

Good Shepherd Sunday 2021



ARCHDIOCESE
of SOUTHWARK



Priest Training and
Vocations Annual Update

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The priesthood has always been essential to the life of the Church, from the time of Jesus until today. In the Archdiocese of Southwark, we are blessed to have men answering the call to the Priesthood and Diaconate and choosing to dedicate their lives to Christ and His people.

2020 was a year of great blessings when it came to ordinations, both in terms of quantity and quality. We had 8 men ordained, 5 priests and 3 deacons. The Priests ordained at St George's Cathedral were Fr Giovanni Prandini assigned to Balham parish, Fr Dermott O'Gorman based at the Cathedral, Fr John Howard assigned to Canterbury parish, and Fr Peter Sebastian at Croydon West parish. Fr Evan Royston was ordained at Immaculate Lady of Victories, Clapham.

The role of a priest is to make Christ present to people in all situations of life. Through all the events of our lives, be they times of joy or sorrow, our priests are there for us. Whether it is in a church, in a hospital, at school; the ministry of the priest is to make Christ's love, healing and forgiveness, alive and tangible.

Through your prayers and donations, you support the work of the Archdiocese of Southwark's Vocations team, so they can encourage and inspire those who hear God's calling. Your generosity also provides financial support to seminarians, covering their educational and living costs during their 7 years in priestly formation at the seminary.

Your investment is an investment in our Church now and for future generations.

Stories from our newly ordained priests

Fr Giovanni Prandini, Ordained July 2020



I have been ordained for only eight months now and it feels I have never done anything else in my life; it feels so natural. Still, when I look back at the pastoral

classes we were given at the seminary, I wonder if you can teach people to be priests at all. To me, priesthood is to accompany people in a journey towards Christ, to help them get a bit closer to Christ and, in doing so, getting closer to Christ myself.

Some people I have talked to remarked how strange it must be to have just become a priest in these COVID-19 times. True, parishes are different now from what they were one year ago, and there are many activities we cannot do. And yet, any time is as good as another to

make our journey towards God, to imitate Jesus. And to me this gives a completely new meaning to the words of St Paul: **All things work together for good for those who love God.**

One of the most significant aspects of priesthood I have discovered is how personal and yet self-effacing it is. All the glimpses of redemption I have experienced in my personal life, all the graces I have received in prayer, and all the moments of bleakness I have gone through, all this is touched by God, redeemed and recast to help others get closer to Christ. In every pastoral encounter, what really matters is the journey of the other person towards Christ. We, as priests, are there to facilitate this encounter.

Fr Dermott O'Gorman, Ordained July 2020

I first felt called to the priesthood as an altar server at school. After university, and some years working, I 'took the plunge'. I wondered how I would survive several years of formation, but I not only survived I thrived. Seminary



life and ministry have brought great joy in following the Lord's call. This joy reminds me of Archbishop John's words to me on my ordination day: **"Joy is a beautiful consequence of love. When we stay in Christ's love, His joy makes a home in us".**

The other word which summarises priestly life so far is privilege. It is indeed a profound privilege to minister Christ's grace to the people through Word and Sacrament, particularly the Eucharist; to stand in the person of Christ to people in the life-defining moments from the cradle to grave, Baptism to their deathbed. I pray that many more young people will consider the call to the priesthood or religious life and share in this joyful privilege.

Southwark Seminarian's story

Matthew Donnelly, Sixth Year Seminarian

I was reluctant, but it was the best thing I could have ever done



I was working in London as a Building Surveyor when I felt the Lord prompting me once more to become a priest. I had tried for the priesthood before but had given up after a couple of years in seminary. Having turned 45 and having just purchased a house, my ex-fiancé sent me a cut out from a catholic newspaper advertising a retreat for late vocations. I was reluctant, but it was the

best thing I could have done. God stepped in powerfully to let me know, through prayer and through the people I met, that this was His will, which would result in the perfect outcome for my life. The commitment we make to anyone or anything should be proportionate to the love we have received and want to express. Where God is concerned, once I had started to live-out that commitment it was only then I experienced great peace and inner freedom. I was left in no doubt that this is what He had always planned for me, right from the beginning, and that He'd never stopped calling me out of His immense love.

Frazer Bellfield, Third Year Seminarian

What greatly encourages me is to know that many people are praying for me and my brother Seminarists



My journey to the seminary began in my home parish of St. Theresa's, Biggin Hill, when our elderly and kindly parish priest encouraged me to become an altar server after my first Holy Communion. Fr. Flood was a great nurturer of priestly vocations and when I was 12 years old, he took me on a "Discovering the Priesthood Day" for young people at the seminary

at Womersley. I could never have known on my first visit that 12 years later I would end up as a student in this very seminary.

After completing my secondary education, I was given the chance to have an experience in Spain with a Spanish Religious Community which had connections to my home parish. I found myself at 18 years old living in an exciting new country, learning a new language and working alongside the Friars in several difficult neighbourhoods. My time in Spain certainly made an impression on me, to this day I still love a good Paella, but I felt more inclined towards working as a parish priest rather than being a Religious Brother, and I was not ready for in depth study at that point in my life. After returning from Spain I worked

Allan MacDonald, Fifth Year Seminarian



I was born and raised in Toronto, Canada and while I was baptized Catholic, I did not grow up in a traditional catholic family. It was not until I started College at 19 and attended my very first mass and I had the desire to become Catholic and was received into the Catholic faith. It was shortly after my reception into the church that the thinking about

becoming a priest occurred. I resisted for a long time, trying to follow my plans and not God's. I became a teacher and immigrated to the UK, but despite my success, God's pull never left me. 'I decided to take the step and my only regret has been that I hadn't done it sooner. At this point I feel that I have made the right decision and I would advise anyone thinking about this call to take the first bold step.

"It is in silence that we find God, and in silence we discover our true self. And in discovering our true self, we discover the particular vocation which God has given us for the building up of His Church and the redemption of our world."

Pope Benedict XVI

in a parish as a pastoral assistant. This gave me a greater insight into the inner workings of the Parish Priest.

By the time I had reached my early 20s I was pretty sure that God was calling me to the priesthood. I always enjoyed travelling and got a job with EasyJet at Gatwick Airport, later with British Airways. It was during this time I met Fr John, the then Vocations Director, who helped me reach the decision that it was right for me to apply for the Diocesan Priesthood.

I am in my third year of formation and very much enjoying being part of the seminary community, just like "the real world", the seminary is a place where we are called to serve God to the best of our ability, with all the joys and challenges that brings. It is great to be living with likeminded guys who help and support me on my journey to the priesthood. What greatly encourages me is to know that many people are praying for me and for my brother seminarists. I would encourage anyone that feels they may be called to the priesthood to pray about it and when the time is right, to speak with one of our Diocesan Vocations promoters who will be very helpful in guiding them through their discernment.

If God is calling you, you should listen!

Fr Paul Kyne, Director of Vocations for Southwark



I was born in Lewisham into a Catholic family and attended primary and secondary schools within the Archdiocese of Southwark.

When I was attending Salesian College Battersea, as it was called then, one of the priests who taught me asked me if I had considered a vocation to the priesthood? I had not and, being only around sixteen years of age and lacking maturity, I had little intention of doing so. Later, in my early twenties, while I was involved at my local parish of St Mary Magdalen's, Brockley, I was again asked by the parish priest if I had considered a vocation to the priesthood. Clearly these priests recognised something in me that I could not see. During this time, I was completing my studies at the University of Greenwich as part of my plan to become a surveyor.

Qualifying in 1998, I worked in the construction and property industry

and later on my career took me to Australia where I worked in the international oil and gas industry. I very much enjoyed my career and the benefits it brought. However, while I was living in Australia, I was experiencing an increasing interior struggle of discontentment which led me to ask whether God was possibly calling me to priesthood? Finally, and somewhat reluctantly, I decided to formally discern priesthood while I continued to work. I contacted the local Vocations Director at the Archdiocese of Perth, Western Australia, who was both supportive and challenging to help me discern priesthood. I eventually commenced formation and was ordained priest for the Archdiocese of Southwark in 2017. If I may share one thing from this experience: if God is calling you, you should listen! I was able to avoid the call but only for a period of time, eventually I had to listen, and I am glad I did. Everyone's vocation story is different. If you think God is calling you... then please contact your Vocations Director who will accompany and support you in discerning God's plan for you. If you are called to priesthood, it is a wonderful life!

Your Vocation – Is God calling you?



“Each one of us is called – whether to the lay life in marriage, to the priestly life in the ordained ministry, or to a life of special consecration; in order to become a witness of the Lord, here and now”

Pope Francis

If you have a calling to the Catholic Priesthood or the Diaconate please contact Fr Paul Kyne, Southwark Vocations Director, on vocations@rcaos.org.uk or by telephone: 020 8300 2480

Thank you for your prayers and generous support of the Priesthood

We rely on the prayers and generosity of our parishes and parishioners to support the formation of our priests and deacons here in the Archdiocese of Southwark.

Priest Training Fund Annual Appeal – April 2021

If you would like to donate to the Priest Training Fund, you can do so via:

- Online: www.rcsouthwark.co.uk/vocations.htm
- Telephone: 020 7960 2504 (office hours)
- PayPal: Scan QR code via your camera phone
- Cheque: made payable to **RCAS Priest Training Fund** – send to the postal address below.



If you would like to become a Friend of the Priest Training Fund with a monthly gift, or are interested in supporting future priests with a gift in your Will, please contact the team on fundraising@rcaos.org.uk

Address: Priest Training Fund, 59 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7JE

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