



Bishop Peter Sartain ordained five men to the priesthood in early June at the Cathedral of St. Raymond in Joliet. They are pictured here, from left to right: Father Stephen Eickhoff; Father Raed Bader; Father Josh Miller; Bishop Sartain; Father John Lindsey; and Father Jason Stone.

## Meet the Newly Ordained Priests for the Diocese

**I**t all starts with a call, a beckoning from God that can be a whisper or can be a loud shout. Five men from the Diocese of Joliet heard that call to serve others, and their answers of “yes” resulted in their being ordained to the priesthood by Bishop J. Peter Sartain during a Mass on June 5 at the Cathedral of St. Raymond in Joliet. Their backgrounds are different, but their goals are the same: to serve the people of God as priests. Here are their stories:

### Raed Bader

Raed Bader was born in Jordan in the same town that the Prophet Elijah was from. He received a Catholic school education as a child, which he credits to helping his faith grow. He drifted away from the Church, however, as he grew older, but his mother’s death in 1993, when he was 23 years old, caused him to come back to the Church. It was around that time that he first started to think about the priesthood.

He worked for eight years as an aircraft technician and then studied philosophy in France. But, in 2002, he decided to come to the United States and worked as a barber for two years. Two of his clients were Franciscan friars, and through his friendship with them, he felt called to explore becoming a Franciscan. After two years discerning with the Franciscans in Joliet, he felt called to the diocesan priesthood and entered Mundelein Seminary in 2006.

“God was always faithful to me and standing

was 13 years old, he admits that his belief in God was pretty low during his teen-age years.

“There was a lot of doubt about God,” he said, so he stopped going to church.

At the University of Illinois, where he majored in English literature, he discovered the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas; in particular, he read what the saint had to say about the existence of God.

“It did start me going back to church in bits and pieces,” he said.

After college, he said he wasn’t sure about what he wanted to do as a career.

“The priesthood idea kept coming back to me,” he said. “But I didn’t want anything to do with it. I was trying to run away from it. I [felt I] was too young to be making those decisions and not holy enough.”

Then, one night, before drifting off to sleep, he said the thought occurred to him that he had come as far as he could on his own and that he needed to reach out to the diocesan vocation office. That led him to apply to enter to the seminary.

next to me,” he said. “It takes time to discern. We need to reflect and take some time to pray and think about what these things mean in life. Through that prayer and reflection, we will find that God wants something from us. I think God uses people and events in our lives to bring us to him. Without the prayer, I don’t think I would have been able to discern God’s will for my life.”

He said what he looks forward to the most as a priest is to be with and for the people.

“The priest is consecrated for the people of God,” said Bader, 39. “I pray that God will help me to be a good servant for him and for the Church and for his people.”

### Josh Miller

Even though Josh Miller felt a call to the priesthood when he

“It has been great ever since,” he said.

While in the seminary, he said what he learned the most was about God’s fidelity and faithfulness to everyone.

“If we really dedicate ourselves to trying to figure all of this out, he will be right there with us,” said the 29-year-old Miller. “He’s going to give 100 percent even if we feel we only feel like we can give 50 percent. I think that is the biggest overall lesson I learned at seminary is this need to stay close to the Lord.”

But the ultimate lesson, he added, was learning how to live for others.

He said he looks forward to two things as a priest: saying the Mass and hearing confessions.

“Those are the two sacraments where I really connect to God on a regular basis,” he said. “I know how good these two sacraments have been to me.”

### Jason Stone

One of the people dealing with the tragic shootings at Columbine High School in 1999 happened to be Jason Stone, who was working the phones and radios in Denver that day as a 911 dispatcher.

“I was intimately connected to the whole thing,” he said.

The shootings “knocked me out of the norm and got me searching for meaning in life,” added Stone, who also was a paramedic at the time. “It is a big part of my call as a witness to how God works good even through very tragic events,” he said.

Knowing several priests also helped him.

“Part of it was their witness and their contentment and joy and living their lives as priests and the invitations from them to go deeper into my own calling and respond to the Lord,” he said.

His search for a deeper meaning in life led him to enter the seminary.

“The biggest thing I’ve learned about life is to shift from living life based on what I wanted to do, the plans I had for my life, to realizing that God has a much bigger plan for me and I should be listening and following his calling in my life if I’m really going to experience true happiness and joy in this life,” Stone said.

### Stephen Eickhoff

Growing up with a Catholic father and a Southern Baptist mother, Stephen Eickhoff learned early the importance of going to church. He recalls a typical Sunday would include going to early morning Mass at a Catholic church and then attending a Baptist worship service later in the morning.

He became aware at the age of 12 or 13 that he

might have a call to the priesthood, he said, but he didn’t act on it until after college. He worked for several years after college for a truck leasing company, doing a combination of sales, training and management.

But the call to the priesthood kept nagging him. “Finally, I realized that, until I actually did something to find whether that calling was real or not, I would forever second guess myself,” said Eickhoff, 34. “I came to realize that everything that I had tried before kind of masked that call to the priesthood and was not fulfilling what I was feeling.”

He said he has grown in faith during his years in the seminary. He is able to articulate the faith better now, and he said that he learned to pray while in the seminary.

What he looks forward to the most, he said, in becoming a priest is bring the sacraments to the people.

“As a priest, I will be able to do that now,” he said.

### John Lindsey

John Lindsey believes the seed to become a priest was planted by his family and his parish.

“My parents formed me in the faith,” he said. “They were models of service and love.”

He went to Catholic schools growing up, and he also credits the parish priests and Dominican nuns at St. Thomas More Church in Chicago with nurturing his vocation, as well.

He went to the high school seminary and the minor seminary in Chicago as a teen, but he discerned that the priesthood wasn’t for him at the time. He then spent 20 years in the banking industry. But he was always involved with his parish during that time.

“The Lord wanted me to come to an adult faith and also experience life in the world,” said Lindsey, 50. “That was my particular path.”

In 2002, he felt a strong call to return to the priesthood. That is when he contacted the diocese’s vocation director.

He looks forward to celebrating the Mass, but also hearing confessions.

“For me the priesthood is being an agent of reconciliation, helping people reconcile with God through that sacrament and the life of faith,” he said.

He thinks that his two-decade tenure in the financial world will help him a lot as a priest.

“I feel blessed that I had an opportunity to work in the secular world and develop good working habits,” he said. “What I learned was how to work with people and how to supervise people. It was a growth process for me. I believe my experiences in the banking world will come in handy in working with people, even in the understanding of balance sheets and helping parishes with various financial problems.” ☪