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Theology 4
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Birthday: October 17

Growing up as the eleventh child of my parents (Jose Corona and Rosa Bernal) in the small town of Tlacotepec in Toluca, Mexico, I could not imagine ever coming to understand the words of Isaiah 55: 8-9, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” After all, my father was killed by a car while returning home from work on his bicycle, and I was just a little over two-years old. As a result, I learned very quickly about hard work and responsibility at a young age. Throughout my childhood, I did my chores after school and accompanied my brother, John, to work the farm on weekends. This is not to say that I did not experience many happy hours playing with my two youngest sisters, Silvia and Lidia, because I definitely did. As is true for most children, the Lord's thoughts for me were not a consideration except, perhaps, during Mass on Sunday and during my catechism lessons.

When I was eight-years old, I joined a parish group called ACAN (Catholic Action Youth and Children) and continued that association through high school. As an adolescent, the idea of becoming a priest began going through my mind, though not very clearly. Yet, the thoughts of the Lord did indeed become more of a consideration, which prompted me to attend pre-seminary. When the priests spoke about the call that God makes to each person to carry out specific tasks, I listened. When the priests spoke of the service we must give to others, I listened even more. I felt that God was calling me—sharing his thoughts with me—in a very special way.

At that time, though, I was not quite ready for the Lord's ways to be my ways. Even so, I remained in numerous groups within the parish where I drew closer to God and to people. Between studying, praying, managing the family business, having my first girlfriend, and participating in athletics (in particular, long distance running), I was happily busy.

Fast forward to 1999 when I was introduced to the Missionary Servants of the Word and then to 2005 when I started my missionary experience within that religious community. The Lord's thoughts and the Lord's ways were clearly heard and followed as I spent ten years in that missionary community. My tasks were specific and, step by step, I understood that this was the life God wanted for me.

My path to the priesthood has led me to the United States, via the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois, and directly to the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio. The lessons of sacrifice, hard work and responsibility that I learned in childhood help me complete my rigorous academic assignments, which should result in my earning a Master of Divinity degree in December, 2018. The decade of serving as a religious missionary has given me the opportunity to hear—and heed—the Lord's thoughts and plans for me. Therefore, I hope and pray to serve God and His people well in my diocesan vocation. Now I am coming closer to grasping the meaning of those words of Isaiah, and I strongly believe in the words of the renowned neurologist

and Holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl: "Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated; thus, everyone's task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it."