



YOOPERS FOR SEMINARIANS

PATH TO THE PRIESTHOOD

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Yoopers for Seminarians

SPRING 2020

Greetings FROM HOUGHTON

We're entering a new year of Yoopers for Seminarians! We had an amazing response in 2019! I hope this newsletter will continue to draw you deeper into the journey our seminarians make as they discern the priesthood.

As we've had a number of men accepted as seminarians since the school year began, we've also had a number of men "discern out." That's seminary-speak for one of the ways men stop being seminarians. It means that they, with their spiritual director, formators, and vocations director, have decided that seminary isn't where the Lord is calling them to be.

I hope you find the discussion here helpful. It's a delicate question, and each man's journey is different. Entering seminary is a true journey of self-discovery and discernment, and sometimes men find they should not continue.

Please continue to pray for each of our seminarians on this beautiful but often challenging journey! Please consider joining YFS 2020 by making a donation to support the critical work of building up a culture of vocations in the UP!

Fr. Ben Hasse
Vocations
Director



YFS 2020: Matching Challenge

During the very first year of Yoopers for Seminarians—2019—there was an amazing gift pledged to seminary education! Fr. Joe Gouin has offered a challenge gift: for every \$1,000 given to Yoopers for Seminarians, \$250 will be donated to the Seminarian Endowment (a fund of the U.P. Catholic Foundation), up to a total of \$25,000! To earn this match, then, we need to raise \$100,000 during 2020!

This is a REALLY impactful gift, because it strengthens our ability to pay for vocations promotion and seminarian education right now (the \$100,000 goal) as well as build up the Seminarian Endowment to provide sustainable funding into the future (the \$25,000 challenge gift). Both of these needs are critical: stronger current funding, and a sustainable long-term plan.

It costs our diocese an average of about \$40,000 per year to educate and form our seminarians. In the last decade, we've averaged about 10 seminarians per year, so that's at least \$400,000 per year just in education costs! Most of this funding each year comes from the Upper Peninsula Catholic Services Appeal (UPCSA). Even with our entire diocese working together, this is a big challenge to fund!

While seminary education is the single biggest cost in the vocations budget, there are other essential activities. Many people don't realize that our vocations office would typically work with a potential seminarian for one to three years up to the moment he submits his seminary application. This work of building up a culture of vocations is above and beyond the seminary education costs themselves.

Consider making a bold gift to YFS this year to take advantage of this generous matching challenge! Your gift will help us to build a culture of vocations as well as to educate our seminarians now and in the future.

BECOME A MEMBER OF YOOPERS FOR SEMINARIANS 2020. LEARN MORE.
YOOPERSFORSEMINARIANS.ORG



PRIESTLY DISCERNMENT AND SEMINARY FORMATION INVOLVE A MAN ASKING THE QUESTION “IS GOD CALLING ME TO THE PRIESTHOOD?”

Finding the answer requires the seminarian, his spiritual director, his vocations director and others to work together.

In a recent article* from the Catholic News Agency, “Discerning in, and discerning out: What happens when seminarians leave?”, Fr. James Wehner, rector of Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, said only about 30 percent of

men who originally enter seminary are ordained. While percentages may vary, one sign of a healthy formation program is that some of the men who begin discern out during the process.

HOW AND WHY DOES A MAN DECIDE TO LEAVE SEMINARY FORMATION? WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN A MAN SAYS HE HAS “DISCERNED OUT”?

The question is timely because one of our seminarians Jack Kinnunen at Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary in Minnesota decided to leave seminary formation recently. This decision was made with prayer and in discussion with his vocation director, spiritual director, family members, and friends.

The core of a vocation is a call from God. The only sufficient reason to remain on the path to priesthood is if a man is convinced he is being called to that vocation. His conviction must further be confirmed by the seminary and the bishop.

Through prayer, however, a man may discover he is not being called. In some cases, he may be ill-suited for the work that a priest does. He or his formators may reach the conclusion that he needs to step away from formation, whether for a period of time or permanently. (A related topic is when a man takes time off from seminary to pursue growth or clarity before returning to priestly formation.)

The decision to leave seminary varies for each man. Some are asked to leave; some men reach that decision prayerfully on their own. The sincere pursuit of seminary formation and a good beginning do not guarantee that a man is called or is able to continue the journey to ordination.

Fr. Ben Hasse says “Two of my close friends in seminary discerned out, one during the first year and one during the second year. Each one of them is happily married with children. They were sincere both in entering seminary, and in choosing to leave. Also, one of my best friends in seminary took time off during formation and received the clarity he needed to return to be ordained.”

A HEALTHY SEMINARY FORMATION PROCESS IS ABLE TO ENGAGE EACH MAN’S JOURNEY TO CHALLENGE HIM AND ACCOMPANY HIM IN SEEKING THE LORD’S CALL IN HIS LIFE.

In a healthy seminary formation program, good and prayerful men will begin the process and some will not continue to ordination. Please pray daily for each of our seminarians and for all the men discerning priesthood in our diocese.

*catholicnewsagency.com/news/discerning-in-and-discerning-out-what-happens-when-seminarians-leave-40636

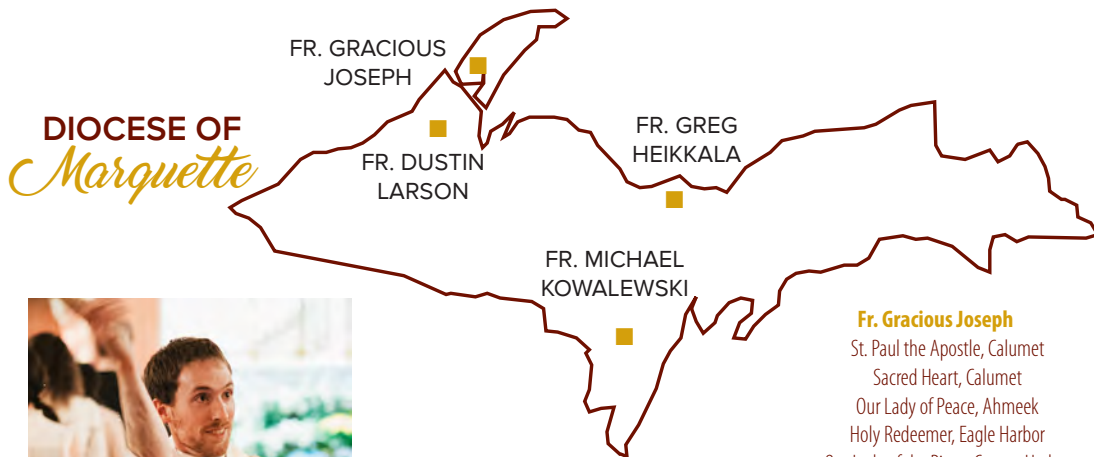
Seeking God's will

Every man's journey is distinct through formation. The program has many stages, steps, and resources. We have spoken with priests throughout the diocese to share their journey to the priesthood. We asked: What was a significant challenge you experienced in seminary? What helped you overcome that challenge? What help or encouragement did you receive to continue? What helped you continue the formation process and reach ordination to the priesthood?



FR. GRACIOUS JOSEPH PULIMOOTTIL
2009

The significant challenge I experienced in my seminary life was the question of who will take care of my parents. According to the usual custom, the youngest son has the obligation to take care for the parents. I was the youngest son and my parents wanted me to take care of them. When I was doing my philosophical studies I seriously decided to leave the seminary. I attended a retreat and counseling to know the will of God. Two Bible verses were strongly rooted in me: Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" and Luke 11:23 "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters." That question was with me until I received ordination, but those Bible verses kept me going. The grace of God helped me to go through formation. I had a personal relationship with Jesus and shared my pains and struggles with him.



FR. DUSTIN LARSON
2018

During seminary, I was trying to logically prove that I had a vocation to the priesthood. It took a while for me to realize that discernment was more about trusting the voice that I believed to be God, knowing that this voice was a voice of love that wouldn't lead me astray. As I continued praying and discerning, especially during the year I spent in Kingsford at St. Mary Queen of Peace, I began to realize this threshold of trust was what was needed to move forward. I returned to seminary. It quickly became apparent that classes were different; it was less of a "theoretical" study and more, "I know people who could benefit from this." There was a new fire in my heart that desired to share God's love with those whom I was going to be ministering to in the future.



FR. MICHAEL KOWALEWSKI
2019

During seminary, I needed to learn to be humble and allow myself to grow in areas to become an effective priest. Humility is a tough lesson to learn. It is what you win when you lose. I had some big falls, learning to love enemies, forgive, and trusting in God through dark times. Learning humility seems to always hurt, but it is essential. Through our heavenly Father's loving presence and the support of friends and family I continued to ordination. No matter how dark things could be, at the end of the day the graces always outnumbered any difficulties. Being a priest for Christ is worth any suffering endured.

Fr. Gracious Joseph
St. Paul the Apostle, Calumet
Sacred Heart, Calumet
Our Lady of Peace, Ahmeek
Holy Redeemer, Eagle Harbor
Our Lady of the Pines, Copper Harbor

Fr. Greg Heikkala
St. Christopher, Marquette
St. Michael, Marquette

Fr. Dustin Larson, Associate Pastor
St. Albert the Great, Houghton
St. Anne, Chassell

Fr. Michael Kowalewski, Associate Pastor
St. Mary Queen of Peace, Kingsford



FR. GREG HEIKKALA
1991

I was a dedicated student and found college and theology classwork to be challenging. Students helped me to better understand the material through study groups and preparing for exams. Helpful encouragement came from professors, people in formation, and seminarians. At home, I had encouragement from our diocesan bishop, priests, deacons, religious sisters, and my family. I am grateful for their example and prayers.



Yoopers for Seminarians
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Fr. Ben and Fr. Robb Jurkovich traveled to Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit with 24 young men to visit the seminary. The group included Michigan Tech students, five high-schoolers, and other seminarians and discerners from across the diocese. Pray for these men, that their hearts may be open to God's good and beautiful plan for their lives, whatever it may be!



BISHOP JOHN F. DOERFLER

Cordially invites you

TO THE

Spring Ordination

FRIDAY, JUNE 5
3:30 P.M. EDT

St. Peter Cathedral
311 W. BARAGA AVENUE
MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN