



Andrew Buchanan
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Mundelein Seminary
St. Ann, Channahon
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Growing up, my family and I attended church services at the Presbyterian Church in Joliet where I was baptized. We would pray at home as a family and as I grew older, I began to pray and read the Bible.

When I entered high school, for various reasons, I struggled to adapt to this new stage of life. I descended into despair and I felt that God could not forgive me for the many sins I had begun to commit. Eventually, I stopped praying and sought consolation in my own devices and other worldly outlets.

One morning during the spring of my freshman year, I was watching television before school and I accidentally turned to EWTN's broadcast of the Holy Mass. I knew that the program was Catholic and I had no interest in watching further. However, in the following weeks, I found myself returning to EWTN's morning Mass and within a few more weeks I was kneeling in my family room during the Consecration. It was through this experience and subsequent experiences that I grew confident in God's ability to forgive all of my sins. At this point I began to pray again; however, I still struggled with certain sins. It was at this time, when I dearly desired a change in my life, that I not only heard God calling me to enter into the Catholic Church, but what I thought was a call to be a Catholic priest. It took me three years to inform my parents of my growing conviction that I had to enter the Catholic Church and when I finally told them of my desire they were shocked. However, their shock abated and they said that they supported my decision.

I entered the Church my senior year of high school, with Father Burke as my Confirmation sponsor, and I began attending the University of St. Francis in Joliet the following school year. At this university, both through solid classroom instruction and by witnessing the heroic lives of faith of both teachers and peers, my growth in the Catholic Faith was nurtured. Furthermore, making new friends who challenged me in my faith allowed me to enter into more serious discernment in regard to my vocation. Finally, a year and a half after graduating from college, I reached the conclusion that God was calling me to enter the seminary.

I am looking forward to my third year at Mundelein and I would ask all of you to pray for all seminarians of the Diocese of Joliet.