Supporting seminarians within the Diocese of Marquette is important to Yoopers for Seminarians donors like Tim and Diane Bennett. “When we were young and raising our family and even now in retirement, it was our priests, the sacraments, and parish life that nurtured and sustained our faith,” the Bennetts said. “In the challenging times we are facing today, we need faithful and dedicated priests. Our hope is in Christ, and our priests are the living witnesses of Christ in our parish and daily lives.”

They are just one of the many families who have made a gift this year toward the Yoopers for Seminarians matching challenge. Fr. Joseph Gouin, Pastor of American Martyrs and long-time supporter of vocations in the diocese, has renewed his challenge and will make another $25,000 gift to the Seminarian Endowment if we raise $100,000 for YFS by the end of 2021.

Because of your gifts, we are now at $60,322.93 raised. These dollars help to send our eight Yooper seminarians to seminary and to promote priestly vocations across the UP.

The average annual cost to educate a seminarian for our diocese is about $40,000. The college-level men in formation are responsible for about half of the cost of their education. For pre-theology and theology level seminarians, the diocese covers 100 percent of their educational expenses.

Mark Aho, who attends St. Peter Cathedral in Marquette, says it is important to support all new candidates for priesthood. “These men have been called by our Lord to bring to all of us the Church which Jesus Christ created. We need these men to care for all of our spiritual needs.”

“Prayers are important for the seminarians and for our wonderful priests serving our spiritual needs. Let’s all support our seminarians and our priests. They are always there for us. Let’s be there for them and support them in all ways.”

BECOME A MEMBER OF YOOPERS FOR SEMINARIANS 2021
LEARN MORE: YOOPERSFORSEMINARIANS.ORG
Where do priestly vocations come from? Obviously, they are a gift from God. But God so often works through the witness and word of other people to guide us in our path. We asked a number of priests from across the generations about the role of another priest in helping them to discern the priesthood. This chain of priestly witness is just one of many that can be found around our diocese. Many people in many walks of life contribute to each one of us discovering our call from God. In this issue, we zoom in on one aspect of that.

Msgr. Michael Steber ordained 1986
“In my early 20s, I was involved in the Charismatic Renewal Movement and Cursillo, where I would often see Fr. Joe Gouin leading Holy Hours at the start of a Cursillo. When I was discerning the step to apply for college seminary, Fr. Joe gave me his support. His warmth, kindness, humor, and priestly dedication encouraged me and has always been a strength and a blessing to me. His generous, enduring priestly ministry is a powerful example yet today!” (pictured above on right)

Fr. Larry Van Damme ordained 1993
“As an NMU student discerning a priestly vocation, I was drawn to the Ordination Mass of Michael Steber in September of 1986. As I congratulated the new priest, he invited me to have lunch with him some day. When I shared my interest in the ministerial priesthood, Fr. Mike invited me to some prayer group meetings. I accompanied him on two weekend trips as he filled in for vacationing priests. Eventually, he took me to visit two seminaries. Msgr. Michael Steber’s prayerful support and priestly example helped me greatly in my discernment and led to a very supportive friendship as brother priests.” (pictured above on left)

Fr. Tim Ekaitis ordained 2007
“Fr. Larry started at St. Al’s one month before I arrived at MTU. He exhibited a contagious joy around being Catholic and being a priest, and he involved everyone in everything. He was the first priest who invited me to sing during Mass, serve at Mass, distribute communion, and volunteer. Eventually, he asked me to be a chapel rat and then to consider the priesthood. His preaching, confessions, and teachings provided me with the tools to grow and mature enough to hear God’s call to the priesthood. For that I will be eternally grateful.” (pictured above, center)

Fr. Ben Rivard ordained 2021
“Fr. Larry has been an important role model and mentor for me in my priestly discernment. When I was assigned to him in the summer of 2019 he shared story after story about things that he had learned in his ministry. There have been many times when I have found his shared wisdom very helpful and it’s helped me.” (pictured above on right, with Fr. Larry)

Bishop John Doerfler ordained Bishop of the Diocese of Marquette in 2014
“My spiritual director in college seminary was a model priest who helped me to develop my prayer life and guided me in discerning God’s call. I admired his steadfast witness of dedication to the Lord.”

Fr. Joe Gouin ordained 1965
“When I was a senior in high school, God put into my heart the desire to be a priest. I shared this with Fr. Arnold Thompson, who seemed to be expecting me to want to be a priest. He was very supportive all my seminary years, for which I am most grateful.”

Matthew Chartier preparing for diaconate, spring 2022
“Fr. Tim Ekaitis came to my home parish when I was in the seventh grade. He was active with the youth group, and he taught my faith formation classes. He allowed me to discern my vocation, while encouraging me on my journey as I keep moving forward toward the vocation of priesthood. He has truly shaped me into the man I am today.”

Our priests have a unique opportunity to give witness to the priesthood. However, every single one of us can lift up our priests in prayer asking God to work through them in a unique way.

Prayer for Priests (from USCCB)
Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our priests. Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments. Help our priests to be strong in their vocation. Set their souls on fire with love for your people. Grant them the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom. Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel. Allow them to experience joy in their ministry. Help them to become instruments of your divine grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.

Have you considered making a planned gift to the Seminarian Endowment? Find out more: dioceseofmarquette.plannmygift.org

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DURING THE DIOCESE OF MARQUETTE SEMINARIAN RETREAT 2021, seminarians and discerners enjoyed a hike in the Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness Area southwest of Baraga.

ARE YOU OR IS SOMEONE YOU KNOW OPEN TO THE PRIESTHOOD? Contact Fr. Ben Hasse, benjhasse@yahoo.com or (906) 290-2434 to talk or to learn more about upcoming events.