

Seminarian Collection 2020 Audio Script

Hello my brothers and sisters in Christ. This is Bishop David Ricken. What a year we have had so far! From schools closing in early spring and children learning online to businesses providing services in new ways along with parishes live-streaming Masses, we have overcome some big, big challenges. Through all of these things our faith has grown. We have discovered new ways to connect with one another and to help families and individuals in need. We have much to be thankful for this year.

One thing I'm especially grateful for is people saying "Yes!" to our Lord. Fifteen years ago we began the Seminarian Collection with a theme of "Hope for the Future, Help Them Today!" Over the last 15 years 36 men have been ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese. You helped these men through your support of this collection.

Now I would like to share with you the stories of two young men who through their education discovered the plans Jesus had for their lives. Ben grew up in a good Catholic family. He went to Sunday Mass regularly and attended Catholic school. However, by his junior year in high school at Lourdes Academy in Oshkosh he found himself with no faith. But that all changed when a Lourdes Academy instructor took time to answer his questions about God and helped him to rediscover his faith. Because of this teacher he went from questioning his faith to deciding to attend the seminary his freshman year of college.

For Kevin, he, too, grew up in a strong Catholic family. His foundation of faith was formed during his youth at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Pulaski. Through campus ministries at UW Madison his heart was opened to the priesthood. After being invited to attend a discernment retreat, he realized God's great plan for his life.

Recently, I had the pleasure of ordaining these two exceptional young men. I am pleased to introduce you now to Fr. Ben Johnson from Oshkosh and Fr. Kevin Ripley from Pulaski. My name is Fr. Kevin Ripley. I'm from Pulaski, Wisconsin. I'm currently serving at St. Raphael Parish in Oshkosh. I really felt inspired to the priesthood during my years in college at UW Madison. I was inspired to the priesthood through participation in daily Mass and seeing a very faithful priest celebrate the Eucharist each and every day and seeing the community gathered around the altar day in and day out. As my love for the Eucharist grew so did this calling to the priesthood.

My name is Fr. Ben Johnson. I'm from Oshkosh. Right now I'm an associate at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Manitowoc. Since I was a kid I knew I wanted to do something good for other people. I just had no idea what that looked like but that really took shape for me in the priesthood. In bringing God to others. The biggest blessing in my life right now is to be able to celebrate the Mass. To all of those who have given to the Seminarian Collection on behalf of myself and my brother seminarians I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving us this chance, this opportunity to study and ultimately become a priest of Jesus Christ for this Diocese. Thank you and may God bless you.

I would really like to thank Fr. Ben and Fr. Kevin for their dedication to their studies and for answering God's call to the priesthood. Fr. Ben and Fr. Kevin are great examples of how discipleship is working in our Diocese. The faith journey they have taken would not have been possible without your prayers and your financial support of the Seminarian Collection.

Did you know it costs nearly \$40,000 per seminarian per year to attend the seminary? If you have given a gift every year or maybe just once in the last 15 years, thank you! Thank you! This year in honor of our 15th year of supporting our seminarians please prayerfully consider a gift of \$15, \$150, \$515 or more. All gifts are beautiful gifts, appreciated gifts. Your generous support will greatly help with the costs of tuition, room and board, insurance, funding for Fr. Mark Mleziva and Fr. Adam Bradley's work in the Vocation Office and other expenses.

Another vocation initiative we will begin this year is the Kairos program. As we work to grow the number of men in the seminary to 30 by the year 2025, this new formation program being led by Fr. Adam Bradley here within our Diocese will help men further explore a calling to the priesthood. Through this year long program of discernment these men will have the opportunity to grow deeper in their faith through prayer and reflection, serve in our parishes and communities and engage in the works of the Church and other Catholic ministries. This is an excellent way to grow future priests for the Diocese of Green Bay!

Please know that whatever gift you are able to give to help support our seminarians is greatly appreciated. More importantly, it will bring the Good News to even more people across our Diocese.

Thank you for all of your prayers and financial support for our seminarians over the past 15 years. These men are our hope for the future and need your help today. I am grateful for you and your generosity for this mission. May God bless you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.