

Life in the Seminary

What follows here is a description of the requirements and activities that are required to be a priest. Yes, they are *requirements* but I can honestly say I enjoyed many of the classes and ministries.

August 2000 - August 2002 The Pre-Theology Years

At the end of the August 2000, I quit my job and moved to Becket Hall, the pre-theology house for the Diocese of Rochester. The requirements for formation and studies consist of two stages. Major seminary is graduate level studies in theology and formation meetings. Prior to entering major seminary students must complete courses in philosophy and religious studies. This is known as Pre-theology. At the time I entered the requirement was 24 hours of undergraduate philosophy and 12 hours of religious studies with appropriate formation while completing course work. Since then the *Program for Priestly Formation* has been updated. Subsequently, the current requirement was changed 30 hours of philosophy, 12 hours of religious studies, and two years of formation.

While completing the pre-theology requirements we live at Becket Hall and complete the academic portion of the requirements at the local colleges. At Becket Hall, one has monthly meetings with a spiritual director and periodic meetings with the rector for formation.

Formation in the seminary is not just about academic studies. There are four pillars of formation, intellectual (academic), spiritual, pastoral, and human. A well-formed priest needs to be formed in all these areas. The intellectual formation is for knowledge about the Catholic faith. Spiritual formation is for the development of one's relationship with God and the prayer life that goes with it. Pastoral formation involves a few hours a week of direct ministry to the people and sharing what the ministry work means for you. Human formation is for awareness of emotional and psychological development of the priest. (For a more complete description of the four pillars see the *Program for Priestly Formation* and *Pastores Dabo Vobis -I Will Give You Shepherds*.)

While at Becket Hall I completed a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy with the following coursework.

Philosophy

- Introduction to Philosophy
- Introduction to Ethics
- Basic Logic
- Ancient Philosophy
- Medieval Philosophy

Religious Studies

- Introduction to Old Testament
- Introduction to New Testament
- The Church
- Introduction to World Religions
- Sacramental Theology
- Theology and Spirituality of the Laity
- Introduction to Islam

- Renaissance Ministry
Philosophy
- Modern Philosophy I assisted with the Youth Groups at St. Boniface Parish and also
- Metaphysics assisted with their group of Ministers of Communion who took
- Philosophy of Education Communion to nursing home residents.
- Philosophy of Law
- American Philosophy

I spent my summers in 2001 and 2002 working as the Chaplain at Camp Babcock-Hovey, a Boy Scout Camp for the Finger Lakes Council.

During this period I made my first week long retreat at Stella Maris in Skaneateles, NY.

In May 2002, I was approved by my Bishop to begin studies at Theological College Seminary in Washington, DC with academic classes at the Catholic University of America.

August 2002 - May 2007 The Major Seminary Years

In addition to the academic classes, there are Formation Talks by the Rector followed by group discussions. I also had a Formation Advisor and Spiritual Advisor to assist me with my human and spiritual development as a Christian person.

The following is an outline semester by semester of the time I spent in major seminary including the classes and ministries I completed. Under the pillar of human formation is the importance of taking some time for ourselves. I would take a walk everyday just to get out of the seminary. Periodically I would visit some of the museums in the Washington, DC area.

Fall 2002

- For my first semester (Fall 2002) I served as Secretary for the House Social Justice Committee and I completed the following classes:
 - Latin for Reading Comprehension
 - Introduction to Christian Spirituality
 - Introduction to the History and Methods of Theology
 - Introduction to the Christian Moral Life
 - Proseminar

Spring 2003

- We started the semester with a 5 day retreat. I was at Priestfield Pastoral Center.
- I continued to serve as Secretary for the Social Justice Committee. I completed the following classes:
 - Pauline Letters

- Christology
 - Theology of Church
 - Marriage and Family
- I also did Direct Service to the Poor Ministry by working at Damien Ministries Food Pantry approximately three hours a week.

Summer 2003

- I completed my first parish assignment. I was assigned to St. Mary's in Auburn, NY with the Pastor Rev. Robert Schrader. Some of my duties included preaching regularly at weekday masses, hospital and home visits, religious education, Vacation Bible School, assisting at funerals (I did one Committal Service), and I assisted with the parish activity for the Diocesan Capital Campaign, Partners in Faith. Lastly, I assisted with the implementation of the new *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*.

Fall 2003

- I served as Chair of the House Social Justice Committee for the 2003/4 academic year.
- I began my Basic Supervised Ministry at the Jeanne Jugan Residence for the Aged run by the Little Sisters of the Poor. Basic Supervised Ministry is a practicum class with two hours of lecture a week and 5 hours spent working in ministry under the supervision of the staff of the facility. Most of my work will be one on one ministry or leading small groups. Generally, it is most commonly done at a hospital or nursing home but other types of assignments are possible. The Jeanne Jugan Residence where I will be houses elderly poor ranging from those capable of independent living to those who need regular nursing assistance.
- I completed the following classes:
 - Introduction to Liturgical Preaching
 - The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, & Luke)
 - Basic Principles of Canon Law
 - Basic Supervised Ministry I

Spring 2004

- We started the semester with a 5 day retreat. Once again, I was at Priestfield Pastoral Center.
- I continued as Chair of the House Social Justice Committee for the 2003/4 academic year.
- I continued my Basic Supervised Ministry at the Jeanne Jugan Residence for the Aged.
- I completed the following classes:
 - Advanced Preaching
 - Gospel of John

- Canon Law and Sacramental Ministry
- Social Action Ministry
- Basic Supervised Ministry II

Pastoral Year June 2004 - August 2005

- From June 2004 - August 2004, I completed eleven (11) weeks of Clinical Pastoral Education at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, NY. I functioned as one of several hospital chaplains while working with a peer group and supervisor to improve the quality of my ministry.
- August 2004 - August 2005- I worked full-time at Church of the Assumption in Fairport, NY with the Pastor Rev. Edward L. Palumbos. I helped with funeral ministry, home and hospital visits, started a baptismal follow-up program, taught some RCIA classes, worked with a couple of the social ministry programs, the stewardship committee, liturgy committee, started a vocation awareness team, and other miscellaneous duties. There were some tough times when I have gotten very busy or had to do something I didn't care for but you have that in any job. Overall, I enjoyed my time at the parish
- One of the last things for my pastoral year was to make another retreat. This time I chose to make my first directed retreat at Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre in Niagara Falls, Canada.

Fall 2005

- I completed the following classes
 - Prophets
 - Sacraments of Initiation
 - Biomedical Ethics
 - Black Church History
- My ministry assignment this semester was at Mt. Calvary Parish in Forestville, MD. My involvement included baptismal preparation, liturgy, and Children's Liturgy of the Word.

Spring 2006

- I completed the following classes
 - Revelation and Faith
 - Early and Modern Church History
 - Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing
 - Liturgical & Sacramental Practice
- I completed my ministry assignment at Mt. Calvary Parish in Forestville, MD. My two primary duties this semester were to continue to assist at Sunday Mass and leading an adult Lenten program discussing the history of Lent in the Church, Stations of the Cross, conversion, and fasting. This was a small group of about twelve people. It was a great job who were very interested and asked lots

of questions which I like because it shows they really are interested. I also assisted at the Easter Triduum and the parish Confirmation Mass.

May 22-27, 2006 Diaconal Retreat

- One of the last things I did before my ordination is to make my diaconal retreat. My Diaconal retreat is a five day directed retreat at Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre. I made my retreat just a few days before ordination and found this very helpful to clear my mind of all the little details of upcoming events and to examine my own readiness and spiritual questions before ordination. Am I ready to make the promises of diaconal ordination? With God's grace, yes.

On June 3, 2006 I was ordained a Transitional Diaconate of the Diocese of Rochester at Sacred Heart Cathedral!

Summer 2006

- I returned to Church of the Assumption in Fairport, NY with the pastor Rev. Edward L. Palumbos where I had served for my pastoral year for my summer assignment. Once again I helped with funeral ministry, home, worked with the baptismal follow-up program. As a deacon, I also preached and baptized fourteen babies. Baptisms were the highlight of the summer. It is a privilege to preside at baptisms, welcoming the children into the Body of Christ. Here are some highlights of the summer.
 - On June 11, 2006 I did my first baptisms. It was a set of twin girls. It was a pretty incredible feeling to be God's instrument as these two girls received the Sacrament of Baptism and were reborn in the Spirit becoming members of the Body of Christ. It charged me up again like I was at Diaconate Ordination and Deaconing my first mass.
 - On July 9, 2006, I presided at my first baptisms outside of mass. I celebrated the Sacrament of Baptism for five beautiful infants. When I baptized the twin girls on June 11, 2006, I was not expecting to do those baptisms. There was a cancellation of another event that made me available to do the baptisms. This time, I was scheduled to baptize the five children so I spent time thinking about it, asking questions, and practicing. When the time came I did it and I believe it went well. I know I believe it was truly a grace-filled moment.

Fall 2006

- I completed the following classes
 - Christian Anthropology
 - Eucharist & Ordained Ministries
 - Doctrine of God
 - Moral Pastoral Practice Seminar
- My parish ministry this year is at St. Mark the Evangelist in Hyattsville, MD. I assisted with the RCIA program. I preached every Friday at Daily Mass and once a month on Sundays.

Spring 2007

- I completed the following classes
 - Eschatology
 - Social Ethics
 - Ministry of the Liturgical Presider
- I also wrote a paper on the Catholic school controversy in America during the 19th Century.
- I continued ministering at St. Mark's

The last item to be completed was my canonical retreat for priesthood. I made my retreat at The Abbey of the Genesee where I reflected on the Rite of Ordination and what being a priest means to me.

My Ordination to the Priesthood was June 30, 2007 at 10:30 a.m.

At Sacred Heart Cathedral.