



Vocations

Responding to God's Call to Priesthood and the Religious Life

Ten New Priests in Two Years! (God willing!)

We vocation directors just love ordinations! Not only is an ordination one of the most beautiful ceremonies in the Sacred Liturgy (especially the way we do them in Savannah!), but also the "crowning moment" of God's work. St. Vincent de Paul said, "There is nothing more perfect than the formation of a good priest."

I thank God for so generously blessing our vocation program in the Diocese of Savannah. In June, Bishop Boland ordained two good, holy priests for our diocese: Fr. Paul O'Connell and Fr. John Markham. Over the next two years, we hope to ordain ten more priests, five in 2004 and five in 2005! **These three years will increase our total number of priests by nearly 10%!**

The Lord has also sent us seven new seminarians this past year who will begin their studies in September. We welcome these men, and ask you to please



Witnessing the Real Thing

As part of "Vocatio Dei," the popular summer camp sponsored by the Vocation Office, Middle School and High School boys attend the ordination of our newest priests. More photos on back...

pray for them. They will be in the seminary (in priestly formation) for the next 4-6 years. These years are crucial to the kind of priest they will become.

I once heard a bishop remark, "No priests would be better than bad priests. But a single good, holy priest is a tremendous blessing for the Church!" And God is giving us ten good, holy priests! We are reaping a harvest of harvesters!

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Vocation Director

I N S I D E

- ⌘ **Seminarian photos**
- ⌘ **Families pass the Elijah Cup**
- ⌘ **Serra Club promotes vocations**
- ⌘ **Two New Vocation Directors**

Serra Club Does Wonders in Savannah

Peter Paolucci has found his second vocation. Retired from Shell Oil with a home in Savannah, he spends his summers in Maine and loves to play with his grandkids. But for nine months of the year, his life's work—his vocation—is to promote vocations to the priesthood.

"You gotta be relentless," says Peter with an accent reminiscent of the northeastern hosts of *Car Talk*. "Otherwise, we're never going to end the vocation crisis."

He's referring to the fact that the number of priests in the U.S. is steadily dropping, while the number of Catholics is skyrocketing. "If we don't do something now, we're going to re-enter the era of the 'priest circuit rider,' a man who drives from town to town to hear confessions and say Mass once a month," he said.

For Peter, there is an urgency in encouraging vocations. But it wasn't always that way. Just a few years ago, he was hardly aware of the problem. An active parishioner at the Cathedral parish in Savannah, Peter saw

lots of priests. It didn't look like there was a crisis.

Then one evening an old friend called him and asked him if he would be willing to start up a Serra Club - a group of people who promote vocations. A couple of weeks later, Peter was at Mass in Boston and the Cardinal kept mentioning the Serra Club. "That was the sign," said Peter, "After that, I knew God wanted me to do this."

Today, three years later, there are 37 members of Savannah's Serra Club — and there are plans to begin chapters in every major city in the Savannah Diocese.

According to their charter, the Serra Club "is dedicated to fostering and affirming vocations to the ministerial priesthood and vowed religious life." But what exactly does this mean? What do Serra members *do*?

The heart of their work is to promote prayer for priests and seminarians. Because of the Serra Club, several parishes in Savannah now pray for vocations at every Mass. In addition, each Serra club member has adopted a seminarian and writes regularly to encourage him. On Father's Day, they sent a card to every priest in the diocese thanking them for their work.

But prayer and encouragement are just the beginning. Serra Club members also do the hard work of cooking at Vocations Retreats and organizing receptions for ordinations. "At first, the committee and I just looked at each other and asked, 'what do we do?' Now we have so much work we could really use more members," said Peter.

"The duty of fostering vocations falls on the whole Christian community, and they should discharge it principally by living full Christian lives."

- John Paul II

SERRA CLUB

Will you help to start a Serra Club in your city? If you love the Church and the priesthood, and you're willing to work hard to encourage vocations, we need you! Contact Peter Paolucci, petepalu@aol.com, and he'll help you to begin.

The Elijah Cup

“**I**n our family we make it a priority to pray every day together,” said Liz Bishop of St. Peter Claver parish in Macon. So it wasn't a surprise when Fr. Brett asked the Bishop family to be the first ones to take home the “Elijah Cup” to pray for vocations.

The Elijah Cup, named after an Old Testament Story about Elijah, is actually a consecrated chalice used at Mass that families pass to each other from week to week. The purpose of the chalice is to provide a focal point for praying for vocations. Liz explained that when her family took the cup, it was as if they were taking on a job for the whole parish. “It somehow made our responsibility to pray more real, maybe a little more serious,” she said.

“We used the diocesan prayer card - the one that lists all the seminarians and priests,” said Liz. “We prayed for every seminarian every day—especially those who are still in the process of making their decision about the priesthood.”

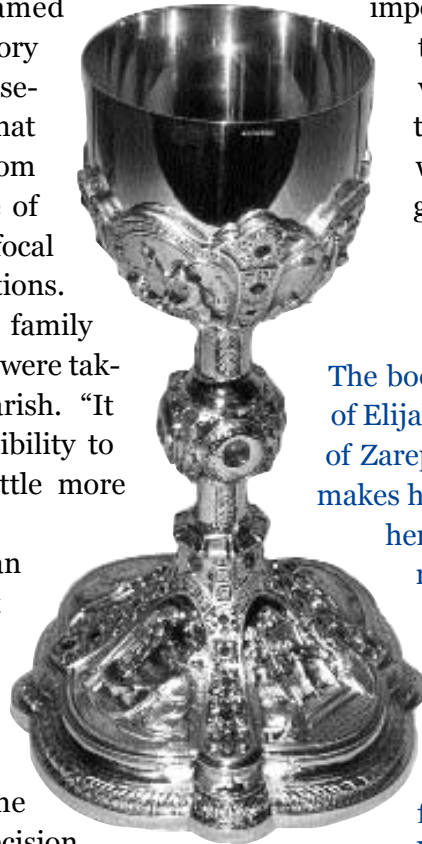
Liz and her husband Rusty have tough work schedules, so they have to rise early. Every morning at 4:30 a.m. (yes, a.m.) they wake up their son Quentin, 17, and Samatha, 11, to pray together before Rusty leaves for work.

“They're a little sleepy sometimes,” admits Liz, “but they do pretty well. We all

know that if we want to spend time together as a family, that's when we need to do it.”

Making such a sacrifice underscores the importance of family prayer. And when they had the Elijah Cup, Liz thinks it reinforced for Quentin and Samantha the seriousness of deciding what to do with their lives. “It's

important for me as a mother to know that my children understand their vocational decisions. Whatever they do, it will be for the Lord, whether it's the priesthood, religious life, or family life.”



What's in a Name?

The book of 1st Kings recounts the story of Elijah the prophet and the poor widow of Zarephath. Elijah tells her that if she makes him a loaf of bread with the last of her flour and oil, her “jar of flour will not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the Lord sends rain upon the earth.” In faith, the widow baked the bread and fed Elijah. Consequently, all three of them ate for a year from the same bowl and jug. Just so, the “Elijah Cup” helps families to pray for a never-ending stream of priestly and religious vocations.

If your family would like to take the Elijah Cup into your home, email Peter Paolucci, petepalu@aol.com. He can help you to begin the program in your parish.

Double Duty: Fr. Tim & Fr. Tim

In a move that emphasizes the priority of Vocations in our diocese, Bishop Boland has named two new assistant Vocation Directors. Coincidentally, both are named Fr. Tim! Fr. Tim Donahue is the pastor of Holy Spirit in Macon, and Fr. Tim McKeown is spending a year of study in Rome. The “Two Tims” will assume many of the responsibilities currently shouldered by Fr Brett. They will be able to care for the needs of seminarians and encourage more men to consider the priesthood.



Fr. Tim Donahue was the manager of a Wendy's restaurant before his ordination three years ago.

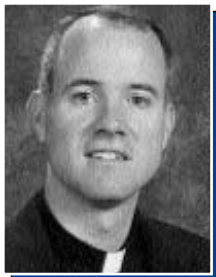
The home, the “domestic Church,” is the centerpiece of family life and the well-spring of vocations. As families teach their sons and daughters how to pray and the importance of charity to God and to neighbor, they become the local church in which children begin to walk with Christ. This fulfills the obligations laid on the hearts of every parent to train their children to enter Heaven someday.

As we review the vocation situation in

Beginning in the Home

this country, it sometimes appears as though the Lord is not calling enough of His children to become priests and vowed religious. The reality is that Jesus is calling men and women into His service, but not enough people are listening to the call. The vocations are out there: families must teach their children to listen and respond to that call.

The Church needs your sons and daughters to carry the work that has been passed on to us, so that a new generation of believers may learn to walk in the light of Christ. If we do not send our children, if we do not encourage our children, if we do not set the example for our children, the light will extinguish. May God bless our children and our families as they walk more closely with the Risen Savior, and learn to respond to His call.



Fr. Tim McKeown was a 4th Grade teacher before becoming a priest five years ago.

We like things to be dramatic. People will travel thousands of miles to see something miraculous. We often think the call to the priesthood needs to be dramatic. One thinks there needs to be a dramatic sign in the heavens or that a prophet needs to tell you that, yes, you have

One Step at a Time

been chosen by God.

There is no doubt that this can happen. The Bible and the lives of the saints are full of such experiences. Think of how Mary felt at the Annunciation when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her. He had to say, “Do not be afraid.”

However, God usually speaks to us in a still, quiet voice. It is so quiet that we might even miss it. The only way that we can tune into that voice is through prayer. God has a plan for your life! He has a plan for your high school and college career. He is calling you to marriage, priesthood, religious life or the single life. He wants to guide you with his plan.

2004 Ordinations

✂ The men pictured at right will be ordained priests on June 5th, 2004 in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

✂ Five more men will be ordained deacons on May 29th, 2004 (see page 6).

Seminarian Events

✂ December 26th: Seminarians will meet with Bishop Boland at the Cathedral. In the evening, they will join the priests of the diocese for the annual Stephanstag celebration.

✂ May 30th: Seminarians will attend Mass celebrated by the bishop at the Cathedral. Afterwards there is a luncheon for seminarians, their families, and members of the Serra Club.

Are you listening?

All you need to worry about is the next step of your life. Don't worry about ten years down the road. Just ask God what He wants to do in your life in the coming year. Your path to the priesthood might only become clear after playing high school sports, finishing college or being a CCD teacher. Maybe God's message for you this year is to join your CYO group. I challenge you in the coming week to take some quiet time before God and listen to what His plan is. Just worry about the next step. "God, what do you want me to do?" If God is calling you to the priesthood those little steps will lead to the miracle of Holy Orders.



Deacon Stephen Angell

4th Theology
Holy Apostles Seminary
Projected ordination: 2004
Summer assignment: Immaculate Conception, Moultrie
Home Parish: Sacred Heart, Vidalia



Deacon Eric Filmer

4th Theology
Saint Vincent Seminary
Projected ordination: 2004
Summer assignment: St. Joseph, Waycross
Home Parish: Sacred Heart, Savannah



Daniel Firmin

4th Theology
Pontifical North American College
Projected ordination: 2004
Summer assignment: Holy Spirit, Macon
Home Parish: Holy Trinity, Augusta



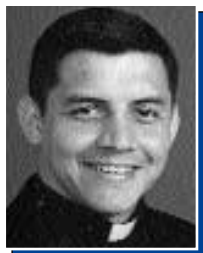
Deacon Thong Nguyen

4th Theology
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
Projected ordination: 2004
Summer assignment: St. Anne, Columbus
Home Parish: St. Joseph's, Macon



Joe Lojaco

4th Theology
Pastoral Year discerning a vocation in the Savannah Diocese
Summer assignment: Immaculate Conception, Dublin
Home city: Arlington, Virginia



Fredy Angel

3rd Theology
St. Vincent Seminary
Projected ordination: 2005
Summer assignment: Our Divine
Savior, Tifton
Home country: Columbia



Augusta

Justin Ferguson

2nd theology
Pontifical North American College
Projected ordination: 2006
Summer assignment: Rome,
Italian study & travel
Home parish: St. Philip Benizi,
Atlanta



Rafael Moreno Estrada

3rd Theology
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
Projected ordination: 2005
Summer assignment: Good
Shepherd, Baxley
Home country: Columbia



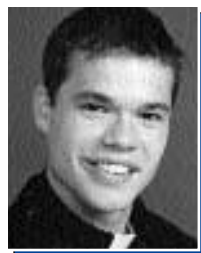
Luis Alfonso Fonseca

1st Theology
St. Vincent Seminary
Projected ordination: 2007
Summer assignment: English
Study, Our Lady of Lourdes,
Columbus
Home country: Columbia



Ray Levreault

3rd Theology
Blessed John XXIII National
Seminary
Projected ordination: 2005
Summer assignment: St. Teresa,
Augusta
Home town: Manville, Rhode
Island



John Johnson

1st Theology
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
Projected ordination: 2007
Summer assignment: Vocation
Office assistant
Home parish: St. Joseph, Augusta



Chidi Osondu

3rd Theology
St. Vincent Seminary
Projected ordination: 2005
Summer assignment: Spanish
Study & St. Joseph, Augusta
Home country: Nigeria



Aaron Killips

1st Theology
Pontifical North American College
Projected ordination: 2007
Summer assignment: Italian
study & Cathedral, Savannah
Home parish: Holy Trinity,
Augusta



Mark Van Alstine

3rd Theology
St. Vincent Seminary
Projected ordination: 2005
Summer assignment: Spanish
Study & Holy Trinity, Augusta
Home parish: Holy Trinity,



David Koetter

1st Theology
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
Projected ordination: 2007
Summer assignment: Sacred
Heart, Warner Robins
Home parish: St. Joseph's, Macon



Stephen Pontzer

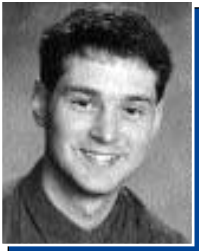
1st Theology
St. Vincent Seminary
Projected ordination: 2007
Summer assignment: St. John the Evangelist, Valdosta
Home parish: St. Joseph's, Athens



Study, St. James, Savannah
Home Country: Poland

Pablo Migone

4th College
Franciscan University of Steubenville
Projected ordination: 2008
Summer assignment: none
Home parish: St. Mary on the Hill, Augusta



Jim Livingston

Pre-Theology II
Franciscan University of Steubenville
Projected ordination: 2008
Summer assignment: none
Home parish: St. Joseph's, Macon



Timothy Tarkenton

4th College
St. Vincent Seminary
Projected ordination: 2008
Summer assignment: none
Home city: Richmond, Virginia



Matthew Ericksen

Pre-Theology I
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
Projected ordination: 2009
Summer assignment : work with Missionaries of Charity in Bronx
Home parish: Immaculate Conception, Moultrie



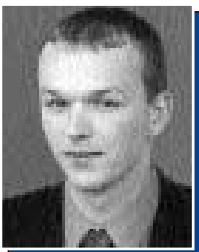
Scott Winchel

3rd College
Mount St. Mary's College
Projected ordination: 2009
Summer assignment: St. Joseph, Augusta
Home city: Peculiar, Missouri



Mariusz Fuk's

Pre-Theology I
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
Projected ordination: 2009
Summer assignment: English Study, St. James, Savannah
Home Country: Poland



Dariusz Zurek

Pre-Theology I
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
Projected ordination: 2009
Summer assignment: English

VOCATION PRAYER

O God,
hear my prayer
and let my cry come unto you.

Bless our Diocese of Savannah
with many priestly and
religious vocations.

Give the men and
women you call
the light to understand your gift
and the love to follow always
in the footsteps of your priestly Son.
Amen.

A Summer Filled with Fun and Prayer!



The Annual Mud Pit

Counselor Anna O'Keefe gives camper Elizabeth Napier a muddy hug after army-crawling through the obstacle course. The "Call to Holiness" retreat combines outdoor sports and activities with prayer and vocational discernment. The event is filled to capacity each summer, mainly by girls who want to return for four days of fun and spiritual enrichment.

- ⌘ **World Day of Prayer for Vocations is May 2, 2004**
- ⌘ **National Vocation Awareness Week is January 11 - 16, 2004**



En Garde!

The "Joust Tournament" is a relatively recent addition to the inventive repertoire of activities at Vocatio Dei. Yes, it's a little rough—but no injuries yet!

For Advance Planners: Vocation Retreats 2004

- ⌘ **Men's Winter Retreat: Jan 2-4**
- ⌘ **Vocatio Dei: June 2-5**
- ⌘ **Call to Holiness: June 8-11**
- ⌘ **Men's Retreat: June 11-13**

C O N T A C T U S



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