

## Come Follow Me: A Seminarian's Journey

### Installment 5 – Seminarian Ministries

#### 1. An Overview

- As a seminarian progresses through his years of theology, he receives special “ministries” from the bishop. These become like steppingstones to the priesthood, or quite literally “Rites of Passage.”
- In the Diocese of Fargo, Bishop Folda installs the seminarians into their new ministries at the end of the summer before we return to our seminaries. So, what exactly are these ministries?

#### 2. Candidacy – Summer Before 1<sup>st</sup> Theology

- In this rite, the seminarian publicly declares his will to offer himself to God and the Church as a priest. He officially becomes a “candidate” for Holy Orders (diaconate and priesthood).
- The seminarian has spent a few years in formation thinking on a personal level whether he wants to become a priest. In some ways, he “turns over” his discernment to the Church—the priests in charge of his formation now play a greater role in determining whether the man is truly called to the priesthood.

#### 3. Lector – Summer Before 2<sup>nd</sup> Theology

- The lector is instituted to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel. This can include the responsorial Psalm and the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful.
- An instituted lector is called to proclaim God’s word in evangelization and catechesis, to meditate upon it, and to grow more in love with the Scriptures through study.

#### 4. Acolyte – Summer Before 3<sup>rd</sup> Theology

The acolyte is instituted for service at the altar and to assist the Priest and Deacon. It is his place principally to prepare the altar and the sacred vessels, to distribute the Eucharist to the faithful as an extraordinary minister, and to help purify the sacred vessels after communion.

- An instituted acolyte is a special minister of the Eucharist. He is called to meditate on the Eucharist, especially in adoration. He can bring communion to the sick and homebound. In the absence of a priest or deacon, an acolyte may do exposition and reposition for periods of Eucharistic adoration (placing and removing the host in the monstrance).

#### 2. Transitional Deacon – Summer Before 4<sup>th</sup> Theology

- At his diaconate, the seminarian is ordained for service in a special way—the Greek word *diákonos* means “servant.” The origin of the office of deacon comes from the choosing of seven men by the apostles (including Stephen) in Acts 6.
- A seminarian is called a *transitional* deacon, as he is transitioning from the lay state to the priesthood (usually 1 year). This is different from a *permanent* deacon, who can be single or married, and has no intention of becoming a priest. The Diocese of Fargo recently ordained several permanent deacons.
- All Deacons can baptize, do marriages and funerals, proclaim the Gospel, and preach the homily.
- Seminarians who become transitional deacons make 3 promises to the bishop: celibacy (forgoing marriage), prayer (praying the Liturgy of the Hours), and obedience (to the bishop).
- God-willing, I will be ordained a transitional deacon in June—the last “step” before the priesthood. Please keep me in your prayers—Matt Kensok.

(Next Time\* – Installment 6 – Four Dimensions of Formation)

*\*I will be on retreat - the next installment may be in 2 weeks.*