



Jose Menemil Cerna
Theology 3
Mundelein Seminary
St. Mary Immaculate, Plainfield
Birthday: May 17

My name is Jose Menemil P. Cerna. I am 45 years old and beginning my third year of Theology at Mundelein Seminary. I am studying for the Diocese of Joliet. I was born and raised in Cebu, Philippines and have been here in the United States for two years.

There are thirteen children in my family of which I am the youngest. One of my brothers died a few hours after he was born; hence, we are twelve living children. I have six siblings who live in the Philippines and also six siblings live in the United States. My mother, Milagros P. Cerna, is an American citizen and currently living with my brother's family in Joliet. My father died in 1984 when I was 11 years old. After the death of my father, I became an active member of the Charismatic Prayer Group in our parish and became an altar server for two years.

This was the beginning of my vocation to the priesthood. At that time, I already had a gut feeling that God was calling me to become a Priest. So, at that time, I had already decided to become a Priest someday. But my plan to become a Priest was delayed for many years because I explored the world first and worked in the corporate world for 14 years. In 2009, when I was 36 years old, I realized that the call of God to the priesthood still existed within me because it never went away during all those years. The call was so persistent. It might have gone away for a time, but it would come back, again and again, no matter how much I ignored it. My pastor, Fr. Orlando Ruiz, was the first one who enlightened me that indeed I still had the calling from God when he saw me attending morning Mass every day in our parish. I divulged to him that it had been my desire to become a Priest since the time I was 11 years old.

After consulting with my family, I quit my job, and I applied to be a seminarian for our Archdiocese of Cebu, Philippines in order to pursue my plan to become a Priest. I was formally accepted into our Archdiocesan Seminary, the Seminario Mayor de San Carlos, in Mabolo, Cebu City, Philippines in June of 2012 when I was 39 years old. I was one of the members of the late vocation seminarians in our seminary for three years until 2015.

In 2015, I decided to transfer to the Diocese of Joliet because my American Resident Visa petition was about to be granted. In May 2016, I got my American Resident Visa from the immigrant petition filed for me by my mother way back in 2004 together with my Green Card. I was formally accepted into the Diocese of Joliet by our Vocation Director, Fr. Burke Masters and Bishop Daniel Conlon in July of 2016. After finishing my second year of major seminary at Mundelein Seminary, I am still experiencing the Lord's call. The Lord has continually affirmed my call to the priesthood and I am filled with joy to be a seminarian for the Diocese of Joliet.

During the 2018 spring semester, I spent my pastoral internship at St. Walter Parish in Roselle, IL under the guidance of the pastor, Fr. Mario Quejadas. This past summer, I spent ten weeks doing Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), a study of Chaplaincy, at Sunrise Hospital and Medical Center in Las Vegas, NV, while staying at St. Anne Catholic Church in Las Vegas, NV. I had the opportunity to minister and pray with many patients during times of illness, pain, and even death. It was rewarding to see God's work and presence in these trying moments. I often witnessed the grace and comfort the Sacraments can bring in these times.

Please pray for me as I enter my Third Year of Theology studies at Mundelein Seminary and prepare for, God willing, Diaconate Ordination in the Spring of 2019. The anticipated time for my ordination to the priesthood, hopefully, will be on May of 2020! Thanks for all your support in encouraging and praying for vocations. Never be afraid or worried about laying everything down for Jesus Christ and His Church. Nothing can compare to the joy it brings. God bless us all!