



DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM IN ALABAMA

Office of Vocations
2121 3rd Avenue North
Birmingham, Alabama 35203
vocations@bhmdioocese.org

TELEPHONE:
205-838-2184

FAX:
205-836-1910

October 16, 2020

Dear Brother Priests,

I want to begin by thanking you for your lives of ministry and service, so needed in our church and world today. I also encourage you to intentionally pray for vocations in your parish, and urge you to pray for the wisdom to invite at least **one man** from your parish to actively discern Priesthood. If you are already aware of someone who might be considering Priesthood, please give me a call or contact the Office of Vocations. We will be happy to talk with you and answer any questions you might have about discernment or the application process. I'll share a little more about our work in the Vocations Office later, but first I want to provide an update on our seminarians.

We have nine seminarians in the formation program this year. Except for essential appointments, all men studying in the states have been restricted to campus for the fall semester.

Theology 3:

Charles Deering returned to Notre Dame Seminary for his 3rd year of Theology. He completed a summer assignment with Father Bob Sullivan at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Birmingham. Charles is expected to be ordained to the Diaconate on June 5, 2021.

Theology 2:

Daniel Sessions returned to the North American College in Rome for his 2nd year of Theology and is expected to be instituted to the Ministry of Acolyte next semester. For his summer assignment, Daniel was assigned to Sacred Heart in Anniston with Father John McDonald.

Theology 1:

Matthew Gubenski begins Theology 1 at the Pontifical College Josephinum. He will be admitted to Candidacy on November 1st and instituted to the Ministry of Lector later this year. Matthew completed a summer assignment with Father Tim Pfander at Good Shepherd Parish in Huntsville.

Pre-Theology 2:

Patrick DePew and **Max Gallegos** begin their 2nd year of Pre-Theology at the Pontifical College Josephinum. Patrick completed his summer assignment with Father Tom Ackerman at St. Francis of Assisi University Parish in Tuscaloosa, and Max was assigned to Our Lady of the Valley Parish, Fort Payne with Father Rick Chenault.

Philosophy 3:

John Gardiner begins another year of College seminary at the Pontifical College Josephinum. During the summer, John was assigned as a missionary to the Totus Tuus Program.

New Seminarians:

We welcome **Collins Hess**, **John Paul Stepnowski**, and **Andrew Vickery** to the Priestly Formation Program for the diocese. These men began Pre-Theology 1 at the Pontifical College Josephinum this fall. Each mentioned the positive influence that Campus Ministry played in their discernment.

Collins is from Madison, Alabama, and a member of St. John the Baptist Parish in Madison. He recently graduated from Auburn University with a B.S. in Software Engineering.

John Paul is originally from Greensboro, North Carolina, and a recent graduate of the University of Alabama in Huntsville where he earned a B.S. in Chemical Engineering. John Paul is a member of St. Joseph Parish in Huntsville.

Andrew is originally from Roswell, Georgia, and a member of St. Francis of Assisi University Parish in Tuscaloosa. He graduated from the University of Alabama with a B.S. in Civil Engineering.

I ask for your continued prayers for our men in formation. Enclosed, you will find the updated seminarian contact information for this year. Please feel free to send the men a word of encouragement and share this information with interested parishioners.

As November approaches, we have a couple of opportunities to focus on vocations. Again, please be intentional in your prayers for vocations in our diocese, and in encouraging men who may be considering a vocation to the Priesthood. All parishes should have received the 2020-21 Seminarian Poster and Prayer Cards. Please contact Kristin Sessions if you need more materials for your parish.

SEMINARIAN EDUCATION FUND (OCT 31/NOV 1, 2020): As you know, donations to this fund, from parishes and private donors, are vital to the education of our seminarians. Tuition and fees are approximately \$42,000 per Seminarian per year. Please consider placing the attached SEF brochure (provided in English and Spanish) in your bulletin the weekend of November 1st, which is also the beginning of National Vocations Awareness Week. I encourage you to emphasize the importance of this fund and the need for priestly vocations in our diocese. A word from the pulpit would go a long way in support of our seminarians.

NATIONAL VOCATION AWARENESS WEEK (NOV 1-7, 2020): As your parish promotes all vocations this week, I ask that you devote a specific time of Eucharistic Adoration for an increase in vocations to the Priesthood in our diocese. Please take a moment during Mass to invite your parish to pray for priestly vocations, and to encourage men who may be considering Priesthood to speak with you. If you need vocation materials or assistance, please contact Kristin Sessions in the Office of Vocations. She will be happy to assist you.

Just a reminder that if you have someone interested in entering seminary in Fall 2021, now is the optimal time to contact the Vocations Office.

Finally, I want to remind you of the upcoming Diocesan Vocation events:

December 21, 2020: Seminarian Christmas Dinner at St. Stephen's University Chapel

January 4-7, 2021: Discernment Retreat offered by the Josephinum (Pre-T only); this retreat is offered during the winter break so that college students may attend.

January 14-16, 2021: Live-In Weekend offered by the Josephinum

February 19-21, 2021: Diocesan Priestly Discernment Weekend

June 5, 2021: Diaconate Ordination of Charles Deering

As always, I am grateful for your hard work, prayers, and continued support of vocations in our diocese. It is the joy of your priesthood, coupled with God's grace, that will encourage more men to answer the call to serve as priests in the Diocese of Birmingham.

In Christ,



Very Reverend Richard A. Chenault, Jr.
Vicar for Vocations

Enclosures

RAC/krs