

## Welcome to Fr. Booth!

This weekend, we are happy to welcome Fr. Steven Booth who has been assigned to St. Julie's as the parochial vicar. Fr. Booth was just recently ordained this past June as a priest of the Diocese of Fall River. He is also a chaplain in the United States Navy and has just completed his officer training program.

Ordinations to the priesthood these days are relatively rare. Our diocese ordained only one priest last year, only one priest this year, and is scheduled to ordain only one priest next year. So, it is rare that a parish receives a newly ordained priest.

There are many reasons why priestly ordinations are rare these days. As a result of our secular society and culture, many young men are simply not interested in the divine mysteries and the sacred work of the priesthood. This cultural trend has also caused an overall loss of faith and the undeniable reality that the Church in New England is experiencing a steady decline in attendance and practice of the Catholic faith. As a result, we see the consolidation and closing of parishes, and some fear that the present pandemic may cause an eventual acceleration of this process. Less practice of the faith also brings the sad reality that fewer Catholic parents these days would recommend or encourage their sons even to consider whether Christ may have chosen them to be one of His priests. And, of course, many young men are hesitant to make the required sacrifice of celibacy, which also seemed unimaginable to many of us priests when we were discerning the vocation.

In honesty, it must also be said that the repeated and painful revelations of sinful behavior of priests have made many people suspicious of priests, and this has lessened an appreciation of the nobility and dignity of the priesthood. (That's exactly what scandal does, by the way – it prevents people from discovering the truth.) And more recent revelations of corruption in the hierarchy of the Church have also made many young men hesitant about taking a vow of obedience which would bind them in service to the Church for life. All of these reasons make some observers think that it may be a long time before we see more men answer the vocation to the priesthood.

So, we are blessed, as a parish, to receive the newest priest of our diocese for his first assignment. It so happens that I was Fr. Booth's formation advisor in the seminary for the past four years, so I imagine he might have been looking forward to getting away from my constant instruction and direction. But I am thankful to God to have him as a brother priest, and to have him here at St. Julie's, because I know how much he loves God, how faithful he is to the teachings of Christ and the Church, and how much he wants to help others discover the beauty of life with Christ. As you will discover, he is also a fun and joyful guy. So, please join me in welcoming Fr. Booth, as he begins his priestly work here at St. Julie's.