

My vocation story starts in 1st grade. My teacher, Sister Dunstan, had us draw a picture of what we were going to be when we grew up. There were seven boys and seven girls in the class. Six boys drew themselves as being priests, one as a farmer. Six of the girls drew themselves as a nun and the other a nurse. Looking back the only one who got it right was the girl who wanted to be a nurse, but she was the only one of the girls that went to the convent. She tried it out but left to be a nurse.

By the way, I was the farmer but that year we had a priest come and visit the school. He was a missionary in Africa doing a mission appeal at our parish. I was mostly interested in whether there were lions and giraffes by his mission, but it made me start to think about the excitement of priesthood. I just didn't think I could learn another language so I could do mission work.

I ended up having one teacher for 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. Her name was Sister Victima. We considered ourselves the victimees. She was always telling us stories about the different Sisters and priests that she knew. It was fascinating. When I was in seventh grade she started having us say a prayer for vocations every morning. By the end of the year I actually noticed the fine print at the bottom of the card. It said there was a seven year indulgence every time you said the prayer and a plenary indulgence if you said it every day for a month. That summer I decided to try for the plenary indulgence. I took me a month and a half to get thirty-one days in a row. The last day I realized I had been praying for more young men and women to be priests, brothers or sisters, and that maybe I might be a young man who could do that.

For the rest of the summer I thought about the possibility. I was pretty sure that I didn't want to be a farmer and milk cows the rest of my life. Also there was a guy one grade ahead of me that went to the seminary when he finished 8th grade. I thought that if he could do it, I could also.

I still had not told anyone about this idea. The first week of my 8th grade year I mentioned it to my Mom. I simply asked what she would think about me going to the seminary. She didn't see any problem with it. I knew that she would mention this to Dad that night. If he didn't like the idea I would hear about it. I didn't hear a thing, so I mentioned it to Sister Victima. Within seconds I was in the priest's house waiting to talk to him about it.

My parish priest was a very tall, easy going person who made priesthood seem easy. But then I didn't know much about it. I thought he just heard confessions every Saturday, said two Masses every Sunday, handed out report cards in the school twice a year and then got enough free food on Thanksgiving to last a year. I figured that I could do that. But it was still intimidating, especially since I was very small for my grade. When I entered high school I remember being 98 lbs. and 4' 11". I was also thirteen years old. The day I talked to the priest I was still twelve. He had me scared for a bit because he told me I would be in the seminary for twelve years. But he reassured me enough that I tried it.

Each year I was in the seminary I became more convinced that God wanted me to be a priest. It was hard because there were many times that I didn't feel that I would be qualified. But each year God prepared me with more and more skills. Soon there was no doubt. God wanted me to be doing His work. My ordination date, June 3, 1978, was the start of me doing more amazing things than I ever imagined, but with each new challenge he gave me all the preparation I would need. He has filled my life with great things and I am still thrilled that I answered His call.