

From the Parents of a Young Priest

From the mother: "I was thrilled when my son told me he was considering priesthood! But after my initial excitement, I had many concerns. What if he was ordained and changed his mind? Would there be parts of priesthood he would not like? Would parish work be boring? I even wondered about what kind of dress I would need at his ordination!"

"My first advice to parents is to pray! Second, educate yourself about seminary and priesthood. Finally, be absolutely honest. In the end, my son knew I would be very happy if he was ordained. I also made it very clear to him that if it was not to be, I would not be crushed."



A young priest prays with his parents on his ordination day.

From the father: "One night, Samuel mentioned that he thought he'd like to find out more about the seminary. As soon as I suggested he contact the vocation director, he had the phone in his hand making the call. I knew then he had been thinking about it for a while and was serious."

"My advice to parents is to give their children a solid foundation in their faith and in life. I especially want to speak to the dads: Be a man. Model for your children what Catholic manhood is all about. Know your faith, impart your faith, live your faith. Love God, love your wife, and love your children. If you do this right, your children will have the foundation to discern their true vocations—to the priesthood, religious life, or married life."



So what happens when a young man goes to seminary even though his parents feel uneasy? For most parents, the pattern is the same: as they witness their son's growing happiness, they become more comfortable with his vocation. By the time of his ordination, they share fully in his joy, peaceful and proud that he has chosen a life of service to God and others.

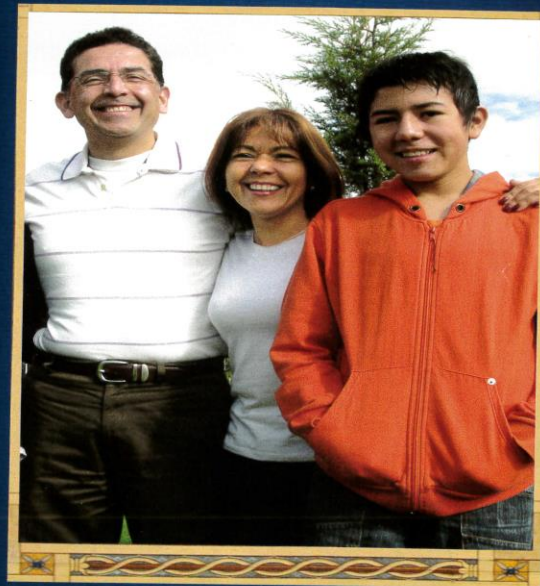
The Ideal Parent

The ideal Catholic parent understands a simple truth: God desires your child's happiness even more than you do! If your son experiences a genuine call from the Lord to pursue the priesthood, trust in God's love for your son!

From the earliest years, make it clear to your children that God has a plan for them. Read them Bible stories of Jesus calling his disciples. Engage in open conversations about your children's hopes and dreams. Make sure that they understand the various vocations to marriage, priesthood, and religious life. Above all, teach them how to pray and serve others.

If your child does express an interest in priesthood, be supportive. The ideal parent is at peace with God's will, saying, essentially, "I will pray for you and support you as you go to seminary... and I will be equally proud of you if discern that you must leave seminary."

VOCATION MYTHBUSTERS for PARENTS



Six Common Fears
when Your Son is
Considering Priesthood

Year after year, in surveys of newly ordained priests, over half report that their families initially opposed the idea of priesthood. Undoubtedly, parents want the best for their children. So what about priesthood does not fit parents' vision of "the good life"? Let's look at six common myths.

MYTH
1 "He's too young."

Many parents, when their young son expresses an interest in seminary, will dispense well-meaning advice: "Get some life experience first—and at least a college degree—then think about seminary later." Mom and dad envision that with a nice girlfriend and a good job, the idea of priesthood will fade away. The problem is, they may be right. That's why it's important that when God moves the heart of a young man to explore the priesthood, parents should trust God that the time may be right! College seminaries are places of joy, camaraderie, and deep spiritual growth. Even if your son goes to college seminary and eventually discerns he is not called to priesthood, don't think he'll have to "make up for lost time." Thousands of former seminarians look back on their seminary days with great affection and gratitude!

Consider if your teenage son had the ambition—and the ability—to become an architect. Most parents would encourage this interest, even going out of their way to research the best colleges for architecture. But the same parents—even good Catholic moms and dads—express reservations about their son attending seminary. Why would you encourage your son to learn how to build roads and bridges, but discourage him because he wants to build the Kingdom of God?

MYTH
2 "He'll be so lonely."

This is an easy myth to dispel. Priests are surrounded by people! After all, their job is to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus. They are continually working with parish staff, youth, and people who come to them for spiritual advice. Seminaries today teach men how to form good, healthy relationships with the people of their parish and the priests of their dioceses. Sure, there can be lonely moments—but the same is true in any vocation, marriage included. Most priests have healthy friendships with brother priests, lay people, and family that keep them grounded and connected.

MYTH
3 "Celibacy is impossible."

Married couples sometimes have difficulty imagining their son choosing "life without a wife." Society would have us believe that celibacy is impossible, or at the very least, unreasonable. The truth is that physical intimacy is indeed one of God's greatest natural gifts, but that thousands of saints have experienced tremendous joy living the *supernatural* vocation of celibacy. Today's seminaries offer superb formation in how to live chaste celibacy with peace and joy.

MYTH
4 "I won't have grandchildren."

At her only child's ordination, a woman was asked if she was sad she would never have grandchildren. Her response? "It's not about me." She was simply grateful that her son had found God's will for his life. Many parents of priests are delighted to find that they gain "spiritual grandchildren"—thousands of people whose lives have been profoundly influenced by their son's priesthood. There is a special joy in meeting people who exclaim, "You're Fr. Jacob's mother? He's such a great priest!"



Just as children are born into the world through the love of their parents, they are born into heaven through the ministry of priests. As one priest put it, "It's true that no one calls me daddy. But thousands call me father."

MYTH
5 "I'll lose my son."

Some parents think that if their son becomes a priest, they'll never see him. One priest laughed at this idea: "When Thanksgiving rolls around and my brothers and sisters are busy with their children and in-laws, guess what? It's me carving the turkey with mom and dad!" His point is that diocesan priests are able to spend a healthy amount of time with family. Even priests in religious orders, who may have assignments far from home, are able to periodically see their parents and siblings. In the Internet age, social media makes it easy to keep in touch.

MYTH
6 "He'll be unhappy."

This is the "umbrella fear" that encompasses all the others. It's also the easiest to dismiss, because the facts prove otherwise. A number of studies about happiness invariably find one profession ranked number one: clergy. In his book titled *Why Priests Are Happy*, Msgr. Stephen Rosetti cites reliable research showing that 92% of priests report being happy. The key factor in this happiness? An "inner peace."