



Vocations

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

When will the next priest pass through?

By Paul Thigpen

There was a time, not so very long ago, when Catholics in Georgia had no priests.

Imagine yourself in Savannah sometime in the early 1800s. Your bishop lives several days' journey away, in Baltimore, and you live on the very edge of his vast diocese — a spiritual wilderness where the faith of many lay people may be strong, but clergymen appear only occasionally, and the Sacraments are rare.

Whenever you hear that a priest is passing through, you send quickly for your Catholic kinfolk and friends living along the coast, and inland all the way to Augusta or even beyond. Soon they begin showing up by wagon, by boat, on foot. They bring children who have long awaited baptism. Their youth seek Confirmation. Young couples who have had to wed in civil ceremonies come hoping to regularize their marriages.

Non-Catholic adults eager to enter the Church have someone to receive them at last. Those weighted down with guilt for their sins are relieved that their Confession can now be

heard, and absolution granted. Those lying on their deathbeds can send messengers asking for Last Rites and a funeral Mass.

Best of all, the altar is no longer bare. Those who prepare themselves can finally receive once more, after months or even years of spiritual hunger, the precious Body of Christ. And Masses can be said for all those who died without access to the Sacraments they longed for.

Why do we need priests? If you could ask the Catholics of old Savannah, they could surely tell you.

Still today — even with the countless, invaluable works of the faithful, religious, and permanent deacons — there are some things only priests have been granted authority from heaven to do for us. God grant that Catholics in our diocese never again have to suffer long spiritual droughts without our ordained fathers in Christ. But we all must do our part to encourage vocations and to pray for them: "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the Master of the harvest to send out laborers for His harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).



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Dr. Paul Thigpen is the editor of The Catholic Answer, a national bimonthly magazine, and executive director of The Stella Maris Center for Faith and Culture. He and his family belong to the Cathedral parish in Savannah.

Uncle Aaron Lives With The Pope?

By Amy Parris



Aaron Killips, who is scheduled to be ordained in 2006, attends seminary in Rome, Italy. His older sister, Amy Parris, offered the following reflection on her brother's vocation.

I consider it a tremendous faith builder to witness the sacrifice and commitment that priests make to serve the Lord and their parishioners. I look forward to my brother being able to administer the sacraments to my children and celebrate Mass in my home – not to mention getting me tickets to see the Pope when we visit Rome and allowing me to stay at the Vatican when he's elected the first American Pope. (Hey, you never know!)

My brother Aaron's vocational decision is having quite an impact on my children. I am thankful that they are

growing up to see the priesthood as a normal part of life. They have attended different stages of Aaron's progression towards the priesthood, and we've even eaten lunch with the Bishop and visited his home in Savannah. They have also been blessed by the diverse brotherhood of seminarians when my brother

brings home classmates from places like Nigeria and the Philippines – men who have become so close to my family that they even call my parents "mom" and "dad."

My daughter Mackenzie, who is only three years old, thinks Uncle Aaron actually lives with the Pope! As she grows older, both she and her six-month-old brother, Aiden, will know many priests, and will understand what it means to have a religious vocation. And, hopefully, when it is time, they will prayerfully consider it as an option for themselves. What more could a sister ask for?

A Banner Year for Ordinations!

In 2004, the Diocese of Savannah will ordain four priests and five deacons – the most men ordained in a single year since the large waves of Irish priests in the 1960s and 70s. Bishop Boland invites everyone in the entire diocese to attend this awesome occasion.

Priesthood Ordination

June 5th, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

- ✠ Stephen Angell
- ✠ Eric Filmer
- ✠ Daniel Firmin
- ✠ Thong Nguyen

Diaconate Ordination

May 29th, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

- ✠ Fredy Angel
- ✠ Rafael Moreno Estrada
- ✠ Ray Levreault
- ✠ Chidi Osondu
- ✠ Mark Van Alstine

New Seminarian

We welcome new seminarian **Larry Napier**, who is from St. Joseph in Augusta. This summer Larry will study Spanish in Mexico, then begin Pre-Theology at Mount St. Mary's this Fall.

A Dad's Perspective On His Son's Vocation

By Fletcher Bingham

There are a whole jumble of thoughts and emotions that come to mind when a man's son announces that he thinks God is calling him to be a priest. They rush upon him in no particular order: Who will carry on the family business? Who will carry on the family name? Will he be able to handle celibacy? He might be a good priest. Does he know what he's getting into? He'd be such a great father. Will we ever get to see him? I wanted to be a grandfather. Will he be happy? I wanted him to be a success. Who brainwashed him? And why does he have to go so far away?

This last question was particularly important to me, for our middle son Jonathan decided that he was called to join the Western Province of the Dominican Order. That means that for the seven years or so while he's studying for the priesthood, he'll be stationed in California. Then after ordination he might be as close as – let's see – Salt Lake City.

Some of the other objections and questions I listed above don't apply to me, although I've heard them all expressed. I don't have a family business to hand on. I have two other sons, both married. My wife Kay and I have our first grandchild on the way.

And his announcement wasn't a surprise to us. He's been thinking about it for several years, and had discussed his thoughts and feelings, the pros and cons, with his mother and me. He had participated in "vocation weekends" and considered the diocesan priesthood. Although he'd be



Jonathan Bingham, whose family attends Most Holy Trinity in Augusta, is studying in California to become a Dominican priest. His father, Fletcher Bingham, offered these reflections.

a lot nearer geographically in the Diocese of Savannah, he believes a more structured life in a religious order fits his personality better.

I'm humbled that Jonathan has been called, because of the awesome responsibility and privilege of the priesthood. None of us is worthy, including him. But I'm proud of him, too, that he was listening when God called and is willing to say "yes" to God. I pray that he will be able to keep the commitments he is making. If he is faithful, he'll be a success even if he doesn't have fame or fortune or worldly power. And I know this: when he recently came home for a brief vacation, he looked more happy and peaceful than I've ever seen him, filled with the grace that only Christ can give.

Meet Your Seminarians

The Knights of Columbus are holding two special evenings so that Catholics in Albany and Valdosta can "get to know their seminarians."

June 25th in Valdosta

July 23rd in Albany



During a nice meal, seminarians are seated with guests and share about themselves and their journey toward priesthood. All will enjoy live entertainment afterwards. Proceeds from the event go toward seminarians' living expenses.

Every Catholic Man Has To Ask Himself...

By Pablo Migone, seminarian

I remember the first words that made me curious about the priesthood. It was when my older brother said to my mom: "Every Catholic man has to ask himself at some point whether or not he is called to be a priest." I was only seven or eight years old when I overheard this, but the question never left me, even if I tried to suppress it.



Pablo Migone is a native of Peru, but attended high school in Augusta, and will soon graduate from the Franciscan University of Steubenville. For the next several months, he is taking a break from his studies to return to Peru, where he will spend time with his family after the death of his father. Please keep Pablo, his father, and their whole family in your prayers.

My mom taught my siblings and me about our faith, and even though she never mentioned the priesthood directly, she provided an environment in which I felt comfortable mentioning my interest in the priesthood. About two years ago, I told my family that I was going to apply to become a semi-

narian for the Diocese of Savannah, and they all received the news joyfully.

The role played by my whole family in my journey to follow Christ has been invaluable. Jesus calls those he wills to be his priests; the family plays a cooperative role by nurturing that vocation.

Men's Winter Retreat

"Check your plans at the door," directed Fr. Brett Brannen at the first session of this year's Winter Vocation Retreat. "Instead, ask Jesus what *His* plans are for you."

The tenth annual retreat was held January 2-4 at Camp John Hope in Fort Valley, about 30 miles southwest of Macon. Attendance was high – 22 high school, college, and adult men attended, as well as seven seminarians.

During the weekend, the men kept silence (except during meals) to better hear the Lord speaking to them. Each day they attended Mass, talks, Holy Hours, and prayed the Rosary. Each person was also able to talk one-on-one with Fr. Brett or Fr. Tim Donahue to explore the possibility of a priestly vocation.

The next **Vocation Retreat for Men** will be held July 9-11 at Camp John Hope in Fort Valley. It is open to high school juniors and older. To register, call the Vocation Office.

Summer Retreats Cancelled

Vocatio Dei and Call to Holiness have been cancelled this summer due to the closing of St. John's Center in Savannah. God willing, they will resume again in 2005.

Seminarians Gather with Bishop

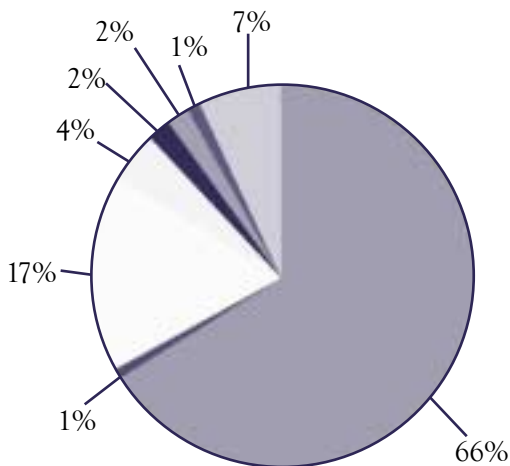
On July 31, Bishop Boland holds his annual meeting with seminarians for discussion and prayer. Afterwards they will share a meal with seminarians' families and members of the Serra Club.

Vocation Office Financial Report

Bishop Boland recently commented on the costs of our thriving Vocation Office. “In many ways it is like supporting twenty-three college students at the same time,” he said, “It is a blessing in many ways, but an *expensive* blessing.” While we are always proud to support and sustain our young men discerning God’s call to priesthood, the costs grow every year, especially with the addition of new seminarians.

The Bishop’s Annual Appeal raises nearly half of the needed funds for our seminarians, so please be generous during this year’s BAA! Fully another 25% comes from investment income and trust funds, and the remaining 31% from diocesan funds.

If you would like to make a gift exclusively for the training of new priests, either directly or through your will, please contact the Vocation Office, 478-743-1474.



2003 Expenses

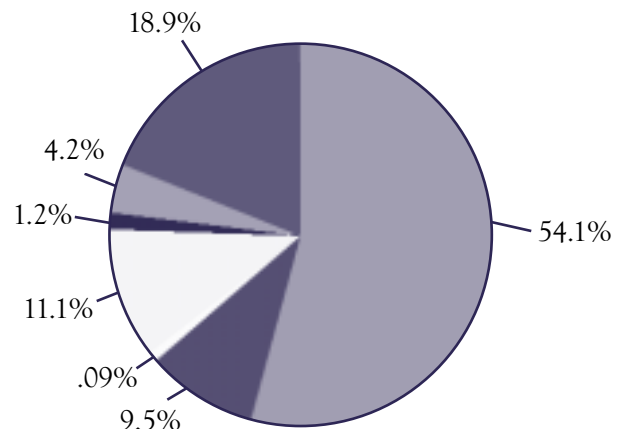
- 66% Room, board, tuition, books for seminarians: \$354,823
- 17% Health insurance for seminarians \$92,395
- 7% Travel: \$39,787
- 4% Salary and benefits for Vocation Office support staff: \$19,599
- 2% Recruitment Programs: \$10,827
- 2% Supplies, Postage, Telephone, Dues: \$10,094
- 1% Professional Expenses (screening of candidates, psychological testing, other professional fees): \$8,862
- 1% Stipends for living expenses of seminarians: \$5,450

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$541,840

2003 Source of Funds

- 54.1% Bishop’s Annual Appeal: \$293,300
- 18.9% Diocesan funds: \$102,618
- 11.1% Educational Trust Fund: \$51,685
- 9.5% Extension Society: \$60,000
- 4.2% Alice Kuhn Investment Income: \$22,739
- 1.2% Flannery Trust Investment Income: \$6,510
- .09% Von Kamp Investment Income: \$4,986

TOTAL FUNDS: \$541,840



Characteristics of a Good Candidate for Priesthood

When Fr. Brett Brannen speaks to men about the priesthood, he looks for a number of important characteristics. For a man to be a good candidate for the priesthood, he must:

1. Love Jesus Christ and desire others to love Him.
2. Be a believing, practicing Catholic.
3. Be living a life of virtue and striving against sin.
4. Live and desire a life of service.
5. Live and desire a life of prayer.
6. Have one's call validated by other people who suggest that he consider the priesthood.
7. Be a "people person," i.e., have good social skills and like to be around people.
8. Have at least average intelligence to complete coursework in Theology.
9. Be physically, emotionally and psychologically stable.
10. Have a sense of humor!
11. Have a "priest's heart" full of kindness and compassion for others.
12. Possess self-discipline.
13. Display stability in life-style, i.e., consistency as a student or employee.
14. Have a healthy psycho-sexual orientation.
15. Be open to the will of God for his life.

For a more in-depth explanation of these characteristics, and to take a self-scoring test for priestly candidates, go to savannahpriest.com and click on "discernment." And remember – no one is perfect! Don't automatically discount yourself if you don't score a perfect "10" in every category. Everyone has areas of life that need work, and many men are able to correct personal shortcomings during their formation period.


Southern Priests



"A man, his dog, and his truck." Sounds like the theme of a classic country song, but in this case it applies to Fr. Brett Brannen (left) and Fr. Tim Donahue, here pictured with their Labrador Retrievers, Bridget and Jack. While priests work long hours (and weekends) there's still time for hobbies and recreation, including hunting, fishing, and golf. Most priests are happy, well-adjusted men who enjoy their ministry to God's people.

Feel free to contact Fr. Brett or Fr. Tim about the possibility of a priestly vocation.

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