



## **Jonathan Hernandez**

**College 1**

**St. John Vianney College Seminary**

**St. Mary, West Chicago**

**Birthday: December 22**

I am the middle child of my family of three children, sandwiched between two sisters. I was raised predominantly in the West Chicago area. This year through the grace and guiding hand of God I will be entering seminary at St. John Vianney.

Like any other human being growing up, I was presented with choices. Like many I often overthought most choices - the call to the priesthood was no exception. My first encounter with the thought of being a priest was at the age of 13. My local pastor at the time Fr. John urged many of the altar servers to attend Jeremiah Day. After much discussion with the altar servers, a handful of us said we would go. Unfortunately, four days before the event every other server besides me canceled. I was not informed. So, I made my dad make the one-hour trip to Mundelein only to find my friends weren't there and there were only four other kids besides myself - I was majorly disappointed and terrified that there were eight seminarians and priests while only five kids. Even more terrifying was I didn't really know what the day there was about! As I reflect back on that afternoon, however, I quickly realize that my presence there was brought about by the guiding hand of God. By my own will, I would have never gone without that incentive of friends going. That first "taste" of knowledge though sent me through what felt like an eternal state of pondering.

I later came to reflect on my constant source of pondering often asking myself is this for me? If this is really for me why do I constantly have to be thinking about this calling? I later came to the conclusion that something was distracting my view from God. Because I would have extreme sensations of being called only to later ponder once again. In my case, the distraction came from my friends, school, and the societal outlook toward priesthood.

Growing up I was taught by everyone to, study hard, become a great person, get into a great college, land a great job and you will live a happy successful life. That ideology could not have been more reinforced while I was in high school and looking at colleges. That monotonous repetition began to take shape and substance, becoming part of my life as I tried to make the thought a reality. In the end, I was left with a choice, listen to the call or pursue the life many of my peers also wished for. In the end, my love for God tipped me towards his call.

This summer before I enter seminary, I had the pleasure of helping my parish with altar server training, retreats, visiting seminaries, soccer camps, dinners, and youth group activities. I thoroughly enjoyed all the spiritual growth opportunities my parish has offered. I can't wait to see what opportunities I have at St. John Vianney.

