

The Office of Vocations

Mission: The Office of Vocations is charged with the responsibility of helping men and women to discern their vocation. We do this by offering counsel, opportunities for prayer, retreats, various events, and by promoting youth engagement across the Diocese of New Ulm. The Director of Vocations also serves as the liaison for the Office of the Bishop to the seminaries where young men are formed for priestly ministry.

Vocational Accompaniment and Promotion: In terms of vocations promotion, the focus of our Office is to provide a means of accompanying men and women in their discernment of God's will for their lives. Along with the Office of Youth Ministry, the Office of Vocations believes that engaging the youth of our diocese in relational ministry and helping them to encounter Christ in our local Church are effective avenues for promoting vocations.

In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (no. 169-173), Pope Francis elaborates on “the art of accompaniment” as a necessary aspect of the evangelizing process. A person who is coming into greater self-knowledge and acceptance of a personal relationship with God within the Church needs the support of many—friends, family, and mentors—in order to persevere in conversion and to attain the holiness that God desires for him or her.

The Office of Vocations takes on a particular responsibility in accompanying our young men and women in their Christian lives. We strive to form our youth to be faithful Catholics who are united to God in a relationship founded on the sacraments and actualized in a life of authentic prayer. This formation provides a necessary foundation for our men and women to be able to discern their vocation, be it to the priesthood, religious life, or marriage.

The Director of Vocations aims to assist the parishes of our diocese to provide pastoral care and spiritual accompaniment for their young people, especially those who may be discerning a vocation to the priestly or consecrated life.

Formation of Seminarians: Of course, promoting vocations is only part of the work entrusted to the Office of Vocations. The Vocations Director is also charged with the responsibility of overseeing the formation of our seminarians. Our diocese has been blessed with many fine and holy young men who have responded to God's invitation to discern a priestly vocation at the seminary. (More information about our seminarians can be found on our Diocesan website.)

We are blessed to have excellent seminary formation programs for our men. Our diocese is intentional in selecting seminaries that provide opportunities for growth and vocational discernment for our seminarians. Presently, all of our seminarians are in formation at the Seminaries of St. Paul: St. John Vianney College Seminary and the St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity.

The seminary formation program stresses growth in four principal areas as outlined in the Program for Priestly Formation. We call these the pillars of formation: spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral formation.

The Director of Vocations keeps in regular contact with our seminarians and assists them in their formation. The Office provides opportunities throughout the academic year and the summer months to gather the seminarians for retreats, days of reflection, and fraternity. We also coordinate parish

placement assignments for our seminarians to provide them with opportunities for hands-on experience of parish and diocesan life.

Forming young men to be holy and capable priests is of paramount importance for the well-being (spiritual and temporal) of our diocese and of our parishioners. It is the privilege of this Office to work directly with these men and to support them in their discernment and preparation.