

March, 2017

To All Considering A Vocation,

Since the time I was in high school, I felt an inclination to serve in the church. Every passing day, the thought of serving God would intensify ever so slightly, and it wasn't until I entered college that I discerned this desire to actually be a call from God. Initially, the thought of becoming a priest frightened me. I was not emotionally prepared to abandon my career goal of becoming a professional airline pilot. Through my own arrogance, I would later dismiss the idea of entering the seminary in order to remain focused on my passion in aviation. Amazingly, I was never able to completely remove the thought from my mind, and like a pilot light gently burning on a stove top, the idea always remained in the back of my mind.

By the time I completed my second year of college, I began working as a TSA Officer at Logan Airport in Boston. This was an impressive job for an undergraduate student to have, as I was planning to start a career in the federal government as a TSA aviation inspector. The immense financial benefits of such a career were beyond my comprehension and I was overwhelmed with anticipation as I prepared to apply for this advancement. It was right at this time however that the dim flame burning in the back of my mind became a blazing fire.

During Pope Francis's visit back in 2015, I was working my normal shift at the airport. There was a massive influx of priests passing through on this particular day. I had the opportunity to interact with many of them and engaged in casual discussion. The joyful expressions on their faces really resonated with me and I remembered how I once felt called to a vocation myself. I thought about the job I was planning for and whether or not it could make me as happy as the priests I'd interacted with that day. I truly felt the Holy Spirit burning within my heart at this very moment as I pondered once again the possibility of becoming a priest.

By the time I arrived home that day, I was very tired and didn't feel like talking to anyone. My grandmother approached me and said "I don't think this is the right job for you." In my irritated mood, I attempted to brush off her remark and continue relaxing. She went on to say "I think you should become a priest." It was at this moment that I knew I needed to seriously discern God's will in my life. Days later, I met with my local vocations director and explained my spiritual situation. He invited me to attend a discernment retreat with other young men discerning a vocation. It was at this retreat, rich in contemplative prayer, adoration, and discernment, that I knew without any possibility of doubt, God was truly calling me to be a priest.

I would immediately change my major from aviation to philosophy as I prepared to enter the seminary. I left my federal job in order to study full-time and graduate on my original anticipated graduation date. From that day forward, the only thing on my mind from the time I woke up until the time I went back to sleep was the vocation that God was calling me to serve Him in. There isn't a day that passes that I don't thank God unceasingly for inviting an unworthy servant as myself to serve Him in this marvelous way.

Amid all of these joyful revelations within my spiritual life, came a number of challenges and hindrances. As I was entering my final semester of college, I was eager to begin the formal application process for the diocesan seminary. Each time I expressed my desire to do so with my vocations director however, I met great resistance as I was consistently told that I needed to wait longer. I could never understand what was holding me back, and I later became quite depressed at the idea that I wasn't even going to be allowed to apply for the seminary. It took quite a while to realize it, but I would later determine that serving as a diocesan priest was not within God's will for my life.

Knowing that I was certainly called to priesthood, I realized that the only alternative from the diocesan priesthood was religious priesthood. Being quite ignorant to the religious life, I hadn't the slightest idea of where to start. I eventually came across a religious order in Boston that I was superficially attracted to. I met with the vocations director and attended a seminar with the community where I was able to spend the day with them and pray. I enjoyed my time there and decided that I would express my interest to the vocations director. To my shock, he told me that I should wait a period of two years before entering formation. Knowing this was totally out of the question for me, I felt very hopeless and lost.

It wasn't until giving my regular confession at La Salette Shrine in Attleboro that I felt hopeful again. I met Fr. Lamartine in the confessional and he invited me to consider the La Salette priesthood as a possible vocation. Through intense prayer and contemplation, I felt profoundly drawn to our Lady's mission of reconciliation and conversion of hearts. Within a very short amount of time, everything fell right into place and it was crystal clear that God lead me to the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette.

My message to all who are discerning a vocation is to separate all of your wants and desires from the will of God. In the Gospel of Matthew, our Lord tells us that the gate to Heaven will be narrow. Discernment is not meant to be an easy process and we will undoubtedly experience many challenges and hindrances. If God is truly calling you to a vocation, He will certainly provide every step of the way. Just take my story as an example.

God Bless You All,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fr. Lamartine', with a stylized flourish at the end.