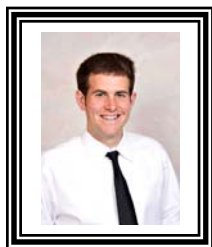


Paul Solomon
Junior - St. John Vianney College Seminary
Parish: Ss. Peter & Paul, Naperville
Birthday: October 10



I was born October 10th, 1988 at 6:33 pm at Hinsdale in Hinsdale Hospital. At 10:02 pm, my mother gave birth to my twin sister, Katherine. I was baptized at Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Naperville on December 4, 1988 and was brought into the Church. I grew up in Naperville and have lived there my entire life. I attended Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic School for kindergarten through eighth grade. It was in sixth grade that I first felt the call to priesthood. I was altar serving and heard a very clear voice speak to me in my heart and say, “Come, follow Me”, and I interpreted this calling as a call to priesthood. The next step from there was to get in touch with the diocesan vocation director. He told me about an opportunity called “Jeremiah Day” to visit Mundelein Seminary. This was a very powerful experience because it was my first contact with seminarians and it made me realize that they were regular people on fire for Jesus Christ and His Church. One seminarian in particular captured my attention. He had been a baseball player and baseball was my favorite sport. I was very intrigued. The following June, I went to the ordination of this former baseball player and his classmates. It was the power of the Holy Spirit that continued to keep priesthood at the front of my mind throughout the rest of my time in junior high school.

However, I made the decision to go to public school at Naperville North High School. At North, I focused a lot on sports and played baseball and football. Freshman year I began going to Eucharistic Adoration but became to busy with sports. Priesthood sank to the back of my mind. I continued to practice my faith but it weakened and I felt called in different directions. Then in my junior year of high school, I felt a prompting to go back to Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and this changed my life. I would go to the Chapel once a week and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation after to be cleansed of my impurities. This time strengthened what had been a weakened faith and moved my heart to want to live a life a service.

As time came for me to start finding where I was to go to college, I finally came to a decision that I wanted to study theology because God had implanted a love for religion in my heart. However, a bigger vision came back to me of priesthood. I explored a few options as far as studying theology, and looked into those schools’ baseball programs as well. But the Lord kept pushing me to open my heart and mind to discernment of a priestly vocation. At that time I got in touch with the new vocation director, that former baseball player, Fr. Burke Masters, and he encouraged me to come and visit St. John Vianney Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota on the campus of the University of St. Thomas. It just so happened that when he suggested this, my dad was on business in Minneapolis. My dad was overjoyed and came over to St. Thomas during his trip and received a tour. He really enjoyed it and thought it would be a great fit for me. Also at that time, College of DuPage was hosting a college fair and the University of St. Thomas had a representative present. I called him and he came over to my school the next day to talk about the possibility of going to St. Thomas. The things he told me about the school impressed me and I went on a visit during November of my senior year in high school. I absolutely hated my first 24 hours of my visit. However, the Lord opened my eyes to see the beauty of St. John Vianney Seminary and the kind of men that resided there. These students were not boys rather they were regular, athletic, intellectual, fraternal, and holy men, which was something I greatly desired and knew that there was no way I could help change the world if I was not a man like these men. After my visit, I entered the application process and was accepted to study for the Diocese of Joliet toward the end of my senior year. God wasn’t done though. During this same time, God put into my life one of the greatest graces I have ever received, which was the girl of my dreams. She and I dated the entirety of the senior year before I left for seminary. As difficult as it was to leave her, I knew it wasn’t fair to her or to me to be in this relationship until I answered this call from above. It was her gift of love for me, which has radically changed me and my approach to life. Please God, may I use the gift of her example of love to help change the world as a Catholic Priest.

This summer I had two part-time jobs. My first part-time job was helping run a six-week summer camp at Happy Times Preschool in Naperville. My second job entailed a part-time position at Ss. Peter and Paul doing mostly maintenance as well as pastoral work.

My first year of seminary was life changing and a great year of self-discovery. I also had the wonderful opportunity to play Division III baseball at the University of St. Thomas. This past year, I had another fantastic year at St. John Vianney. I grew so much as an intimate Son of the Father and as a Father to my younger brothers in seminary. It was an incredible year of conversion, receptivity, transformation and grace (both joy and suffering), mercy and healing, and guidance. The seminary has been a great joy to me for so many reasons and I thank God for all He has done for me. I thank Him so much for all of those people who have been praying for me and supporting me in my discernment.