



# PRIESTS FOR TOMORROW

FALL/WINTER 2018

NEW SEMINARIANS

SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

WHAT TURTLES TEACH US

VOCATIONS FOCUS GROUPS



Congratulations to Deacons Ethan Hokamp and Brandon Guenther.

## WITNESS TO CHRIST

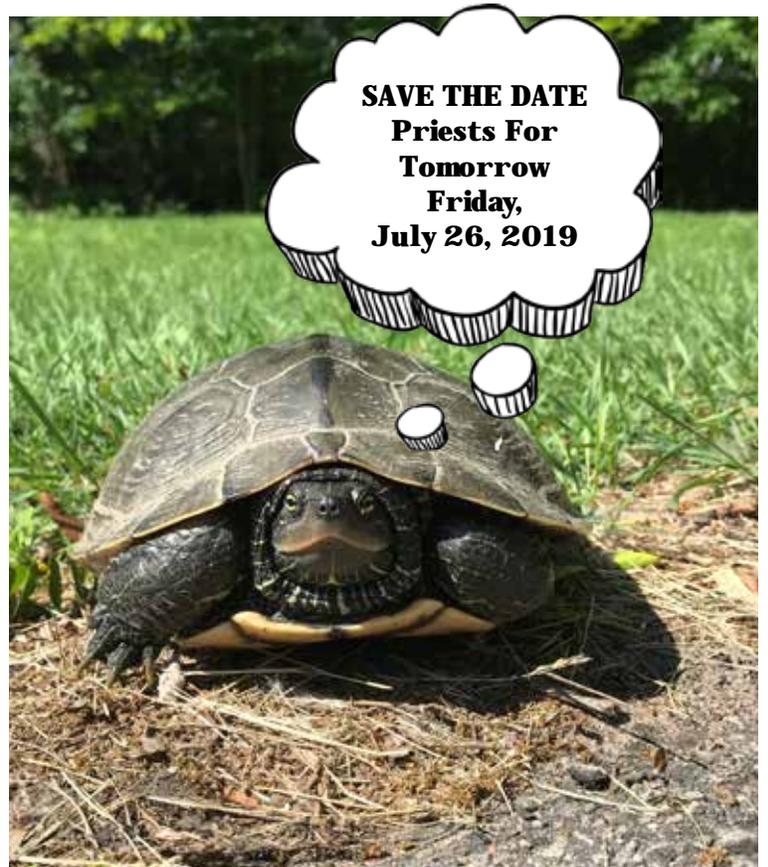
Welcome to the Fall Seminarian Newsletter! This year our theme is “Witness to Christ”. I know you will find many examples of how your 26 seminarians have witnessed Christ’s love and service this summer to people throughout the diocese and in various places around the world.

The continuing emergence of details regarding child sexual abuse has been on the minds and hearts of all of us in the vocation office as well as the seminarians. We keep all victims of abuse and their families in our prayers. Since 2002 there are stringent background checks and psychological evaluations completed on the seminarians to ensure that no abuse ever occurs in the Church

again. Please read the article Teresa Brown, the Coordinator of Safe Environment, wrote for the newsletter. In it she details the efforts to keep children safe in parishes, schools and at diocesan events.

You will notice how much is happening in the vocation office, especially over the past four months. I am continually impressed with how the seminarians embrace their formation and education. We couldn’t do any of it without your prayers, your financial assistance and kind support – Thank you!

Rev. Alan Wierzba  
Director of the Office for Vocations



# SAFE ENVIRONMENT

**S**afe Environment – What is it and why does the Diocese of La Crosse mandate that it is used in all Parishes and Schools?

We entrust our most precious gift from God, our children, to those that teach, work and volunteer in our parishes, schools, and churches. We will invest more of our time, money and often tears into our children than any car we will drive or house we live in. Often, we don't have the ability to shop around for a Catholic school or church and "test drive" several until we decide on the correct fit for our family, simply because there might only be one school or church in the community in which we live.

When we drop our children at the doors of school or church, we must know that

those people who will spend hours with them are suitable and qualified. We don't always have the luxury of knowing all the people that work or volunteer as well as we would like. How often have you said to yourself, "Who is that person, do they belong here or are they a visitor?" Many of our parishes have hundreds of families and as much as we would like to know everyone, we just can't.

As the Diocese of La Crosse, we need be able to give each family the reassurance to know that paid employees and volunteers have been trained and screened to the best of our ability prior to even beginning their assignment within the Diocese.

This is why the Diocese of La Crosse has a set of measures in place called



Safe Environment. It has established a way for us to be accountable. All clergy, seminarians, paid employees and volunteers who work with children and youth as part of their ministry must submit to a background check and have annual training. Paid employees also have fingerprinting done. Part of the annual training consists of recognizing child abuse and how to report it. Standards of good

conduct are taught to everyone with a position of trust with our children.

Safe Environment doesn't just happen at the Diocese of La Crosse, but is done throughout the country. The USCCB - United States Council of Catholic Bishops has created guidelines that are used across the United States. The focus is for a consistent, ongoing, and comprehensive approach to creating a secure environment for young people throughout the Church. There should never be a doubt or hesitation about the people involved with teaching our children.

The Diocese of La Crosse has the best interest in everyone and this is why we care enough to follow the guidelines to ensure the safety of all involved within our diocese.

Teresa Brown  
Safe Environment Coordinator

# DIACONATE ORDINATION - THE PROMISES

By Deacon Brandon Guenther

When thinking about becoming a priest for the first time I didn't know what I would be getting into. In fact, even being newly ordained to the diaconate I still don't know exactly what God has in store for me, but these years in seminary have been a great start! We are able to study philosophy and theology, take numerous workshops on pastoral ministry, learn how to celebrate the sacraments, and most importantly, spend time in prayer with our Lord, the one who calls us in the first place. One particular aspect that we learn about and reflect upon are the promises that are taken at the diaconate ordination; namely, celibacy, obedience, and prayer. At this important mo-

ment in the journey towards priesthood we make the promises that shape our daily life and identity and prepare and dispose us to celebrating the sacraments in their fullness, especially Holy Mass.

***"Since you are prepared to embrace the celibate state: do you resolve to keep forever this commitment as a sign of your dedication to Christ the Lord for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, in the service of God and man?"***

The promise of celibacy has perhaps been the most frequently asked about aspect of my call to the priesthood. In the eyes of the world there seems to be nothing quite as radical as giving up the natural goods of a spouse, spousal love, and the possibility of children. I think because the

world pays so much attention to the vow of celibacy, so does the Church, especially during seminary formation. It is important to remember that celibacy is not merely a crucible necessary to be a priest, but a gift and calling from God that also, in a way, requires sacrifice. Jesus was the perfect model of celibacy and it is to this celibacy that we are called to strive for and the gift we participate in. A celibacy that ends in perfect love and union with the Father has perfect love and sacrifice for others.

***"Do you resolve to maintain and deepen the spirit of prayer that is proper to your way of life and, in keeping with this spirit and what is required of you, to celebrate faithfully the Liturgy of the Hours with and for the People of God and indeed for the whole world?"*** The promise

of prayer is a great duty of the ordained, but it is also sustenance. We promise to pray for the People of God and to offer them the sacraments; the Liturgy of the Hours is a natural continuation of these sacraments and offers the priest special times throughout the day to re-center himself in Christ. Again, we use Jesus as our model working tirelessly for the kingdom, but always making time for intimate prayer with the Father.

With hands joined between those of the Bishop: "Do you promise respect and obedience to your ordinary?" Again the model for obedience is unsurprisingly Jesus Christ who "humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" Philippians 2:8.

This verse, the nucleus of the larger context of Christ's Incarnation, relationship with His heavenly Father, and with us, gives the greater hermeneutic of how to understand obedience. An obedience that as St. John Paul II says can only be understood in the context of: "Father, child, love." Obedience is rooted not in a "master-slave" relationship, but the relationship between a father and his beloved child; but not just any father, the Father, who calls us to Himself



in free, full, filial, transparent, and heroic obedience. A sense of duty remains, but only duty to a Father who loved us so much that He sent His only Son so that we too may call Him "Abba." This obedience extends to legitimate superiors who are and will be placed over us by God's will. Obeying them is obeying the Father and though not always easy or pleasurable in the moment, is in the end a delight to have given everything to the Father. When looking at these

promises all at once it can seem daunting, but it is a consolation that in seminary we essentially live the promises; further, God always gives us the grace sufficient to follow His call. Please pray for Ethan, myself, and the nearly 40 others ordained at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Know of my prayers for you!

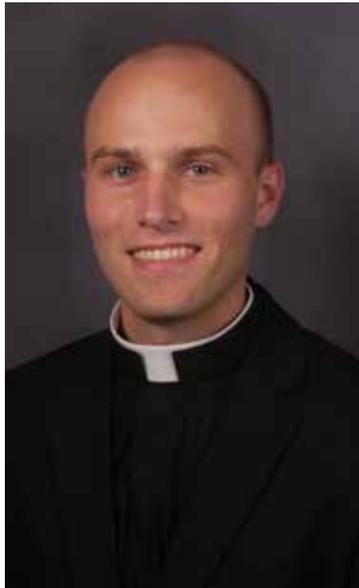
**Deacon Brandon Guenther was ordained to the diaconate in Rome at St. Peter's Basilica on September 27, 2018.**

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## Congratulations Deacons Guenther and Hokamp!

By Deacon Ethan Hokamp

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach."* These are the words the ordaining bishop says to a newly ordained deacon as the deacon is presented with the Book of the Gospels at the end of the Rite of Ordination. The act of handing on the Gospels shows what characterizes the Order of Deacon: he is a herald of the Gospel of Christ. A deacon is able to preach the Gospel at Mass and give the homily; thus, he becomes a herald of the Gospel both by his words and by his actions in everyday life. He ought to be a living example and witness to the Gospel. Along with assisting the priest at Mass, a deacon is also able to exercise his ministry of service among the community by presiding over public prayer, administering Baptism, assisting at and blessing marriages, bringing the Eucharist to the sick and dying, and conducting funeral rites.



One of the readings in the Mass of Ordination of a Deacon comes from the Acts of the Apostles and tells of the days in the early Church when the apostles chose men from the community to be the first deacons. The reading speaks of how the community of Christians had grown to such an extent that the apostles could no longer adequately balance serving the community and dedicating time to worship. Seven men were then chosen as the first deacons to serve the

community and assist the apostles. Through ordination, a deacon becomes one with Christ the servant as he assists the priest at Mass and does works of charity among the community. He is to be a living embodiment within the community of the service of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve.

On September 27, 2018, Brandon Guenther and I were ordained as deacons in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome along with thirty-nine of our classmates from the United States and Australia. It is exciting for us after so many years of seminary formation to be so near to dedicating our lives to the Church through ordination. Countless hours of study, preparation, and prayer have been spent in forming us well to be able to receive fully the grace of ordination; yet, we know that all of the effort, time, and resources that the Church has put in to forming us is not just for us but for the betterment of the whole Church. As deacons, God will ask us through our service to share with the faithful of

the Church what we have so generously been given in seminary formation.

We will spend this year finishing our studies in Rome and serving as deacons here in our seminary community at the Pontifical North American College and at our apostolic outreaches here in Rome. I myself look forward to serving as a deacon this year at St. Patrick's Parish, the American parish in Rome, which is my apostolic outreach and which will give me invaluable parish experience for when I return to the Diocese of La Crosse next summer. I hope to use this year as a deacon well in preparation for ordination to the priesthood next June in order to better serve the diocese as a priest. Please keep us and our classmates in your prayers as we seek to commit our lives as deacons in service to the Church in order to spread the Gospel of Christ.

**Deacon Ethan Hokamp was ordained to the diaconate in Rome at St. Peter's Basilica on September 27, 2018.**

# MEET OUR NEW SEMINARIANS

**Hello!**

**My name is Joseph Culligan.**

I am just entering seminary for the Diocese of La Crosse as a student in Pre-Theology 1. The beautiful city of La Crosse has been my home for most of my life. My three older brothers and younger sister went through the Onalaska school system. After graduating from Onalaska High School I had the opportunity to go to UW-La Crosse for my undergraduate where I double majored in Finance and Economics. Also, as a sophomore in college,

on Easter of 2015, I had the incredible opportunity to convert from being a nondenominational Christian to joining the Catholic Church!

I spent the year after college graduation working as a missionary for FOCUS in Aberdeen, South Dakota. FOCUS is the Fellowship Of Catholic University Students. While in Aberdeen I was able to help spread the Gospel to many college students at Northern State University. I also had a lot of time for prayer, giving me the chance to truly listen



to where God was calling me. It was during this time that I became more con-

victed that I needed to pursue Christ through discerning the priesthood. One thing led to another and at the end Bishop Callahan accepted me to be a seminarian for the diocese. I am extremely honored to be part of this wonderful diocese and am greatly looking forward to my upcoming years at St. Francis de Sales Seminary! Please pray for me!!

**Joseph is a seminarian at St. Francis de Sales Seminary near Milwaukee.**

**My name is John Regnier.**

I am a six foot eight pianist, writer, proud Catholic, and now, the tallest seminarian I know. I grew up in Prescott, Wisconsin in a big grey house surrounded by corn fields and, because of that, I will forever be in love with God's rural creation. I am the middle child of seven, and I love my three brothers and three sisters to pieces.

I remember acknowledging the beginnings of a call to the priesthood when I was seven years old. I marched downstairs and announced to my family that I was seriously considering becoming a priest. They thought it was a

great idea, and my dad even offered to buy me three dogs if I ever was ordained. Now further convinced of my call, I went on with my life as a busy seven-year-old and quickly forgot about it.

Six years later, I had my heart set on owning and running my own horse-racing facility. I didn't quite know how I was going to make it happen, but I figured that the details would work themselves out. Around that time, I began to experience a quiet call during prayer. Once I realized that it pointed towards the priesthood, I quickly shut it out. I had my plan, and I didn't want God interfering with it.



Thankfully, God didn't give up. As I progressed through high school, I attended various conferences and retreats that brought me into contact with Christ. I will never forget the first time I was inches

away from Jesus Christ in the monstrance, and it hit me that He was more real than I could ever imagine. From then on, I started to order my life around God and desired to grow closer to Him. As I fell deeper and deeper in love with my God, I began to pray, "My Jesus, I love You so much. I am willing to suffer anything for You." And one day, around Junior year, God answered with, "Then why won't you be My priest?"

This time, I answered, "I will."

**John is a seminarian at Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary in Winona.**



## PRIESTS FOR TOMORROW

By Daniel Buchal

I always look forward to the Priests for Tomorrow dinner. What is not to love? The food is always great, the music is wonderful, and it is a wonderful start to the summer gathering for the seminarians of our diocese. Besides the reasons I just mentioned, there are three reasons that I

love the Priests for Tomorrow dinner. First, I get to reconnect with many people I know. Second, I get to meet new people from different parts of our diocese. Third, I enjoy the speakers that we have heard at the dinner.

I love seeing familiar faces at Priests for Tomorrow whether it is a priest friend I know, someone I met during a volunteering event or apos-

tolic, or a brother Knights of Columbus member. It is great to hear about what is happening in their lives and the lives of their family members.

Meeting new people may be fun for me simply because I am an extrovert but it is really awesome to get to know the people I will be serving as a future priest. The individuals I have met in the diocese are incredible. The stories I have heard about the work they do for the church and others are inspiring.

The speakers at Priests for Tomorrow dinner have always

been great. Each speaker has brought an inspiring message to us about their experience in the priesthood, the Church, or simply how to better live our lives as Catholics. It is a beautiful thing to hear someone talk about the way they have impacted the lives of others.

I love the *Priests for Tomorrow* dinner. I always leave inspired and joyful to serve the people of this diocese. I am sincerely looking forward to the next dinner.

**Dan is a 2nd year College Seminarian at IHM Seminary.**



## WHAT TURTLES TEACH US

foxes come out at night to scavenge. But the most amazing time of the year has to be the months of May and June, when the turtles come up from the Mississippi River to lay their eggs.

Come May, the turtles can be seen everywhere around the grounds, and I mean everywhere. You can hardly go anywhere outside without seeing one, and often you can see them in clusters of three or four. They come to find good well-hidden places to lay their eggs so that they can hatch safely. Because of this, we have to always make sure all the garages in the building are shut, otherwise a turtle might try to lay its eggs somewhere in the building! However, the eggs aren't very safe. The foxes around the area like to pilfer the nests for food, and they're very good at it, evidenced by the many empty nests and few baby turtles.

It seems strange. The eggs are the turtles greatest treasure, so why are they so bad at guarding it?

It might seem quite stupid to us, to leave your greatest treasure where any robber who wants

to destroy it is free to do so, but as

Christians our greatest treasure

is our faith in Jesus Christ. It is

because of our faith that we

are able to hope for eternal

life in Heaven. How often

do we simply neglect it, and

leave it at the mercy of the

world and the devil before it can

even mature, and we can discover how

beautiful it really is? We must defend

our greatest treasure from those wily

foxes who would take it from us, and we

must not keep it buried, we must let it shine.

**John is a 3rd year College Seminarian  
at St. John Vianney.**

### ADVICE FROM A TURTLE

Swim with the current.

Be a good navigator.

Be well traveled.

Think long term.

Age gracefully.

Spend time at

the beach.

By John Duranso

The Holy Cross Diocesan Center is a place where humans and animals are able to coexist much more peacefully than many other places. At least, that's how it seems to me, having grown up in the suburbs of the urban metropolis known as Wausau. Birds have man-made birdhouses located all over the grounds, a doe and her two fawns freely roam the grounds without fear of predators or hunters, and

## VOCATIONS FOCUSED GROUPS

### LA CROSSE VOCATIONS SOCIETY

By Richard Bottelberghe

The La Crosse Vocation Society (formerly Serra Club) is devoted to encouraging vocations to the priesthood and religious life. It was founded over 50 years ago in La Crosse and has continuously been meeting at least monthly to keep informed of the training of seminarians. In addition, members hear a topic relevant to our times from guest speakers covering a broad range - mission activities, book re-

leases, campus ministry, pastoral ministry in hospitals and the jail, Catholic Charities activities, duties of the Curia offices, pilgrimages including World Youth Day, and others. It is an enrichment for our members to know what the Universal Church is doing. However, our major emphasis is on vocations, both encouraging consideration of service, and in continued support. Each year our group hosts a fund-raiser golf outing to financially support the Vocations Office's activities. We have been able to

present the office with about \$10,000 each year from this event. We also remember all our diocesan seminarians at Christmas time with a card and gift. In addition, you will find our membership involved with the televised Masses, and with assistance at Priest Unity Days and with the Seminarians' Christmas Party. Our monthly gatherings include prayer for our seminarians, plus we have a yearly Evening of Reflection with our seminarians and Religious to nourish our own souls.



## SERRA CLUB

Phil Parker is the President of the Wisconsin Rapids Serra Club. They are the only remaining SERRA club in the diocese and they meet every 1st and 3rd Friday. Because they are an aging group (one member is 100 years old and has been involved with Serra Club for 67 years!), they no longer hold fundraisers so a portion of dues each member pays goes into a seminarian fund. Each member also donates whatever extra they can towards

the fund, which usually adds up to about \$100 per member per year. This past August they gave a check to the Vocations Office for \$4,000 and a \$1,000 check to Mater Redemptoris House of Formation for Woman.

Phil says they keep their luncheon meetings fairly informal, but each meeting centers around vocations in some form. They have speakers, show videos, or share stories. They always say special prayers for priests, seminarians, and those who are discerning.



The Knights of Columbus have always been big supporters of our seminarians. Many seminarians are Knights themselves. This past year over \$28,000 was donated to our men from the RSVP program. Below is a description of the RSVP program from Fred LeSavage.

“Through the Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP) the Knights of Columbus has cultivated spiritual soil for more than 30 years. While the order has a number of vocations programs, RSVP is the primary program through which councils, assemblies and circles provide financial and moral support to men and women preparing for the priesthood or religious life. Every council, assembly and circle is encouraged to participate.

RSVP allows councils, assemblies and squire circles to “adopt” one or more seminarians and provide them with financial assistance and moral support.

Money provided by RSVP is used by seminarians and those in religious formation for tuition and books, car insurance and maintenance, travel during vacations, emergency expenditures and other

**“The Knights of Columbus was founded by a priest in 1882. Its primary reason was to support clergy. We get great satisfaction from doing this and are happy that we can aid in the development of their calling.”**

— Dennis Koranda, District 4125, Tomah Comptroller, District Deputy

Bill Jaekel of Assembly 1195 explained the differences in councils and assemblies. 1st, 2nd and 3rd degree Knights are Councils. The councils are more focused on parishes. 4th Degree is an assembly. To become a 4th degree Knight you go through an exemplification process. The assembly is more patriotic. They try to line up with the Bishop’s calendar and support the work that he is doing.

living expenses. Knights provide more than financial support though; members write letters to students, sponsor dinners for them, invite them to join the council and, most importantly, pray for vocations.”

Usually someone from the one of the KC councils contacts the Vocations Office regarding which seminarians could use extra help at the time. Some groups have a connection to a particular seminarian and want to give financial support to him. Sometimes they request seminarians from their area, and other times they ask who is most in need.

In talking with some of the Knights I asked how these funds are raised. There are Chicken Q’s, pancake breakfasts and more! Dennis Koranda of District

4125 notes that his council has dinners and other fundraising events asking for a free will donation. They also have a trust fund and the interest from it provides 4-8 scholarships each year. This fund has been active for about 15 years.

The 3rd Degree Knights of Columbus has a wonderful fundraising program called “Sentiments For Seminarians.” They used to collect toiletries to distribute to the seminarians and in the past few years it is gift cards (mostly for gas). It’s a great way to help out the men as they travel between parishes and all over the diocese.

Whoever you talk to about the Knights of Columbus, you will always get the same kind of response.....

**“RSVP program and the seminarians are really sacred to the councils. As difficult as it is sometimes to raise funds, we will do whatever we can to help them! They are critical to the longevity to our church.”**

Bill Jaekel, Assembly 1195

**“The Knights of Columbus stand proudly for our priests and pray for their ministries. By participating in RSVP, we trust we will reveal to seminarians that they are not alone in their journey and have the support and prayers of our entire membership.”** — Fred LeSavage, District 4125, Tomah

# SUMMER GATHERING

By David Nowicki

For us seminarians, the summer gatherings evoke an anticipatory familiarity, a nostalgia of expectation. Most of our time is typically spent at the Holy Cross Diocesan Center in fraternity with each other, Fr. Wierzba, and Bishop Callahan. We get to catch up with our brothers who attend other seminaries, playing card games, board games, and sports. The week is restful and refreshing. If there is a trip associated with the gathering, it seldom lasts longer than a day or two.

Imagine our surprise when we received the email from Fr. Wierzba that read, “For the seminarian gathering this year, we are looking at taking a bus trip - to the Badlands!” Thanks to the generosity of a beloved benefactress, our preconceptions about this year’s seminarian gathering were quickly tossed out the window. Instead of spending most of our time in La Crosse, we would now spend four of our five days together in western South Dakota, surrounded by Black Hills, Badlands, and bison. New excitements arose of adventure and of the unknown.

After a Monday at the Diocesan Center, we departed for South Dakota early on Tuesday morning. The eleven-hour bus ride was the perfect prelude to our destination, amplifying our anticipation. We watched the familiar forests of Wisconsin and Minnesota give way to the wide swaths of field and pasture in eastern South Dakota. These expanses became drier and more rolling the further we progressed. Toward the end of the day’s drive, we witnessed the Black Hills rising and the valleys of the Badlands descending to the place God had appointed them. It was at the Diocese of Rapid City’s Terra Sancta Retreat Center that we would spend the rest of our seminarian gathering.

The next day we set out for the Pine Ridge Native American Reservation. There we met diaconal candidate Bill White. Bill introduced us to the life of Servant of God Nicholas Black Elk, a Lakota medicine man who was received into the Church in 1904. Black Elk’s life of catechesis to the Lakota was inspiring in the face of great hardships endured on the reservation, even today. Toward the



end of our time with Bill White, he took us to the grave of Nicholas Black Elk. To pray at the final resting place of such a witness to Christ was powerful and unforgettable. At the end of the day we traveled to a classic symbol of America, Mount Rushmore. Against a dusky sky, the relief carvings of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt became aglow with spotlights. Here, visiting veterans were honored in a beautiful reminder of the freedom they fought for.

The next day we explored the natural beauty of the Black Hills, both high and low. We began our day underground as we ventured into Wind Cave National Park, a twisting maze of subterranean passages with an alien beauty unknown to the ground above. The park ranger leading our tour was knowledgeable about both the cave formations and the way out—all the hallmarks of a good cave tour guide. Following Wind Cave was an above ground bison sighting and exploration at Custer State Park, a favorite outdoor recreation spot in the Black Hills. Our day ended with time to spend with our seminarian brothers at the retreat center. Many used this time to gather in fraternity, playing ultimate frisbee and gathering around a campfire.

The next day we retraced our steps

back to La Crosse. This time, the landscape slowly morphed back to familiarity, and the joy from our days of fraternity filled the bus. As with any seminarian gathering, prayer was an essential part of our trip, and nowhere was that truer than during our pilgrimage detour to the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Fr. Wierzba celebrated Mass for the seminarians, and we prayed our holy hour in the tranquil cathedral. It was the perfect opportunity to thank God for the blessing of this trip. Spiritually nourished, we boarded the bus for the final stretch of the journey. In a few hours we departed the bus for the last time in the parking lot of the diocesan center, filled with memories of our four-day experience.

This year’s seminarian gathering offered us a new chance to grow in fraternity, virtue, and love of Christ. The backdrop of the Black Hills was a beautiful repose between summer assignments and the return to seminary life. The activities were refreshing opportunities to share a common experience with each other. The journey truly was an example of “How good and how pleasant it is, when brothers dwell in unity!” (Ps. 133:1).

**David is a 2nd year Pre-Theologian at Mundelein Seminary.**





# NICHOLAS BLACK ELK

By Timothy Reither

This year for the annual summer seminar-gathering, a benefactor took all of us out to a retreat center in Rapid City, South Dakota. It is a testimony of the grace of the Holy Spirit that after an 11 hour bus ride we would still be enjoying each other's company and I very much continued to enjoy the time spent with my brother seminarians for the remainder of our trip. We would go on to see all the greatest sights of South Dakota, including some heads carved into a rock and some buffalo which were making Fr. Wierzba a little nervous that one of us would be gored, but my favorite part of the trip was our visit out to the Great Sioux Reservation.

After a slight mix up as to which end of the national park we were going to meet at, we arrived at a ranger station where we met our guide, a deacon candidate for the Diocese of Rapid City who was also the promoter of the cause of canonization of the new Servant of God Nicholas Black Elk. We followed our guide as he led us into the heart of the reservation to the little country church of St. Agnes, where Nicholas Black Elk had once lived and worked. Black Elk was known as a medicine man and a visionary among the natives. After the death of his first wife, he converted to Catholicism and served as a lay catechist to teach the faith to his native people. His zeal for teaching the faith came from an earlier

vision he had in which he came to understand that all peoples must learn to come together and live as one. After visiting the church, we walked about a quarter mile to see his grave. The poverty of the area showed in the cemetery as all the graves were overgrown with weeds and there were horses grazing among the monuments. Towards the back of the cemetery, in a small clearing of the weeds, was set a sign with the words "Black Elk's Grave" and little tombstone to mark the spot. After spending a year studying in Rome, *it was by far the humblest grave of a future saint that I had ever seen, and yet, there was something there that united him to all the great cathedrals and monuments of the saints of Europe. His faith in Christ was no different than theirs.*

After taking some time in silent prayer we returned on the way back to the church. Along the way, we met a man who was visibly agitated at the sight of all of us strangers walking around the cemetery where his relatives were buried. Our guide explained that we were there to pray to Nicholas Black Elk for the union of all peoples. On hearing this, he calmed and even asked if we would



pray for the kids in a neighboring house who were struggling with substance abuse. We said we would and he shook our hands with a smile on his face.

Our pilgrimage to the tomb of Nicholas Black Elk I will remember as I begin my second year of theology studies in Rome. The great "oneness" of our faith is treasure wherever it is found, and I pray that one day he will be raised among the company of our saints.

**Timothy is a 2nd year Theologian at Pontifical North American College.**

# DARE AND THRESHOLD RETREATS

By Isaac Wolfe

The vocations retreats that we hold over the summer are an essential part in the process of having young men be open to the call of priesthood. The first retreat that we hold over the summer is called "Dare to Follow". The retreat is for boys from grades six to ten. It is a very formative time especially for cultivating vocations. The retreat, while of course being focused and looking at the possibility of a call to priesthood, is also very influential for the kids to understand a little bit more about priests and seminarians. We are able to show them that priests and seminarians are normal people too and we come from places and situations very

similar to theirs. I remember when I went to the Dare to Follow retreat, while at the time I was still working on accepting my own call it helped me to understand a bit better what seminarians and priests were like. They do all sorts of physical activities and have different hobbies.

We also have our "Threshold" retreat, which is for those who have done some discerning and are on the threshold of being able to apply to be a seminarian for the diocese. It is typical for those who are juniors or seniors in high school. This retreat is more focused on the typical life of seminary and on more focused discernment on whether or not to apply. This is usually a smaller group of guys so it is far more individualized. Both of



these retreats, as I have said, have a big impact on shaping and cultivating the future priests of the diocese. It is a time for them to step away from the normal everyday life of the summer and to look deeper into whether or not they feel they have a calling to be a shepherd.

**Isaac is a 2nd year College Seminarian at IHM Seminary in Winona.**



## PRIESTLY ORDINATION - WE ARE A LIVING SACRIFICE

By Steven Weller

Fathers Kyle Laylan and Barry Saylor are our two newest priests for the Diocese of La Crosse! Praise God for His gracious gift to us, and please pray for our priests. This article I offer as a reflection for all to marvel at the profound mystery in the priesthood. For if we marvel at it and understand it a little, then we who work with priests can marvel at our own profound role in salvation history. I will begin with the ordination rite itself from this summer.

The priest candidates made several promises in the ordination Mass before the bishop ordained them. Each promise bound the priest to do something, such as obey, pray, and celebrate sacraments. Yet, one promise stole my attention because it was a promise to be something. The priest candidates promised to “be united” to Christ the High Priest, a pure Sacrifice for the salvation of all. This promise reflects not so much what the priest does, but rather who he is. He is another Christ, a sacrifice offering his life and giving it up in every way for the salvation of others. His identity as sacrifice will help us understand his ministry and by extension part of our ministry.

At Mass, the priest makes a promise of this sacrifice. He takes the chalice saying that it is Jesus’ Blood which “will be poured out for you.” He then raises the chalice. How humbled he must be to see his reflection as the person of Christ who just consecrated the wine! A priest’s schedule, breaks, work, relaxation, and everything are no longer his own because he promised to be united to Christ, a sacrifice who offers everything for the salvation of souls. His collar declares to the world that his work is not schedules or balancing budgets all day. Rather it declares that he works on God’s time; he works for the interruptions, the ordinary and extraordinary of life where and when God needs him.

God has graciously given us His priests to bring us closer to Him through their whole lives. Perhaps we would do well to remember them not only as our spiritual fathers, but also to remember that they are another Christ as a sacrifice. They are, in a mysterious way, carrying the cross up Calvary for the salvation of the world. We who are not priests are Simon Cyrene, Veronica, and the Centurion transformed by that witness through the sacraments the priest offers. We walk

away from him with sins forgiven, and with God Himself within us. Yet we also help him bear the cross by involvement with the parish, we wipe his face when we tell him thank you; we receive God when he offers the sacraments.

I cannot help but wonder what all those characters did after witnessing the passion of Jesus. They must have done what many of us do after interacting with the priest. They saw Jesus give up everything for salvation: so too the priest. They proclaimed the Good News to the world because they met God in a man and received His divine love. So also do we see the priest and the love of God bursting forth through him that we invite others to that same love. Simon Cyrene must have seen how Christ sacrificed every ounce of energy to carry the cross. It must be similar to seeing the priest who offers all his time and energy, even his weaknesses and struggles, for those daily visits to the man dying of cancer. For the priest, like Christ, gives up everything to give us God. When he gives up everything and we receive God, we go out and bring our loving God to the world.

**Steven Weller is a 2nd year Theologian at St. Francis de Sales Seminary**

# HOW DID YOU ENCOUNTER THE LORD THIS SUMMER?



## BRANDON GUENTHER

I encountered the Lord this summer during pastoral visits to the hospital. Jesus is truly present to those who suffer and their families in unique and often invisible ways.

## ETHAN HOKAMP

At my parish assignment this summer I had the opportunity to accompany a group of high schoolers from St. Agnes in Weston and St. Florian in Hatley down to a Life Teen Camp in Georgia for a week. While there, we did a lot of fun outdoor activities, but we also heard great talks from one of the co-founders of Life Teen and we had many opportunities to pray together. I encountered the Lord in many of those young people as I saw that, even in the midst of the difficulties they face from growing up in our world today, they too are searching for the truth and know that only God can provide them with it. It gave me great hope for the future of the Church.



## SAMUEL MCCARTY

I encountered the Lord this summer through many deep and life-giving friendships. I was able to see friends in St. Paul much more often than usual while I was there for hospital ministry, and I am incredibly thankful for the many great people in my life who call me to holiness and are just fun to hang around with! I really experienced the Lord's care for me through others this summer.

## JOSEPH RICHARDS

In my whole time in Ellsworth this summer and last semester I encountered God regularly in parishioners—usually when I was least expecting or disposed to receive his Grace. At the end of a long day I would be tired, impatient, ready to grill something and kick back, and more than once that's



when another parishioner would pull up with a gift (especially fresh produce, I LOVE fresh produce), or a word of encouragement, or even a story about how God had worked something out for them. Those were pointed reminders of his Providence.

## DANIEL WILLIAMS

I encountered the Lord in the sick and the suffering that I was blessed to minister to through my hospital ministry, called Clinical Pastoral Education, in Sioux Falls. It was in these encounters that I experienced how the Lord is close to those who are suffering. At the same time, I was able to experience how God used me to bring His presence into each hospital room. I was able to pray with them and listen to their stories which is a very humbling experience. I will never forget these unique experiences that I had and have drawn me ever deeper into relationship with the Lord as he calls me to be His minister.



## ERIC MASHAK

One instance in which I encountered the Lord this summer was through the death, Vigil Mass, and funeral of a beloved parishioner at the parish I was living at. The faith of the deceased family members, even in this terribly difficult time, was something I will never forget.

## TIMOTHY REITHER

I encountered the Lord in the many different opportunities I had working at All Saints Parish this summer. Whether it was bringing Communion to the sick or serving at Mass or RCIA meetings, I was constantly reminded that wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus' name He is present.



## STEVEN WELLER

I encountered the Lord this summer when visiting people in the hospital. Oftentimes, people need someone to talk with, and the Lord especially uses those moments to mani-

fest His peace. A suffering patient can have Jesus' peace and joy simply from a visit.

## MATTHEW BOWE

I encountered the Lord this summer in two main areas. The first area is in solitude. I can easily fall into "measuring" how "successful" my prayer went. Thus, prayer becomes very difficult when you are constantly expecting to get something. Around the end of June, I finally heard the Holy Spirit tell me that I was very focused on my "expectations." Thence, I asked Jesus, "What do You desire for me?" He simply wants me to be happy to be with Him. The second encounter was my visits to the local assisted living facility and the hospital. At the nursing home, the people were very grateful to simply receive a visitor and were very delighted when I gave them Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. At the hospital to distribute Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, it seemed that I encountered either people who were happy that I was there and very appreciative or people who were content to be by themselves that day. Either way, Jesus was there.



## BRADLEY HAAS

This summer I was at Ss. Peter and Paul parish in Independence and I encountered the Lord in the people of the parish. At seminary you do not have much interaction with the

people of God, the people we seminarians hope to serve one day as priests. The ability to be with God's people this summer and helping Fr. Woody with various ministries was a good reminder of what seminary is really all about, preparing us to serve God's people.

### LEVI SCHMITT

Because summer is more relaxed than other times of the year, I was able to encounter the Lord in quiet prayer and reflection.



His mother, Veronica, and the women of Jerusalem must have been of great consolation to Christ. Encountering Him in the ill and homebound this summer has encouraged me to provide similar consolation to others.



### ARTURO VIGUERAS

I encountered the Lord this summer in the homebound parishioners that I visited in the nursing homes and in the hospital. To me, the visits allowed me to see the face of Christ through their different joys and struggles. The homebound parishioners to me are my heroes because they bear gentle witness to the love and mercy of Christ by the way in which they embrace the different cross that they carry in their lives.

One particular homebound parishioner that I enjoyed visiting this past summer is Ruth Schmidt. Ruth would always be full of Joys. One of my favorite things that I like to do with Ruth is to laugh about the most insignificant things that were going on in our lives. I think that the picture above does a good job capturing the joys and happiness of our visits.



### DAVID NOWICKI

During my parish assignment, I got to experience Christ in those who were homebound. The people I encountered had a deep love for the Eucharist, and it gave me so much joy to

deliver Holy Communion to them or to assist them in participating in the Mass. Conversely, the Lord showed Himself to me in those who most needed love in their lives. Many homebound people receive few to no visitors during a given week. To hear about their isolation immediately brought me to the suffering of Christ, mocked and scorned during His journey up to Calvary.

The consolation that the ill and homebound receive by the presence of another person is invaluable. We cannot be witnesses of Christ to others if we are not present in their lives. During His ascent to Calvary, the sparse encounters with



### ISAAC PECHA

Saint Paul exhorts us, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). This summer, I found the Lord especially in one such imitator: the pastor at my summer parish assignment

in Chippewa Falls. Despite his erudition, this priest never regarded anything as being 'beneath him' if it benefited his flock. It was like watching a rocket scientist help a child with his homework, without being bored or overbearing, but simply being joyed to assist in the process of the child's learning. God is so good, to give us such faithful exemplars!

### DANIEL SMYTH

I encountered the Lord in the poor and suffering people of Peru. I was reminded of a profound truth in Catholicism, exemplified well by the life of St. Mother Teresa. We encounter Christ intimately in His Blood and Body at the Eucharist. Then we encounter the same Christ, wounded and abandoned in the poor.



### JOSEPH CULLIGAN

I had a wonderful encounter with the Lord this summer through my spiritual director Father Jordan Samson. We had the chance to both attend a six week training program put

on by FOCUS. During this six-weeks we had the opportunity to navigate different prayer experiences, pray with random people that would ask for his blessing, and also just spend time together. Fr. Samson really became a spiritual father to me and his amazing witness to priestly holiness and humanness is something I wish to carry into my life as a priest if God wills it for me to become one.



### ANDREW DUSHEK

I encountered the Lord this summer a few times when working as the Chaplain for Camp Phillips Scout Reservation. I met Him upon arrival, welcoming me and easing the anxiety of transitioning into the new position. I saw Him in many of my fellow staff members and in the troops we hosted every week.

### ALEX KREN

I encountered the Lord through my coworkers at Subway, and the people of Uganda on my trip to Africa. The trip to Africa was the highlight of my summer encountering Jesus in a profound way.



### JOHN ZWEBER

I was very fortunate to have spent this summer at Notre Dame Parish in Chippewa Falls. Meeting all the parishioners there was truly an enriching experience, and I was able to experience God's presence at work in the sacramental life of the parish.

### JARED CLEMENTS

This summer, I encountered the Lord through my coworkers at Perkins in Onalaska. I waited tables and I was amazed at the pastoral experience that I gained by working with average people. I made some amazing friends and had some wonderful discussions about the faith with them. It was affirming to witness Christ's love spreading around the work place. I also had many conversations with customers on a daily basis about the Priesthood and the Catholic Church. I had a few conversations with women from Blessed Sacrament and from the Cathedral that showed me just how generous our diocese is. It was an honor to witness these holy families and people coming to eat a meal at Perkins and wearing their faith on their sleeve by praying before their meals. I thank God for making this summer so amazing.



**PHILIP GRYGLESKI**

I encountered the Lord while working with youth at a Catholic summer camp called Camp Tekakwitha near Shawano, WI. I had the privilege of talking to a guy who was getting in trouble at camp. He opened up with me, and shared with me his own struggles, and I had a lot of compassion for him, even as he was getting into trouble. The Lord let me see this guy with the Eyes of Christ.

**JOHN DURANSO**

John is in Rome for a semester. With travel he had limited access to email so was not able to comment for this newsletter.

**DANIEL BUCHAL**

I encountered Jesus this summer in the new friends that I have made in the Chippewa Falls area and the men I worked with over the summer. In both cases the people I met are very willing to open up about their lives and are not afraid to ask tough questions. I felt at home around them as they chal-

lenged me to grow. I count them as a great blessing and an inspiration.

**JOSEPH PYKA**

This summer I worked at the Holy Cross Diocesan Center down in La Crosse. I worked under three different departments mostly doing maintenance and grounds keeping but I also helped out in the Vocations Office. There were two other seminarians working with me and it was through them that I really encountered the Lord. Every day was a new challenge and there were many times when we did not see eye to eye, but through the help of the Holy Spirit and some great guidance from Father Wierzba, we started to develop a beautiful friendship. With this new friendship developing we started to be more open with each other which made it possible for us to start praying with each other and for each other. It was truly a great summer, and it was through those two great men that I encountered the Lord.

**ISAAC WOLFE**

I encountered the Lord This summer in nature. I was working at the diocesan



center this summer and while not only having a lot of time outside for the work I also had plenty of time to go around La Crosse and visit a lot of the parks and beautiful sights - especially Goose Island and Grandad Bluff. It's amazing when you look at nature and creation how much serenity it can bring and how much peace is in it; a lot like the serenity and peace we have and get from the Lord.

**JOHN REGNIER**

This summer I worked in the dairy department of a grocery store. There's nothing particularly glamorous about placing yogurt on shelves, but, once I stopped and realized that Jesus was right beside me, it became much easier for me to do my work happily and well. As I went about my work, I had the opportunity to witness to my co-workers. Many of them wondered at the cheerful Catholic dairy clerk, and a few puzzled over why any teenager would ever want to enter a seminary. I didn't have any person beg to enter the Catholic Church, but I did leave my job with quite a few friends. I don't know if my co-workers could see Christ in me, but I saw Christ in them, and I thank God for giving me the opportunity to work alongside Him at the local grocery store.

## WHEN I HAVE AN AFTERNOON FREE I LIKE TO....

**BRANDON GUENTHER**

When I have an afternoon free I like to brew beer!

ticular I enjoy hosting people - good food and good conversation is a near perfect recipe.

**ERIC MASHAK**

Play sports, read a good book, or write a letter to someone.

**ETHAN HOKAMP**

I like to go running, play some sort of sport outside, read a book, or play a board or card game with friends.

**JOSEPH RICHARDS**

On a given free afternoon you can probably find me in a canoe or fishing or in the woodshop making a paddle to canoe out for some fishing.

**TIMOTHY REITHER**

When I have a free afternoon I like to read books that are not required for a class.

**SAMUEL MCCARTY**

When I have an afternoon free I like to cook dinner. I don't often have time to do this while I'm at school, but really enjoy it when I get the chance. In par-

**DANIEL WILLIAMS**

When I have a free afternoon I enjoy a few different hobbies. Lately, I have been digging into my family's genealogy which has been fascinating to see where my family comes from. Other hobbies include reading and visiting with friends

**STEVEN WELLER**

When I have an afternoon free, I like to read a good book

**MATTHEW BOWE**

When I have an afternoon free, I like to either relax, read, exercise, or enjoy fellowship with others.

**BRADLEY HAAS**

I am more of an introvert so I do enjoy spending some of my free time watching TV/movies or playing video games.

**LEVI SCHMITT**

When I have an afternoon free I like to work out, read a book and meet with friends.

**ARTURO VIGUERAS**

Going on a long bike ride and enjoying my afternoon soaking in the sun especially in the summer.

**DAVID NOWICKI**

Go for a run! I can't cover as much ground as a bicyclist, but I enjoy exploring new places while relying solely on my own two feet. Not only does it give me

the excitement and adventure of exploration, but it also provides a prayerful backdrop. Being on my own on the trail proves excellent for Scriptural meditations or a Rosary. It also is very refreshing and energizes me for the evening and next day ahead.

**ISAAC PECHA**

In a letter to St. Peter Faber (dated December 5, 1542), St. Ignatius Loyola impels St. Peter to write letters "directed to the greater service of His Divine Goodness and the greater advantage of our neighbor." I am a big fan of both St. Ignatius and of letters—especially letters in correspondence with parishioners in our diocese—so I often include letter-writing in my free afternoons. I also enjoy spending time with my fellow seminarians, particularly if we have enough time to take a day trip up to



Milwaukee. A great perk of seminary is that everybody here is actively invested in promoting fraternity, so it's easy to find company. In fact, I have a free afternoon today, so once I finish writing this newsletter update, I'm going to put on my cheesehead, march downstairs to the common room, and watch the Packers-Bears game with the Chicago seminarians. Go Pack Go!

**DANIEL SMYTH**

When I have an afternoon of free time, I enjoy making good coffee and reading. I also enjoy catching up with friends and family on the phone. Other times, I like planning dream fishing trips.

**JOSEPH CULLIGAN**

Now that I am in Seminary I don't have many afternoons free! Although on the rare occasion that it does happen I enjoy spending that time either playing the piano, reading, running, or spending time with other people.

**ANDREW DUSHEK**

When I have a free afternoon I like to go for a nice long walk or watch a good movie.

**ALEX KREN**

When I have an afternoon free I like to go golfing.

**JOHN ZWEBER**

Spend time with a friend.

**JARED CLEMENTS**

... Play sports with friends like Ultimate Frisbee, basketball, or football. I also like to play video games with my brother and cousins, not to mention talking with my sister and those I am around.

**PHILIP GRYGLESKI**

When I have an afternoon free I like to sit down, play guitar, and sing songs to the Lord. Praising the Lord simply gives me peace and life.

**JOHN DURANSO**

John is in Rome for a semester. With travel he had limited access to email so was not able to comment for this newsletter.

**DANIEL BUCHAL**

When I have a free afternoon I like to play guitar in the sun (granted I could probably play just as well in the rain but some of the enjoyment is lost there.)

Music is really soothing and I love to use it to pray. I can't think of a bad time to play music.

**JOSEPH PYKA**

When I have an afternoon free, I like to do many things, but it usually depends on where I am at. If I am at seminary, I enjoy going for hikes, playing racquetball and ultimate frisbee with my brothers. If I am home, I enjoy riding horses and sitting down with a good book.

**ISAAC WOLFE**

When I have a free afternoon, I enjoy sleeping but on the occasion of me being well rested and not tired, I also like to go into the outdoors. I like to go

fishing and spend time hiking around. I also can be found in a hammock. When in seminary though I tend to look to play racquetball with my brothers as it has quickly become one of my favorite sports.

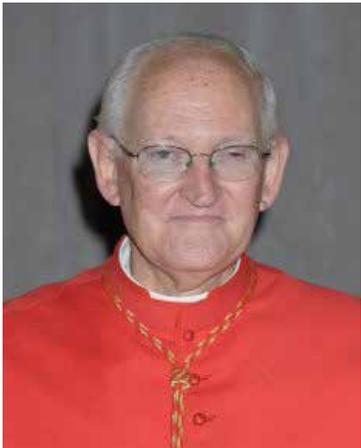
**JOHN REGNIER**

I would pack a lot into a free afternoon. I could be adventuring with my siblings or taking a quiet walk. I might ride a horse, hunt, swim, or hike in God's creation. On rainy days, I would either play the piano, read a good book, or write a few lines of poetry.





# PRIESTS FOR TOMORROW



SAVE THE DATE  
FRIDAY  
JULY 26, 2019

Keynote Address by

Cardinal James Michael Harvey

*You are encouraged to write to our seminarians as a way of showing your support and prayers throughout the school year using the addresses provided below.*

## ST. FRANCIS DE SALES SEMINARY

3257 South Lake Drive  
St. Francis, WI 53235

## PONTIFICAL NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE

Via del Gianicolo, 14  
Rome, Italy 00165

## MUNDELEIN SEMINARY

1000 East Maple Avenue  
Mundelein, IL 60060

## IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY SEMINARY

750 Terrace Heights  
Winona, MN 55987

## ST. JOHN VIANNEY SEMINARY

2115 Summit Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105

## PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Heavenly Father, Bless your Church with an abundance of holy and zealous priests, deacons, brothers, and sisters. Give those you have called to the married state and those you have chosen to live as single persons in the world, the special graces that their lives require. Form us all in the likeness of Your Son, so that in Him, with Him, and through Him, we may love you more deeply and serve you more faithfully, always and everywhere. With Mary we ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



### October

- 2 - Bradley Haas
- 6 - Timothy Reither
- 8 - Daniel Smyth

### December

- 3- David Nowicki
- 12- Andrew Dushek

### January

- 2- Deacon Brandon Guenther
- 8 - Samuel McCarty
- 19 - John Regnier
- 24- Isaac Wolfe

### February

- 7- Philip Grygleski

### March

- 13 - Eric Mashak



Vocations La Crosse Diocese



DIocese of  
LA CROSSE

3710 East Avenue South  
La Crosse, WI 54602-4004

Phone: 608-791-2667



[www.dioc.org/vocations](http://www.dioc.org/vocations)