

“ULTIMATELY, I RECOGNIZED AND ACCEPTED THE REAL PRIORITY IN MY LIFE”



Do you remember where you were when you first heard God’s call? I do. I was home from college for the weekend to help out with a youth group retreat. Twenty-two years later, I vividly recall the first time I talked to a priest about the priesthood. The conversation began a process of discernment that led me to where I am today. At forty, I am in my second year of theological studies for the Archdiocese of Newark at Immaculate Conception Seminary and look forward, God willing, to ordination.

During the past twenty years, I participated fully in the secular world. I was a licensed funeral director and volunteer in Appalachia, all the while active in my parish. Yet as I chased happiness as it is understood by the world, God continued the conversation begun years earlier during the retreat. The conversation in my heart never ended; rather, it was placed on hold. Still, I could never forget it, and occasional reminders came by way of my

mother, different priests, and others. Eventually, I was moved to focus more on this conversation with God.

Ultimately, I recognized and accepted the real priority in my life: God. Once that was clear, I found myself increasingly on the receiving end of happiness rather than merely chasing it. This was a profound change, which others began to notice. It is this happiness and peace that I hope to share with all the people of God. God was patient while I matured enough to make the necessary commitment. This conversation does not have to be twenty years for everyone. For those who are in the midst of it, I pray that it may come into focus sooner rather than later.

Matthew Dooley, Seminarian
Immaculate Conception Seminary
South Orange, New Jersey



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