



Seminarian Nick Benak

I am entering my first year in formation as a seminarian. I was born on October 15th, 1997, fortunate to grow up in Naperville, Illinois as part of a loving family. I have one sister, Grace.

As a child, my perception of God was as a distant, omnipotent being. Although I was taught and believed in the essential magnitude of faith, I did not translate my deep connection with God into my daily life through prayer or beyond Sunday mass. While I was eager to continue learning the faith as I approached confirmation, I became angry and embarrassed of my disregarded relationship, or lack thereof, with God.

Further, a familial emphasis on academics and extracurriculars at the expense of mass or building a prayer life left me in search of the stepping stones to the relationship with God that I yearned for in my soul.

After a transfer to a Catholic high school, Benet Academy, and further studies at Catholic colleges, I learned more about God and was surrounded by fellow believers. Although the pandemic was a challenging time, causing an interruption to regular mass attendance, my involvement in the Diocese of Joliet's Young Adult Discernment Group (Samuel Group) deepened my faith, enabling me to see Jesus as the source and summit of my life.

Following the pandemic, I began to truly consider the intermittent call to the priesthood I believe God is asking me to explore. Through God's grace and the guidance of my spiritual director, I have utilized Lectio Divina to improve my prayer life and better facilitate communication with God.

I am deeply grateful for and encouraged by the vibrant community of my home parish, St. Margaret Mary in Naperville. As I continue to grow closer to God in a propaedeutic year at Our Lady of Mercy, I ask that you please keep me and my fellow seminarians in your prayers.