



# Into the Depths

## Taking Care of the Fish by Fr. Tim Hepner

One evening at dinner I asked the priests I live with, "Do you mind if I get about four or five pets?" Normally calm and amiable, Fr. Greg Nelson looked at me nervously and asked, "What kind of pets?" With a smile I said, "Fish!" He was a bit relieved that I



wasn't thinking of adopting five cats, and said it was okay. So I went to the pet store and got my aquarium set up. A week later I brought home four fish. It's been awhile since I've had pets, but I did remember one important thing:

getting them in the aquarium is one thing, but taking care of them is a much bigger deal. Measuring the PH balance and the level of nitrates, cleaning the tank, making sure they don't eat each other—all this is crucial to making sure my fish are happy and healthy.

Well, by God's grace, this summer I get to enjoy more than just new fish. Seven young men are entering seminary for the diocese, and I'm almost as excited about them as I was about my fish! But seriously, when I think about the possibility of these men serving the Church that I love as priests, I am ecstatic. They are good, humble men who have perceived a call to the priesthood and are willing to submit themselves to God and Holy Mother Church. After months (sometimes years) of fishing for them, it will be a relief to finally get

them in the seminary!

But, just like the fish, the real work begins once it comes time to actually *take care* of these seminarians. And while they hopefully won't eat each other, there are lots of other concerns—will they have the proper guidance and resources to grow in the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral pillars? Will they have all their basic needs met? Will they have good experiences of priests and laity both in the diocese and in the seminary? For six to eight years, Christ and his Church have asked us to give these men an experience of formation in which they experience Christ's love, they are challenged to grow in all dimensions, and they are able to discern the priesthood. This is one of the most crucial tasks, because priests form parishes, and parishes form the Church. If we have happy, holy, healthy priests, the impact is exponential.

It takes a lot to grow a priest, and the task doesn't just belong to the vocations directors. We are very blessed to have Fr. Patrick Henehan as our vocation director for formation. He is a great example of a holy, dynamic, joyful priest, and he cares deeply about these men. But he alone isn't in charge of their formation. *We all* are, and we all do our part.

We are grateful to the parishes that have hosted seminarians, and those that have had Totus Tuus teams in which men who are discerning or are in formation have gotten a taste of ministry in the Diocese of Peoria. We're also grateful for all those people who only know the seminarians by their picture on the poster or their name on the prayer card, yet choose to pray for them every day. Each of our Catholic schools adopts at least one seminarian, and *Continued on back page...*

# Carton Scholarship Dinner

We hope you'll join us for an opportunity to spend time with the young men discerning the priesthood for the Diocese of Peoria. We're confident that you'll leave the event full of enthusiasm for the Church in our area.

The Msgr. George A. Carton College Seminarian Scholarship is designed to ensure that no young man is denied the opportunity to discern a priestly vocation in a college seminary due merely to financial need. Scholarships are awarded in varying amounts to qualifying college seminarians, and the monies are paid directly to the college or seminary

to offset the awardees' tuition, room, and board expenses. Each college seminarian will receive at least \$9,000 per academic year, or more as their need demands and our fund allows.

The dinner honors Msgr. George A. Carton, who founded the St. Therese Seminarian Endowment Fund by asking a group of ladies if they would donate a dime a day to help needy seminarians. While there is no set price for the dinner, the evening is primarily a fundraiser. We also see it as a wonderful opportunity

to educate our guests regarding priestly vocations activities in the Diocese of Peoria. We ask that those who plan to attend have the capacity and have prayerfully prepared to financially support the program. We hope to see you there:

Friday, August 4th.  
Cocktails @ 6pm,  
Dinner & Program @ 6:30.

Hettinger Hall at St. Jude Catholic Church  
10811 N. Knoxville Ave.  
Peoria, IL 61615

RSVP to Amy Chovan by July 19th.  
achovan@cdop.org  
(309) 671-1550



## How Can I Pray for Vocations?

Find a Parish Vocations Apostolate by going to [comeandfollowme.org/vocations-apostolates](http://comeandfollowme.org/vocations-apostolates).

Print off and distribute the Novena to St. Therese at [comeandfollowme.org/howtohelp/prayer](http://comeandfollowme.org/howtohelp/prayer).

Insert petitions for vocations into the prayers of the faithful at Sunday Mass ([comeandfollowme.org/resources/parishresources](http://comeandfollowme.org/resources/parishresources)).

Pray a rosary before Sunday mass for an increase in vocations.

Establish a monthly Holy Hour for Vocations (contact us for resources).

Distribute "Vocations Prayer Apostolate" brochures to the sick and homebound (order from Vianney Vocations or contact us).

## Did You Miss Us?

We know it's been awhile since our last newsletter, but we're hoping you'll agree that we've had some good excuses. Things don't seem to slow down here in the Office of Priestly Vocations, and we're happy to be busy promoting vocations and forming our seminarians. This is what we've been up to the last several months:

**January:** The Vocations Apostolate Workshop was a huge success. If you have started an apostolate or are forming one, know of our continued support and please share your information with us.

**February:** We were overwhelmed at the turn-out for the college discernment retreat at St. John's Newman Center in Champaign—over 75 students came! Several diocesan schools chose to highlight vocations during National Catholic Schools Week.

**March:** The calm before the storm. As Lent began, we started preparing for an event that would be bigger than we could imagine...

**April:** Holy week brought our seminarians

home to spend time with their bishop on Holy Thursday and serve their parishes at Easter. Then on April 24, three priests began to ride across the diocese to raise prayers for vocations. *Priests Pedaling for Prayers* was covered by media outlets in every major city in the diocese and met with enthusiastic receptions at parishes and schools along the route. More importantly, thousands of people were intentionally



praying and offering sacrifices in union with Fr. Tom, Fr. Adam, and Fr. Michael. They finished the ride in Danville on April 28.

**May:** The most joyful time of the year for our office. Our seminarians finished exams and headed home for the summer. In a packed cathedral, the bishop ordained Lee W. Brokaw as a priest for the diocese. The next day, Fr. Lee

celebrated his first mass in an equally packed Immaculate Conception Church in Monmouth. Fr. Lee began his assignment as parochial vicar at St. Matthew's in Champaign in June.

**June:** Our two major summer programs, Emmaus Days and Totus Tuus, began. Serving hundreds of young people throughout the diocese, these programs help

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# Passage to Pray With:

## MY YOKE IS EASY, MY BURDEN LIGHT

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

~Matthew 11:25-30



## Miss Us, cont'd.

to grow and form new vocations. Men participating in both these programs discern to enter seminary because of their involvement in them. *Totus Tuus* is a Latin phrase short for, “totally yours, Mary.” College students and seminarians traverse the diocese evangelizing and catechizing with a level of energy that makes me tired just thinking about it. Emmaus Days is our vocation camp/retreat that’s been going on for 35 years at which men imitate the disciples on the Road to Emmaus by encountering Christ in their lives and letting him lead them to their vocations. Like the road to Emmaus story, it is centered on the Eucharist, and the young participants’ hearts are set on fire with love for Christ’s presence through prayer



and talks.

**July:** Our summer programs continue, and our retreat for Parents of Priests and Seminarians (POPS), led by Fr. Chase Hilgenbrinck, takes place at St. John’s Newman Center in Champaign.

So you can see how much work the Lord has given us, but we know we’re not doing it alone. Our efforts are infinitesimal compared to the grace of Christ, and we are always in awe at the effectiveness of the prayers and efforts of the priests and lay people of the diocese.

**Looking Ahead to August:** Our seminarians gather with Bishop Jenky and the vocation directors for a week of prayer, fraternity, and workshops during St. Joseph Days. Seven new seminarians will be accepted by the bishop. We will also host the Carton Scholarship Dinner for those who are willing and able to financially support our college seminarians. The seminarians will return to their formation in Minnesota and Maryland, and the next round of application and discernment will begin for many men. **September:** The Novena to St. Therese will begin September 22. **October:** St. Therese’s Feast Day will be celebrated on October 1st, with a special holy hour.

## Quote of the Month

“In the fifth chapter of Hebrews, verse four, there is written: “His vocation comes from God, as Aaron’s did; nobody can take on himself such a privilege as this.” When a priest receives the call from God, something happens to his soul, like that which happened to Peter in his barque one dark night when Christ entered it. The young man with a vocation reacts as did Peter: “Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.” There is a double tension: one of attraction to the divine, the other, subtraction, because of one’s own unworthiness; a desire to approach the All-Holy, and a shrinking because of one’s own sense of inadequacy. Then begins a minimum of six years of difficult study and moral and spiritual discipline, as one asks himself a thousand times if he is worthy. Either with the crucifix that hangs on the wall of his simple room, or to the crucifix on his desk, he carries on a constant dialogue. The seminarian knows how human he is, and yet, like Christ on the Cross, suspended between heaven and earth, abandoned by one and rejected by the other, the world expects him to be more than human. Called to be as pure and as holy as an angel, he is conscious of his own weakness, bearing about as he does the rich treasure in a frail vessel. And yet he must fulfill the words of his Master: “Thou hast sent me into the world on thy errand, and I have sent them into the world on my errand” (John 17:18). From now on, he no longer takes the short breaths of the world; he must draw in strength from the world of the spirit.

~ Venerable Fulton Sheen, Priest of Peoria

## THE LIFE OF PRAYER:

“Continue to say the Rosary every day in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary, to obtain the peace of the world...Make sacrifices for sinners, and say often, especially while making a sacrifice: O Jesus, this is for love of Thee, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for offences committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. If you do what I tell you, many souls will be saved, and there will be peace.”

~Our Lady of Fatima, July 13, 1917

the kids often send cards with encouraging messages. First graders' art work usually puts me to shame, by the way.

We are also very grateful to those who will donate to the Msgr. Carton Scholarship Fund this year. Many people who aren't able to make it to the dinner still send in checks for whatever they can afford. And with the bishop's decision to give each college seminarian at least \$9,000, every little bit counts!

So thank *you* for helping to take care of these men. Hopefully you'll get a chance to see them around the diocese in the near future, whether it's at the Carton Dinner, in your parish, or at the Cathedral. And if you ever want to help me clean my fish tank, you know where to find me!



*A grade schooler of the diocese depicts Fr. Michael Pica, one of the pedaling priests, in a drawing that is much better than anything Fr. Hepner could do.*

# FOLLOW ME.

Everyone is called to something. What's your calling?

WANT TO SUPPORT PRIESTLY VOCATIONS? KNOW A YOUNG MAN WHO MAY BE CALLED? CONTACT US:

CALL **309-671-1550** OR  
VISIT US ONLINE AT  
**COMEANDFOLLOWME.ORG**

*Want to save paper and help us be good stewards? Sign up for an electronic copy: email [achovan@cdop.org](mailto:achovan@cdop.org).*

Office of Priestly Vocations  
Catholic Diocese of Peoria  
419 NE Madison Avenue  
Peoria, IL 61603

