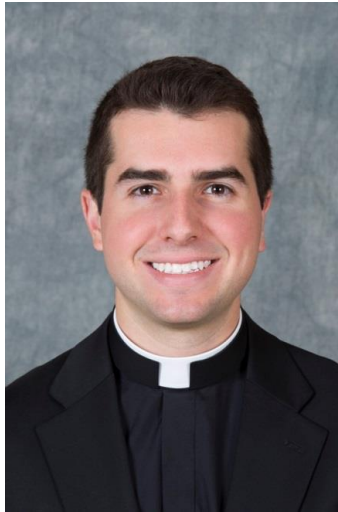


Max Behna
Theology 3
Mundelein Seminary
Parish: Ss. Peter & Paul, Naperville
Birthday: January 23



Hello, my name is Max Behna. I was born in Elmhurst to my loving parents, Sherif and Carol Behna, on January 23, 1992 and was later baptized at Immaculate Conception Parish. When I was four years old my family moved to Naperville where we have been parishioners at Ss. Peter and Paul Parish ever since. I have four wonderful siblings. Mitchell (25) graduated from North Central University and is currently working as a Legislative Aid at the Illinois State Capital, Mallory (22) attended Illinois State University and just became an RN, Michael (18) will be starting college at Butler University and studying to be a PA, and Mark (16) is going to be a sophomore in high school at Naperville North.

My mother says I was around four years old when I first began to talk about becoming a priest. I remember being fascinated with it, going so far as to even dress up like a priest and have my older brother and younger sister attend “mass” in our basement! However, by the time I reached 2nd or 3rd grade these early thoughts quickly faded.

From then on, the possibility of becoming a priest didn’t really cross my mind. I didn’t start thinking about it again until the spring of my freshman year of high school. However, instead of welcoming this thought with joy as I once did as a child, I experienced nothing but fear and denial. Like most high school kids, I dreamed of getting married, having kids, and finding an interesting, successful job. It’s true, I had wanted to be a priest years ago as a child, but come on, was this really what God wanted of me? The thought would be one that I would begin to wrestle with more and more over the next couple of years.

Finally, a turning point came sometime during the spring of my junior year of high school. It began with a simple conversation with my pastor, Fr Thomas Milota. After chatting with him after Mass one morning, my mother had mentioned the fact that I had been thinking about the priesthood. Before I knew it, I received a phone call the next day from the parish secretary! She called with information about an Operation Andrew Dinner that was coming up

in the next few days. These are dinners hosted at various parishes in the diocese about three or four times a year for young men with any sort of interest in learning more about the priesthood. The dinners include a talk from the Bishop, as well as the Vocation Director, with a Q and A to follow. With reluctance and hesitation, somehow by the grace of God, I gave it a try. What would happen next changed everything.

That evening, I witnessed and learned of the real joy of being a priest. It seemed to just radiate from the Bishop at the time, Bishop Peter Sartain, now Archbishop of Seattle. I could tell that he was giving his life over to something great and holding nothing back. I also witnessed this in Fr Burke Masters, our Vocation Director. At one point he said, "God does not call his children to a life they will not be happy in." It was when I finally allowed that profound truth to enter into my heart that I realized, if God was truly calling me to be a priest, then, in His Infinite Goodness, this would be the most joyful and fulfilling life I could ever hope for, even if it meant giving up marriage, children, and a successful job!

From then on, in the summer leading into my senior year, I began to honestly discern and open myself up to the priesthood. It took time, lots of prayer, meeting seminarians, and staying in touch with Fr. Burke, but by the time I reached my senior year of high school I had enough peace in my heart to know that this was seriously something the Lord was asking me to pursue.

This summer I worked as a chaplain at Loyola Medicine in Maywood. The program the seminarians work with is called Clinical Pastoral Education. It involved 11 weeks of administering to patients and their families from all different units in the hospital as well as taking classes about ministering to the sick. It was an intense but very formative summer in preparing to visit the sick and dying as a priest. This fall I will be entering third theology at Mundelein. I ask that you please keep my classmates and me in prayer in a special way as we prepare to be ordained deacons for the diocese on April 21, 2017! Know of my heartfelt gratitude for all the ways you continue to support us! God bless!