



Luke Zanoni
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Parish: St. James the Apostle, Glen Ellyn
Birthday: February 18, 1991

I was born in LaGrange, IL on February 18, 1991. St. James the Apostle in Glen Ellyn has been my home parish for the past six years of my life. I come from a family of five in which I am the oldest child. I owe a great deal of thanks to my parents Matthew and Christina for the great sacrifices they have made for my sister Natalie (18), my brother Joshua (15), and myself.

Before entering seminary I attended the University of Iowa in Iowa City. My first year of college proved to be a great spiritual challenge. The summer before my freshman year I was content with the way my life was going, especially with dating the girl I had fallen in love with during my senior year of high school. Within my first semester of college I started to experience an overbearing sense of confusion and chaos—a storm within my heart. I was surrounded by unexplainable feelings of loneliness and confusion. Also, God pulled away from my heart all signs of his presence. I entered into a period of intense spiritual desolation.

In this desolation I felt extremely lost and without any comfort. Something was happening inside of me that I could not ignore. Through this I started to feel a strong desire to pray. I was praying in front of the tabernacle at the Iowa Newman Center one evening when I realized people were gathering for Mass. I decided to attend the Mass. There I experienced a peace that brought me back the next day. Later on I was shocked when I realized I had attended Mass almost every day for two months. I now realize God was drawing me back to Him and His Church, through the presence of the Eucharist, but at the time I was in unexplainable awe of the peace that surrounded Mass and prayer before the tabernacle. I desired this peace more than anything, so I frequented the chapel as much as possible.

In prayer I was reminded of an experience I had at the Youth Leadership Conference in 2008. During the weekend and many times afterward, I experienced strong interests and feelings of peace associated with becoming a seminarian. At the time, I shunned the idea of priesthood because I felt that I was too conflicted and broken to be a priest. I had also just begun dating my girlfriend at the time so I adopted a “maybe later” mentality.

Once again the desire to become a seminarian entered my heart. The Lord continually reminded me of the small feeling of reservation that I felt when spending time with the girl I loved. No matter how hard I tried to give my heart to her I always felt I was holding something back. After a tough breakup during my first semester at Iowa, I had time to reflect on the meaning of this reservation. In prayer I saw God speaking to my heart. He was saying “There is something more” and I realized this was connected to my desire to be a seminarian. While the idea of priesthood was scary and seemingly impossible to me, something was extremely appealing about being a seminarian. In the midst of a spiritual storm, thoughts of joining the seminary became like little beacons of light and temporary shelters from the storm. The idea of seminary allowed me to bring the peace that I experience in the chapel and at Mass, out into the rest of my everyday life.

After Mass one Sunday night, I was praying in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel at the Newman Center and I finally asked the Lord with an open heart “Do you want me to pursue the seminary?” Almost instantly I felt as though a weight had been lifted and the great storm that I had been experiencing was gone. I experienced an intense feeling of peace and joy. I felt as though I was floating on a cloud. The chaos and confusion in my heart was replaced with a fire, a desire to jump in head first to this calling that God had given me. I began to realize that the doubts and brokenness I felt was nothing compared to Christ’s love and will for my life. I realized I did not need to be perfect to be a priest. I only needed to trust God with my life and believe he will give me what I need to follow His will.

After talking with Father Burke I decided to apply to the Diocese and on December 2nd, 2010 I was accepted by Bishop Siegel as a seminarian. I finished my first semester at St. John Vianney College Seminary in the spring. I have never been happier. I am filled with so much joy and am thankful to finally be home here in the Diocese of Joliet.

This summer I have been blessed to share our faith with kids and teens around the diocese through the Totus Tuus program. I will be a junior this year at St. John Vianney. My prayer for you is that you may share in the joy I now treasure by opening your heart to God’s will. I thank you so much for all your prayers and support of the seminarians. You are truly a blessing and I pray that God blesses you greatly in return.