

Fr. Colin Jones Vocation Story

When did you first feel called to the priesthood/when did you start to feel a pull towards that particular vocation? What events, experiences, or person(s) fostered that desire?

- I first felt the call when I was about 10 years old. That was the age we could start altar serving at the parish where I grew up (St. Charles Borromeo). It was something I was really excited to do and it did not disappoint! I loved the fraternity among the servers and the sense of duty and reverence we had when we were in the sanctuary helping with the Liturgies. We learned about the different parts of Mass and got to prepare the chalice and the water and wine and pray with the priest before Mass and it was all pretty awesome!
- My dad also took me to these monthly meetings at the seminary called Team Vianney, for middle-school and high-school age boys who might be considering a vocation. That was helpful too because it gave me some context around how one prepared for the priesthood, what a seminarian was, etc.
- Ultimately, I would say that while priesthood wasn't always the primary attraction throughout my childhood, it was at least always on my mind as a possibility of one thing I could do "when I grew up."

What aspects of the priesthood were you most attracted to and why?

- I was very much attracted to the priest's prayerfulness. At St. Charles, we had some very holy, prayerful men as our priests, and this was a very attractive quality. It really helped that this prayerfulness was constantly coupled with normalcy too! We had associate pastors who would rotate through every few years and they were so genuine and awesome and had normal interests and took interest in what we enjoyed too. I remember talking to them about music, movies, sports, etc. and thinking that holiness didn't seem so far off and unattainable.

How did you know the priesthood would be a good fit? What fears or doubts did you have?

- I think my experience in seminary helped me to see the priesthood as a very real possibility. I didn't enter SJV with this super concrete sense that priesthood was

going to be the result. I was more or less on a “one year at a time” sort of track, just like most guys who enter at the college level. But I loved seminary life in a way that I hadn’t loved anything before. The fraternity was just what I needed to help me live a life of virtue. The prayer was new and exciting and difficult, and I had a spiritual director who could help me sort it all out. I guess I felt that seminary gave me a very defined purpose to my daily life, and as the years went on, I felt the Lord shaping this into something much bigger than seminary. As if he was saying, “you think this is cool, Colin? Well, you’re gonna *love* what I’ve got in store for you next!!”

- One doubt that came up sometimes was the thought that maybe I hadn’t “experienced enough of life” in order to discern well. Whether it was not having dated, or experienced “normal” college life, or pursued a job or other studies, etc. I thought maybe that meant I wasn’t offering enough to the Lord or there was something I was “missing”. But my rector at SJV, Fr. Michael Becker, very much helped put that doubt to rest by assuring me that the Lord called in all sorts of different ways, and that if he wanted to call me when I was younger, he would give me everything I needed!

What advice do you have for someone who may be interested in the priesthood?

- I would encourage anyone who is discerning the Lord’s will to commit to sometime in prayer every day! Doesn’t have to be a super structured agenda, like “Lord, give me a sign today,” etc. In fact, that’s usually not how we want to discern. Rather, I would say just spending time with Jesus and opening up your heart to him in conscious prayer, especially before the Blessed Sacrament, is the best way to know his heart and learn his will! I would also say that it’s super important to have “another set of eyes on it,” in the sense that, if you do feel that tug, don’t be afraid to talk to your parish priest or the vocation director or someone else whom you trust and who is well-versed in the spiritual life. They can help you unravel some of those lies you might believe from the evil one (as Fr. Becker did for me), and they will encourage you to follow the Lord in the little nudges he places on your heart!

What did your discernment process look like? What general advice do you have for someone who is discerning their vocation?

- When I was a senior in high school, I went on a Vianney Visit, which is a Thursday-Saturday event for guys from junior year in high school through college where they can come visit the seminary and “live the life” for a couple of days. I was not expecting it to be much of anything, and I was actually already applying to different schools, since the whole seminary thing was not high on my list that year! But the Lord used that Vianney Visit in amazing ways, and I left feeling pretty sure that the Lord was at least calling me to SJV as a next step. I was halfway through my senior year by that point, so I thought I might be too late in the game, but I learned that there was still time to apply. I had already applied to St. Thomas and gotten accepted, so all I needed to do was talk to the Vocations Director and apply to the Diocese. It was an intense process but a very good one, as it definitely prepared me for the new life that I was embarked upon at SJV. Once I was at the seminary, it was one year at a time and just trying to be totally open and honest with my formation advisor and spiritual director. 8 years later, I was lying on the marble at the Cathedral of St. Paul!
- Some advice that was given to me by one of my spiritual directors is that God most often works and speaks to us through our *desires*. If you are seeking his will and trying to live your life for him (not perfectly, obviously, but doing your best and seeking to be a disciple), you can be confident that the *desire* he puts on your heart is something that he probably wants you to follow! So, for instance, if you find that, in your prayer and relationships and as you attend Mass, you start to have this desire for the priesthood, or a desire for celibacy, or a desire for a life of consecrated ministry, or a desire to celebrate the Sacraments, etc., the Lord probably has given you that desire because he wants you to think it over and pursue it! Now, he might give you a desire for the priesthood or a desire for the seminary and then reveal different desires to you at a later date (as in, a deeper desire for marriage and family, perhaps), but following the desires of your heart is often a very simply and very powerful way to do his will! You can ask yourself:

what is it that I find myself longing for...deep down inside? You will probably find lots of different desires there, which is where the daily prayer, discernment, and spiritual direction can really come into play. Don't ever forget that the Lord wants to give you joy to the full! So whatever it is that he is calling you to is going to give you that deep, profound joy.