calmed and at peace wherever I am at in life. In my mind, if I could speak to God about life: my fears, my faults, my praises, I would prefer to speak to Him in person – in the flesh. I can do that every time I am at Mass, near the tabernacle, or in adoration. So I guess you could say I deal with my fears of the priesthood by speaking to God man-to-man, face to face. He always provides the answer.

What is mercy?

I have struggled with understanding mercy. Not that I do not believe or want it but rather its place in my relationship to God. Early in my life, I saw mercy as an act of love God had to give us out of obligation to us. In recent years, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I have seen mercy as an inexhaustible expression of love that God yearns to give us. Instead of God stacking the cards against us, He is a loving father opening up his arms of mercy to bring us back home into communion with Him. Mercy is also an expression of glorifying God. Instead of running from Him in sin, we humbly approach Him and give thanks for his unconditional love through his mercy.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

During my early middle school years, my friends and I had an obsession with the vintage banana-seat bikes. Not sure why when I think about it? We would find old worn-out banana-seat bikes, paint them up, grease them down, and ride around town all summer long.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

At seminary, I comically imagined somber young men humming Gregorian chant and speaking strictly of theology. In actuality, we spend a fair amount of time outside of prayer and class. I have played tennis with a monk, picked pears at a local farm for the hungry, and participated with a local RCIA group for my apostolic ministry assignment.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

A beautiful Saturday morning would consist of a coffee in one hand, and a good read in the other. I would find a cozy spot, preferably outside and in the fall season. Afterwards I would hit the courts for a competitive match of tennis – doubles, because I like to get aggressive at the net.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

Padre Pio is the man! I would ask anyone praying for my path to the priesthood to ask for his intercession. A spiritual warrior who fought the devil in many temptations with his vocation, Pio persistently relied on God through the Eucharist to protect him from those temptations.



Michael Koepfel

Seminary

Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary
700 Terrace Heights #767
Winona, MN 55987-1321
College III

Birthday

February 6

Parish

Holy Family-St. William Parish
Wittenberg

Contact

mbkoep15@smumn.edu

Intercessor

St. Jude Thaddeus

Motto: Keep on keepin' on.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This summer, one of the best experiences I had was working Saturdays at Momentum Bikes in Platteville, WI. Working at Momentum involved two things I enjoy very much: working on bikes and socializing with customers and coworkers about bikes and various topics, including faith. Although the Momentum family is not all Catholic, they were always there for me and were one of the biggest sources of support as I discerned entering seminary. I pray often that God's presence grows stronger in their lives each day.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

As a new seminarian, I have not yet really discovered a good way to deal with my fears. I constantly go back and forth between the pros and cons of either priesthood or marriage. The thing I have recently thought about is that there is still a third possibility, which would be the single life. I studied engineering for the last four years, so naturally I tend to overanalyze everything I do. I think of every possible scenario that could play out, whether it is good or bad. It does not matter today if I am called to priesthood, marriage, or the single life. Right now I am where God wants me and I can be sure of this because I am trying to do God's will and he will not lead me astray. Doing a holy hour each day and receiving the Eucharist always helps make the days better. Talking with friends or a spiritual director helps gain knowledge that does not have to be learned through my own mistakes. Taking advice from elders is life's shortcut. It is not always easy but swallowing pride makes it worth it. It is important not to try to escape reality, which is very common in my own life and society today. Sometimes I find myself doing this by binge watching Netflix or getting engulfed in one of my hobbies so I do not have to think about life problems. Do not avoid problems, bring them to prayer. Last but not least is probably the best – talking to your Vocation Director.

What is mercy?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines mercy as: Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm. This is relevant in my life because God shows me more mercy on a daily basis than I have the capability of realizing. Every time I repent for sins, he forgives me and imparts another chance. This is the most common occurrence of mercy in my life.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

In middle school I started bowhunting. Bowhunting was one of my favorite activities. I could come home and go straight to my tree stand and would still have time for homework afterwards.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

When I am not studying in seminary I like to go mountain biking on Winona's single track near Saint Mary's University. Otherwise we spend a couple hours each week doing our apostolic works where we volunteer in different community settings such as nursing homes or penitentiary visits.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

I would spend a beautiful Saturday morning woodworking. Woodworking comes naturally to me and I do not have to put tedious thought into it. I can clear my head and enjoy myself while I do it. When I am all done I have a product to show for my work as well.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

I would like people to ask St. Jude Thaddeus to pray for my vocation. He is the patron saint of lost causes. This is because after four years of college and entering the seminary to discern priesthood I am not sure what is going to happen next.



Eric Rudd

Seminary

Conception Seminary College
P.O. Box 502
37174 State Hwy VV
Conception, MO 64433-0502
College III

Birthday

December 28

Parish

St. Jude the Apostle Parish
Oshkosh

Contact

erudd@conception.edu

Intercessor

St. Joseph

Motto: To the Heights!

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This past summer, I was a camp counselor at Camp Tekakwitha for my second year. What really stood out for me was my last day at camp. It was quite an emotional day since I was aware that it was to be my last day working there, due to a new assignment next year. The day proved to be memorable. The recognition and appreciation I received from the campers and my fellow counselors was overwhelming and filled me with great gratitude. I really left feeling blessed to be a part of that mission for two summers.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

I deal with fears about the priesthood by bringing them to the Lord, in whatever way possible. One helpful method for me is to bring them to my spiritual director. I have found this to be quite helpful throughout my time as a seminarian. Spiritual direction helps me to quiet myself and hear the silent whisper of the Lord, which is deep within all of our hearts. Another way I deal with these fears and anxieties is by bringing them directly to the Lord in my personal prayer life. I sincerely ask the Lord to give me clarity, amidst all the storms and confusion of vocational discernment and life in general. I always find that God answers these prayers in one way or another. Sometimes it is in ways that are direct, in which I feel immediate reassurance, and other times it is in ways that require much patience. I have found that most important thing to do is to always try to bring any of these fears that I am carrying to the light, instead of keeping them within myself. This can simply involve talking them over with a fellow seminarian, or any friend for that matter. This really helps me to sort out my priorities and place things into perspective. Once I am able to see things in perspective, I am much more at peace.

What is mercy?

I think mercy can best be visualized in the example of the Good Shepherd who was willing to leave the ninety-nine sheep in order to go after the one sheep that had strayed. That is what Jesus is willing to do for us anytime we wander from his presence. He is always willing to pick us up and carry us back to where we belong, which is in communion and fellowship with him. He never tires of forgiving us. It is often we who tire of asking him for forgiveness. His mercy is something that we are immersed in at all times, whether we realize it or not. This, the mercy of God, is the greatest example of mercy there is.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

I enjoyed the peak of my football career in middle school. In sixth grade, I was the starting quarterback of my YMCA football team. Despite our losing record, I played relatively well at the position and hoped I would one day replace Brett Favre. This did not pan out.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

I would dispute this claim by mentioning all of the other activities we enjoy as seminarians. We have the opportunity to live a pretty balanced life, contrary to popular belief. There is plenty of time for recreation, leisure, traveling, and socializing (outside of the seminary), just to name a few things.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

After sleeping in a little bit, I would drive down to the nearest running/biking trail, and enjoy getting some exercise in. Another option would be to play a game of pick-up basketball. If I felt like simply relaxing, I would find a quiet place to play my guitar.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

They should call upon the intercession of St. Joseph. This is because I am striving to become more of a man of virtue, as he is. His humility and patience inspires me and reflects an area of my life that I am seeking to grow in.



Branden Timm

Seminary

Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary
700 Terrace Heights #542
Winona, MN 55987-1321
College III

Birthday

January 28

Parish

Holy Family Parish
Brillion

Contact

brandtimm@gmail.com

Intercessor

St. Bartholomew

Motto: Awake sleeper, Christ is calling your name!

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

My experience this past summer, teaching Totus Tuus, was a blessing! Totus Tuus is a catechetical program for children from first grade to seniors in high school. It was awesome being able to work with the youth and all the amazing families in the various parishes. Totus Tuus really stretches you because it is hard at times to work as a team, but it is an opportunity to grow. It has helped me learn how to do all things with love, even when it is frustrating.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

Being one of the youngest seminarians in the diocese, many of my fears of the priesthood have often revolved around me asking: "Am I too young to be discerning priesthood?" In those times of self-doubt I turn to the book of Jeremiah where God calls him. Jeremiah says he is too young to be God's messenger because he is only a youth and does not know how to speak. The Lord proceeds to tell him, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you you shall go and whatever I command you you shall speak. Be not afraid of them for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 1:7-8). Constant devotion to the Eucharist and fervent prayer casts out many fears because when we are afraid it is an opportunity to give more of ourselves to the Lord. When we give more of ourselves to the Lord He is able to do remarkable works through us because surrendering our fears makes us weak and vulnerable. When we surrender ourselves to Lord we become His instruments and He can use us to help bring people closer to Him. Knowing that I am never on this journey alone is a great comfort. Being an instrument of the Lord gives me great peace and joy when I remember that my fears amount to nothing compared to the love of the Lord.

What is mercy?

Mercy is God's willingness and power to love us and forgive us no matter how big a sin we commit. Mercy is an unlimited gift from God. For the sake of emphasis, God's mercy has no limits! We miss the mark on many occasions, but because of God's mercy we are able to receive forgiveness if we are truly sorry, possess a contrite heart and go to the sacrament of Confession to get back into perfect union with God and His Church.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

When I was in middle school I did a lot of singing. I was a member of the Appleton Boychoir for about four years. I used to sing soprano. I had many opportunities to tour with the choir. The best tour was to China when I was 13.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

I primarily read philosophy books. To read a theology book is a treat for me. Seminary is also more than just going to class and reading books. It is about being formed and growing in relationship with Jesus Christ so someday we may be able to be in the person of Christ and bring Him to His people.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

I would spend a beautiful Saturday morning doing anything outdoors. I enjoy stuff like kayaking or swimming in a lake and hiking, but if I have access to a basketball court or a weight room I would rather lift weights and shoot hoops no matter what it looks like outside.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

St. Bartholomew because he is my favorite apostle. When Jesus called him to be His follower Jesus said, "...Here is a true child of Israel. There is no duplicity in him" (John 1:47). Jesus wants us to follow Him without any duplicity and that is how I want to follow Him.



Aaron Hietpas

Seminary

University of St. Thomas
2115 Summit Ave #3404
St Paul, MN 55105-1048
College II

Birthday

December 27

Parish

St. John Nepomucene Parish
Little Chute

Contact

hiet0006@stthomas.edu

Intercessor

St. Kateri Tekakwitha

Motto: For Love of Him.

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This summer I taught Totus Tuus in the Archdiocese of Chicago. During the first week I noticed that one sixth grader was sitting off to the sides. I tried to get him involved but after many attempts he was not convinced. After a couple days I noticed that he was opening up and enjoying himself. At the end of the week he gave me a thank you card. In it he wrote how much he appreciated the week and that he was a lot more excited about his faith.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

Prayer is the number one go-to when it comes to fear. This is true when in fear of anything, big or small. When something comes up that scares me pertaining to the priesthood or God's plans for me I bring it to Christ and ask Him why it scares me. Most times I do not get an answer right away, but we have to remember to be patient and trusting with God. He will give us strength and answer our prayers. It is always reassuring to know that the Father only desires what will bring the most joy in our hearts. Another good idea would be to talk with a priest or a spiritual director about any fears or anxieties about the priesthood or one's vocation. They will talk with a person and dispel their fears. I know when I talk to a priest about a misconception or a legitimate fear, they are always kind, informative, and patient. It always helps to have someone else to walk with. Most of all, remember the Father's great love and never fear because His plans are greater than anything we could ever imagine. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you" (Jeremiah 1:5).

What is mercy?

Mercy is God reaching down, picking us up, holding us in His arms, and calling us daughter or son, even though we are sinners. His great love pervades through the darkness and Christ is the victor. This is perfectly explained in the parable of the lost sheep. When Jesus says, "And when he does find (the sheep), he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep'" (Luke 15:5). He loves us so much that he searches for us individually, carries us home, and celebrates our return with unsurpassable joy.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

In middle school I became involved in theater, speech and debate competitions. For one season of speech and debate I performed *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and in my eighth grade play I was the lead in a story about the prodigal son.

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

Yes it is true that we read theological and spiritual books, but that is not the half of seminary life. We have free time to hang out with our brother seminarians and hang out with people on campus who are not in the seminary. We help those in need and are involved in many on-campus activities that are not a part of the seminary.

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

Saturday mornings are my time to relax and hang out with friends. I like to make some tea and read either something spiritual or a good novel. Then I enjoy trying different activities anywhere from running, kayaking, and Frisbee golf to playing guitar, writing poetry, and playing board games.

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

Please ask for St. Kateri Tekakwitha's intercession as I continue my discernment. Kateri's devotion to the Eucharist and our crucified Savior is inspiring. I desire to grow in love for the Blessed Sacrament, and to have a continued fervor and desire for holiness just like Kateri.



Nathan Runde

Seminary

University of St. Thomas
2115 Summit Ave #6131
St Paul, MN 55105-1048
College II

Birthday

August 6

Parish

St. John Nepomucene Parish
Little Chute

Contact

nrunde555@gmail.com

Intercessor

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Motto: Come Holy Spirit!

Tell us about a great experience that you had during the summer of 2015:

This summer, I was privileged to attend a Colorado Leadership Retreat, a pilgrimage into the mountains filled with prayer and hiking. While walking, I got to dialogue with many high school and college students. One day I talked to a young adult whom the Holy Spirit had been inspiring. He was deeply inquisitive about the faith, had a hunger to grow in relationship with God, and to begin living out his faith. In the discussion he said to me, "I feel like my faith journey is just beginning!" It was a blessing to see God's action in this group.

How do you deal with fears about the priesthood?

Bringing fears to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is very important for me. I also bring these fears to mother Mary. The Father is the loving caretaker who desires my utmost good and gives everything I need through His divine providence. The Son is the loving brother who walks with me through the fears. It helps me to look at how Jesus handled situations in his life by reading the Gospels. The Holy Spirit is the peaceful guide who shows me where I need to go, giving me all the gifts I need to carry out His inspirations. Mary helps me to know and pray to each of the persons of the Trinity because she is the human who knows them best! Also, I try to keep in mind that I have time to learn, grow, and decide. There is no pressure to get all of my struggles solved and decisions made immediately. I have seven more years until ordination and God will do His work in my soul in that time. His grace is always sufficient, and He will never give me more than I can handle. When some fear comes up about being a priest, I try not to let it consume my mind and attention. If I have a hard time thinking and praying about it in peace, I write it down to pray about another time and to talk about with my spiritual director or another holy person.

What is mercy?

Mercy is that God loves us, although we are sinners. In the parable of the lost son, Jesus explains the Father's mercy towards us: "While [the lost son] was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). This is mercy. While we are still poor sinners, the Father welcomes us into his loving embrace and pours the Holy Spirit into our souls, while Jesus walks with us on our journey. Jesus burns up our sins in the fire of his merciful heart and restores us to the joy of friendship with God.

Share an interesting fact about your middle school years:

During middle school, my recesses were often spent playing football. I recall trying to get away with playing tackle football in the snow. The playground supervisors did not like that!

How would you dispute the claim that all you do at seminary is read theology books?

While study is a key part of seminarian formation, we do a lot of other activities as well. We play instruments, exercise, hangout together, eat together, and do service work. One goal of seminary is to make us well-rounded people; so we cannot just sit and read all day!

How would you spend a beautiful Saturday morning?

I would get up very early with my dad, get in the car, and drive to the pier in Manitowoc, which goes out into Lake Michigan. We would walk out on it and cast our lures into the deep over and over again, as the sun rose, until we nabbed a king salmon!

Which saint should people ask to intercede for your vocation?

I am sure many others have also chosen her, but I would like people to pray for me to St. Thérèse of Lisieux. She is just so beautiful to me. She loved God with her entire heart, and she knew the infinite love of God!

Office of Vocations



Fr. Daniel Schuster

Vocation Director

Home Parish:

Most Blessed Sacrament Parish
Oshkosh, WI

Schools Attended:

Drake University, Des Moines, IA
BS Business Management
Mundelein Seminary
STB Sacred Theology, M. Div
The Liturgical Institute

Contact:

(920) 272-8293
dschuster@gbdioc.org

How you can get involved:

- PRAY for seminarians by name
- SEND a seminarian a card for their birthday, Christmas or Easter
- SHARE this with your friends, family and those who you think may be a good priest
- ADOPT a seminarian as a family, class or parish
- CONSIDER what your role is for serving God and his people



Fr. Quinn Mann

Associate Vocation Director

Catholic Youth Expeditions:

Founder/Spiritual Director

CYE Mission: To encounter Jesus Christ and foster Catholic Christian community through expedition retreats of prayer, proclamation of the gospel and outdoor adventure!

Contact:

(920) 312-0070
fatherquinnmann@gmail.com



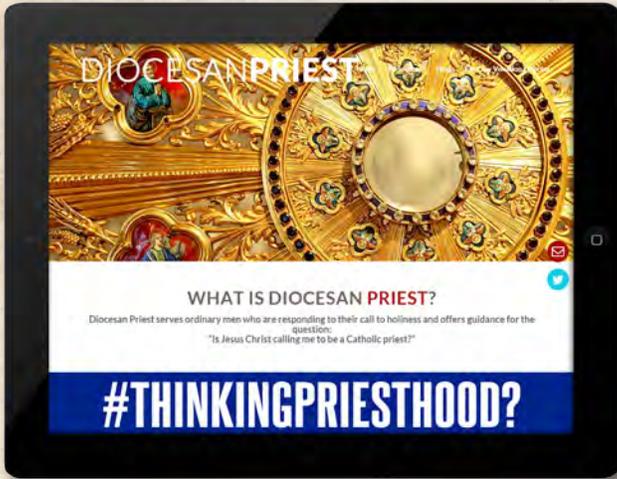
Prayer for Vocations

O God, who willed to provide shepherds for your people,
pour out in your Church a spirit of piety and fortitude,
to raise up worthy ministers for your altars
and make them ardent yet gentle heralds of your Gospel.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

*Collect of the Mass for Vocations to Holy Orders
from The Roman Missal: Third Typical Edition*

What is God Calling YOU to Do?



DiocesanPriest.com

DiocesanPriest.com serves ordinary men who are responding to their call to holiness and offers guidance for the question: “Is Jesus Christ calling me to be a Catholic priest?”

Find the answers to your questions:

- Am I being called?
- What does it look like?
- Who do I talk to?
- What can I read?
- What do the saints say?
- What do the popes say?

Read the blog, use the interactive Vocation Director Finder, and discover what it means to be a Diocesan Priest!



Catholic Youth Expeditions

It's pretty simple. Catholic Youth Expeditions is an ecclesial community of the New Evangelization. JP II states in Pastores Dabo Vobis, “ecclesial communities are not antithetical to the Church. Rather they regenerate its historical and existential nature.” In other words, “They’re IMPORTANT!”

Jean Vanier, founder of L’Arche Communities states, “Our world has more and more need of ‘intermediate’ –places where people can find a certain interior freedom before they make their decision. A place where they can discover their deep selves.”

That’s what we are...a place where interior freedom can be discovered through love, mercy and forgiveness. We are a pre-formative intermediate community for young adults who want to follow Jesus Christ and His Church plain and simple. We are all about formation, not training. About people and not numbers. Souls and not money. Grace over sin. Life over death. Fun & faith over rigidity and empty ritual. A place of mercy, a place of healing. So simple, we tend to forget about it, but the thing the Church needs most.

CYE Base Camp - All of our retreat expeditions leave from this coffee house. It is the place where we gather and gear up to make an expedition to Saint Joseph Formation Center! Base Camp offers a sustained place of community for people to meet and share faith, coffee, pizza, and Door County Cherry Smoothies!

St. Joseph the Worker Formation Center is home to Catholic Youth Expeditions and the newly founded religious community, the Missionaries of the Word. It is a 7.5 acre property on the beach of Kangaroo Lake. We have men’s and women’s dorms (during fall, winter, and spring), a pizza oven and back patio, Frasatti field for intense games of ultimate frisbee, and a super simple chapel for the sacraments.

To Learn More:
cyexpeditions.org

St. Joseph Formation Center
3035 O’Brien Road
Baileys Harbor, WI 54202
920-573-0290 (north Office)

CYE Base Camp Coffee House
1000 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Appleton, WI 54914
920-574-3621 (south office)

PROJECT ANDREW

DISCIPLESHIP-PRAYER-PRIESTHOOD



JANUARY 12, 2016 • SEPTEMBER 8, 2016

**5:30 P.M. MASS WITH
BISHOP DAVID L. RICKEN**
Followed by supper and discussion

ST. MATTHEW PARISH
130 St. Matthew St., Green Bay, WI

Fr. Daniel Schuster
Vocation Director
(920) 272-8289
vocations@gbdioc.org

WWW.GBDIOC.ORG/ANDREW

CALLING HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE MEN

Please join us for a gathering of disciples open to the priesthood. Local priests, pastoral leaders, campus ministers and youth ministers are invited to bring men from among their flock.



Diocese of
Green Bay