



Vocations

RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL TO PRIESTHOOD AND THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

They Went up the Mountain to Pray....

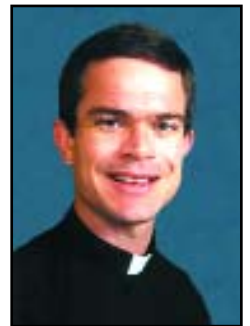


Savannah Seminarians took a break this summer to hike, relax, and pray together at Unicoi State Park. Pictured L-R: Fr. Tim McKeown, Vernon Knight, Jason Adams, Johnny Johnson, Jim Livingston, and Aaron Killips.

My First Year as a Priest: Terrific!

By Fr. Mark VanAlstine

I entered seminary with little other expectations than pursuing a daily adventure into what I believed God was calling me. Now those six years of seminary have rapidly receded into my past, and my transition to parish life has seemed quite natural.



After my final summer as a seminarian at Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Columbus, coupled with a terrific diaconal assignment at Saint Louis de Marillac parish in Pittsburgh, I was gladly ready to leave seminary life and get into "parish life."

Admittedly, in one year I have only wet my feet in the parish life at Saint Anne in Columbus, but the experience thus far causes me to give thanks to God for so wonderfully blessing me, despite my stubbornness.

I can honestly say that many relations, situations, and simply good times in the ordained life leave me very grateful. How did I ever deserve such a good life?! I did not. I could not do what I do without a large, often unknown to me, network of prayer support. Not infrequently someone will comment on my appearing joyful, or being something more than I was aware. Herein God reminds me that He works at times through

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New Seminarian Profiles

This summer four men were accepted by Bishop Boland to begin studying for the priesthood.



Jorge Andrés Bedoya

Age: 32

Hometown: Anserma, Caldas, Colombia

Favorite Sport: Biking and Ping-pong

Family: parents, +Ligia

Bedoya +Horacio Bedoya (both deceased), seven brothers and four sisters (Jorge is number 11)

Home Parish in America: Most Holy Trinity, Augusta

Undergrad: Bachelor in Philosophy from Bolivarian Pontifical University, Medellín Colombia

Current Study: St. Vincent Seminary, Latrobe, PA

Favorite Saint: St. Jorge and St. Andrew, but I really like St. Therese of Lisieux.

Vernon Knight, Jr. *(not pictured)*

Age: 23

Hometown: Warner Robins

Favorite sports: tennis, golf, and soccer

Family: parents, Rebecca and Vernon Knight Sr., and one younger brother

Home parish: Sacred Heart, Warner Robins

Undergrad: Macon State College

Current Study: St. Vincent Seminary, Latrobe, PA

Favorite saints: St. Francis of Assisi and St. Ignatius of Loyola

William Godfrey *(not pictured)*

Age: 23

Hometown: Eatonton, GA

Favorite sport: Soccer

Family: parents, Paula Patton and Bill Godfrey; one sister, Amber

Home parish: Holy Spirit, Macon, where he served as music director for two years

Undergrad: Mercer University

Current Study: Mount St. Mary's, Emmitsburg

Favorite saint: St. Thomas Aquinas

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First year of Priesthood

me as His priest.

This still takes me back, that I am “His priest,” not just a more socially adjusted me. God has given me the gift of priesthood, and yet this gift is not mainly for me, but for the great many people that God intends to love through His priest - me, amazingly enough in this case. Many times His gift of priesthood blesses people without my consciously doing anything other than showing up as “His priest.” Showing up as His priest often happens even without my intention, as people recognize “Father Mark” at the store, the movies, and other places I formerly visited incognito. And yet this I find this new public identity good. God’s humor must accompany His calling otherwise-reluctant people to do what they never dreamed possible!

Every Vocation is a Family Matter

For seminarian studying in Rome, ordination was incredible experience

When Aaron Killips was assigned to study at North American College in Rome three years ago, the move was bittersweet.

“I still remember the conversation I had with Aaron when he called to tell me that the bishop was considering sending him to Rome,” said Aaron’s sister Amy Parris. “I told him he would be crazy not to go.”

The Killips family realized, however, that while the opportunity was the chance of lifetime, it would also include some hardship. Having Aaron so far away would mean missing several family milestones, including the birth of his nephew and the death of his grandmother. And it would mean being apart during the holidays.

But Aaron’s family has been amazed and blessed by his experience in Rome. He sang for Pope John Paul II with the NAC choir, and had a papal audience. He attended Pope John Paul II’s funeral, and was in St. Peter’s Square to see the white smoke announcing the election of Pope Benedict.

Aaron was joined by family and friends this October to celebrate his ordination as a

Transitional Deacon. The trip itinerary included the ordination, a Scavi tour (led by Aaron), tours of the Sistine Chapel and Vatican Gardens, an audience with the Pope, a daytrip to Assisi – and (very importantly) a soccer match.

Aaron’s parents, Dennis and Marie, knew the ordination at St. Peter’s Basilica would be “a very emotional experience that will be full of great memories.”

“We are extremely grateful to God that we live in a Diocese that remains so faithful to the teachings of the Church,” said Dennis, “and that we have a Bishop who truly cares about his seminarians. We’re also grateful for the example of so many holy priests.”

Marie said Aaron’s ordination is the “fulfillment of generations of Italian ancestor’s prayers.”

Aaron’s younger brother Brian is looking forward to the joy that will continue beyond the ordination.

“I am very proud of my brother,” said Brian. “It gives me great pride to know that my brother will soon join some of the finest men in the world – the brotherhood of Catholic priests.”



Aaron Killips (left) with his extended family. Seminarians studying at the North American College in Rome are not permitted to travel back to the US during the first two years of seminary, so Aaron’s family met him in Ireland at Christmastime.



Discern your vocation at

savannahpriest.com

FAQs, discernment tips, and much more

Inspired by JP II: Seminarian Jason Adams

New seminarian from Vidalia

Jason Adams said it was a chain of events that brought him to where he is today – a first-year seminarian at Mount St. Mary's in Emmitsburg, MD.

The 22-year-old from Cordele, GA recently graduated from Valdosta State University, and had planned to go into politics. But last year, after spending time with a seminarian friend – and after the death of John Paul II – he began to move his focus away from his plans for his life towards the plans God had for him.

“I majored in political science,” said Jason. “Early on, I thought I was called to serve that way – in a political way, like being a Senator. I kept telling myself that being involved in politics is what God wanted me to do.”

Jason said it was the death of the Holy Father that sparked a desire in him to more for God. “I thought ‘we just lost one more holy man,’” he said. “Then it hit me - I’d been doing what I want-



Jason Adams and his mother, Joy Adams. Jason is a fifth-generation Catholic, rare for this area of the country. He is an Eagle Scout, and his interests include politics, NASCAR, and his Catholic faith.

ed to do and not what God wanted me to do.”

After that, Jason talked to a priest at the student center at Valdosta State, and soon met Fr. Tim and Fr. Brett at a Vocations retreat.

Jason said his time so far at The Mount has been an incredible experience. “I like the brotherhood,” said Jason, “and the academics. We are getting good formation, they prepare you here well.”

He added that he and Fr. Brett are both easily identifiable at the seminary because of their Southern accents.

Jason said the most important aspect of praying about becoming a priest is the act of putting God in control, and working from there.

“Every man, at some point in his life, needs to evaluate where God wants him, not ‘where do you see yourself,’” said Jason. “It’s never too late to patiently listen to what the Lord has planned for you, and not what are you telling the Lord.”

First Steps Toward the Priesthood

It’s normal to be both excited and nervous about the thought of becoming a priest. If you feel God is calling you, here are a few “first steps” in your discernment:

- ◆ Pray! Ask God for guidance and peace as you discern.
- ◆ Talk to a priest you know and respect about your calling.
- ◆ Ask close friends and family members if they could see you as a priest.
- ◆ Call the Vocation Director to talk about what is involved in becoming a priest.

New Vocation Office Assistant

Boooks Coates moves to Statesboro to work with Fr. Tim McKeown

This summer, Brooks Coates became the new Assistant to the Vocations Director.

He will be helping Fr. Tim McKeown with the day-to-day operations of our busy Vocations Office.

Brooks is uniquely qualified for the position, having considered the priesthood himself. "While I don't personally feel called to become a priest, I still have a great love for the priesthood," he said. "As a former seminarian, I'm able to empathize with the unique struggles that our seminarians face in their discernment and study."

Brooks lives at the rectory of St. Matthew's Parish in Statesboro, where Fr. Tim is the pastor. He enjoys the job immensely.

"I'm thankful for the chance to serve our diocese and seminarians," he said. "I want to continue working for the Church in whatever opportunities come my way."



Four Deacons Ordained This Year



Four new deacons were ordained in 2006. Pictured here are Steve Pontzer (above) performing his first baptism, and David Koetter proclaiming the Gospel at Mass. Elsewhere in this issue are photos of the two other new deacons, Johnny Johnson and Aaron Killips. All four men will be ordained to the priesthood in June 2007.

K of C Support



The Knights of Columbus have long supported priestly vocations. Many local Councils adopt a seminarian and send him money throughout the year to help with expenses. Three Councils – in Savannah, Valdosta, and Albany – have held special dinners attended by seminarians and their families, raising thousands of dollars. The photo above is from the very successful dinner in Valdosta, picturing Deacon Johnny Johnson with John Brenner, the State Deputy of Georgia.

Deacon in Rome



Aaron Killips was ordained to the transitional diaconate in Rome on October 5th. During the ordination ceremony, each man lays his hands on the Bible while the bishop enjoins him to “Believe what you read; teach what you believe; practice what you teach.” Once ordained a deacon, Aaron can preach homilies (above), witness marriages, and perform baptisms. After his ordination to the priesthood Aaron will be able to celebrate Mass, hear confessions, and anoint the sick.

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