



## Seminarian Ben Mate

I am Benjamin Mate. I was born on March 18, 2007 to my wonderful parents Erica and Edward. I was baptized by the legendary Father McGeean on April 22, 2007. My mom and dad have always been helpful and supportive in my life. From a young age, my mom spent time with all my siblings, Oliver, Gina, Samantha, Lucy, and I. She always did activities with us and was very influential in my life, especially when I was young. I went to catholic grade school at St. Joseph Catholic School in Manhattan, IL. There I experienced great catholic teaching and formation as well as an exemplary education. The school offered sports as well, which helped me to grow friendships that lasted. My mom was a big support in letting me do after school activities and always got me places on time. In eighth grade, my love for the faith blossomed because of my great religion teacher Mrs. Koss. This was a great foundation on which my faith grew in high school.

Before I go into my life in high school, I would like to share what home life provided me. My parents helped me become a better person. My mom was always there when I needed her and was my bridge to prayer. She said daily Rosaries with my dad and was involved in many prayer groups. My dad taught me life lessons that made me a better person. I learned a lot from my dad and always strived to be more like him. He was honest, hardworking, and kind to others. My parents influenced me in different ways that complimented each other, forming me to act as God would want me too.

I went to high school at Lincoln-Way West. Since it is a public school, there were many challenges to overcome. It was somewhat of a shock coming from a catholic school, since without God, a lot more goes wrong. People and certain scenarios challenged my faith. However, because of my good upbringing, I had full confidence in God. I strived to not only live as I should but tried to help others see God as I did. This led to me meeting with my parish priest, Father Mike McMahon, to discuss certain challenges I faced. These meetings were very fruitful for my spiritual life and allowed me to grow and help others along the way. This also allowed for more openness to God's plan and an increase in my prayer life. High School also provided opportunities for me in which God helped me grow. In particular, I think wrestling was one of the most life changing experiences. Wrestling is a tough sport. Everyday I asked God for strength to make it through practice or a competition. I know God answered my prayers, because there was no way I could have done it without Him. One of my favorite coaches once said to me after I struggled through another practice, "Most kids would have quit by now", and all I could think was anything was possible with God. This realization along with the discipline and attitude wrestling built in me allowed me to trust more in God and lean on Him for help.

Towards the end of high school, I had to start thinking about my future, something I often pushed off. I originally wanted to be an engineer like my dad, thinking if I was just like him I would be very happy with the man I would become. However, God had other plans. When I was applying to college I felt a calling from God to apply to Seminary, something I hadn't really thought of before. There had been many signs before, but I chose to ignore them. I went to Father Mike and told him about the calling I felt, and he helped me work through it so that I was sure it was God's call. He then introduced me to Fr. Borello, the vocations director, who was very instrumental in my final decisions and very helpful with the application process to Seminary. In the end it turns out that the holy ladies at the church that tell you that you should consider Seminary are usually right, or their prayers are very powerful.