

Come Follow Me: A Seminarian's Journey

Installment 1 – “The Call”

1. The Meaning of “Vocation”

- When we pray for “vocations” we are using a word from Latin meaning “callings” (*vocare* = “to call”). We are praying that God would *call* people to the priesthood or religious life.
- God calls people (as he did me) in various ways. He makes his will known in prayer and in signs.

2. God Calls... In the Silence of Prayer

- While at NDSU I got involved with St. Paul's Newman Center. I started praying in Eucharistic adoration for one hour each week on Thursday evenings.
- During that time of prayer, I asked the Lord, “Did you want me to become an engineer? Lord, what do you want me to do?” In the silence of my heart, I heard three words in response: “BE MY PRIEST.”

3. God Calls... Through Other People

- God sometimes uses subtle interactions, such as a parishioner telling a young man, “Have you ever thought about being a priest?” A seed is planted.
- One evening at the Newman Center, I went to confession after daily Mass to Fr. Cheney. Afterwards, he said, “I forgot to announce this at Mass, but there is an Operation Andrew Dinner at Bishop Folda's house tonight for young men considering the priesthood. Would you like to come?” The thing was, *I hadn't told him I was thinking about the priesthood*. I went to the dinner—I felt God was speaking through him.

4. God Calls... In Retreat Experiences

- Retreats can be powerful times of encounter with God. As I was discerning the priesthood, I went on several retreats that called me deeper into love for God and a desire to do his will.
- I went on a “Koinonia” retreat through the Newman Center, a national “SEEK” conference for college students in Nashville, TN, and a “Vianney Discernment Weekend” through the Diocese of Fargo.

5. God Calls... Through Sacred Scripture

- As I was discerning this call to the priesthood, I read and prayed with Scripture using a method called *Lectio Divina* (“Divine Reading”). I would listen to God speaking to me through the words of Scripture.
- Verses like, “Immediately they left their nets and followed him” (Mt 4:20), or “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5) were God's ways of inviting me to the priesthood. God can speak to us through these words and phrases of Sacred Scripture.

6. God Calls... With the Help of Mary

- Mary always points us to her Son. Praying the rosary became a powerful way of allowing Mary to lead me to Jesus and his will for my life.
- As I meditated on the mysteries of the Rosary, I heard Jesus calling me to the priesthood—the Wedding Feast at Cana (2nd Lum. Mystery): “Do whatever he tells you,” or the Transfiguration (4th Lum. Mystery): “This is my Beloved Son; listen to him.”

7. God Calls... To Give Us Peace

- Whether God calls a young person to priesthood, marriage, or religious life, he wants that person to be at peace, to be happy. This is what happens to us when we do God's will—He gives us peace.
- As I studied engineering, I was becoming dissatisfied, unhappy, and lacking in peace. Christ, the Prince of Peace, wanted to give that peace by showing his plan for my life, which I still believe to be the priesthood.

-So, let us continue to pray for vocations, for God still calls—and often in unique and varied ways.

(Next week – Installment 2 – “Levels of Seminary”)