

# CHOICES

FROM THE CONGREGATION OF HOLY CROSS OFFICE OF VOCATIONS

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New Seminarians 2012-2013

## Following God's Call



The Holy Cross Vocations Team: Fr. Drew Gawrych, C.S.C., and Fr. Jim Gallagher, C.S.C.

The fall is an exciting time in seminary life. Many of the men are returning from summer ministry placements with stories to share about encounters with God's grace. There are new classes to dive into and new subjects to explore. Of course, there are also the new men who are joining formation and bringing new life to the house.

This year we have nine new men joining our seniors from Old College to form a Postulant class of 16. We also welcome four new men to the Old College Undergraduate Seminary — three as freshmen and one as a sophomore. Arriving with different backgrounds and from different hometowns, these men are now brought together by a common desire to take the next step in discerning God's call.

In this issue of CHOICES, we share brief introductions to each of these men, including where they come from and what they will be studying. More importantly, we share their thoughts about why they decided to enter the seminary, as well as their words of advice for others who may be thinking about a vocation to religious life and the priesthood.

Many note how important it is to trust in the Lord and to not be afraid to take a step forward in the process of discernment. That next step forward for you may not necessarily mean application to the seminary, but it may mean making a visit or participating in a retreat. Whatever it is, there is no reason to hold back. Moving forward can bring clarity and a deepened relationship with the Lord — both of which are good things.

If we can be of any help as you consider what the next step might be in your discernment, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

In Christ,  
Fr. Jim Gallagher, C.S.C.  
Director, Office of Vocations

## Moreau Seminary

### ENTERING THE POSTULANT PROGRAM

The Postulant Program at Moreau Seminary, located across St. Joseph Lake from the Golden Dome at the University of Notre Dame, is a one-year, pre-novitiate program. It is designed for men ages 21-35 who are prepared to immerse themselves in Holy Cross community life while continuing their personal discernment, spiritual development and growth in knowledge.

These men have pursued their college studies in various places and have been exploring their religious vocations, often aided by ongoing contact with the Office of Vocations and other members of Holy Cross.



HUGH PHILIP DOWELL

Who else but a saint could entice a guy to give up summers at a world-class castle resort in the heart of the Canadian Rockies for the Midwest?

Hugh was working in guest services at the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel in Banff National Park when he began to follow a call to explore a vocation to the priesthood. The Ontario native began formation and philosophy studies with the Calgary Diocese in 2008 after several years studying music.

Then, Brother André Bessette was canonized in 2010.

While studying music at McGill University in Montreal, Hugh made many visits to the Oratory of St. Joseph, so he knew about Saint André, but the excitement around his canonization sparked his curiosity.

"St. André was very clear that the work he did and the call he lived out was intimately connected to the spirituality and life of the Congregation of Holy Cross," he said.

Hugh spent time researching Holy Cross, reading the Constitutions and Blessed Basil Moreau's biography. "I found myself attracted to the life and charisms of this group of men who had given the world a saint I greatly loved and admired," he said.

Hugh had already taken a step toward investigating a vocation to the priesthood, but when he learned about Holy Cross, he was attracted to religious life in a community and the opportunities to pursue further studies and teaching.

Hugh credits his family's support for furthering his vocational discernment, especially from his father. "It made a huge impression on me how Holy Cross encouraged my family to be part of my discernment process," he said.

He has also found it very helpful to root his prayer

life in the Eucharist and Scripture. "I think any vocational discernment needs to be rooted in an intimacy with the Lord and I found the greatest way to establish that intimacy was to sit with Scripture," he said. "It was helpful to be reminded that the disciples had doubts – and they were right there with the Lord!"

Hugh graduated high school from St. Andrew's College in Aurora, Ontario, in 2003. He has a bachelor's degree from Concordia University College of Alberta, where he majored in philosophy and minored in music. He studied theology at Newman Theological College in Edmonton, Alberta, and also attended St. Joseph Seminary, Edmonton, where he was a sacristan, director of music and community secretary.

The third of four children, Hugh's interests include hiking, camping and canoeing. He is involved in liturgical ministry, serving as a lector, choir director and master of ceremonies at his parish, Our Lady of the Rockies in Banff, as well as at St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.



**CHARLES WESLEY  
FOERSTER**

One might think that a physics professor would be the last person to encourage a vocation to religious life, unless, of course, he was a brother.

Wes grew up in Texas and attended St. Edward's University in Austin, earning a degree in biology in 2000. Holy Cross brothers served as his instructors at St. Edward's. Br. Romard Barthel, C.S.C., taught him physics, for example. "Through his witness and ministry in the classroom, as well as his gentle encouragement, he has provided an example I hope to follow," Wes said.

Wes was attracted to the Holy Cross Community at St. Edward's. "I was inspired by the zeal of Holy Cross religious for their apostolates, their commitment to community and by their gentle encouragement," he said.

The Montgomery, Texas, native has been preparing for the Postulant Program by clinging closely to the Sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He has also benefited from regular spiritual direction.

A discernment retreat he attended made a difference in the way he was thinking through his vocation. Staying in touch with the Vocations team and visiting the seminary "were most helpful in dispelling some doubts and trying to get a better understanding of life within the Congregation," he said.

As a trained scientist, Wes recommends that others considering a vocation to religious life gather data. "Take the next step," he said. "That may be as simple as having a conversation with a trusted friend, family member, pastor or religious. It might also include communication with a Vocations director, an infor-



**"In Baptism, we  
received the  
seed of spiritual  
life which must  
grow and be  
strengthened  
until Jesus Christ  
is formed in us.  
In this way, we  
become other  
Christs and His  
life is made  
manifest in ours."**

Blessed Basil  
Moreau, *Spiritual  
Exercises*

mal interview, attending a retreat or even making an application."

Most recently, Wes has been working as an insurance agent and enjoys reading, golf, fishing and hunting. He is the younger of two children and is a 1996 graduate of Montgomery High School.



**JOHN ANDREW HEID**

As a new graduate of Notre Dame with a degree in history and classics, John knows where to look for wisdom when he needs it.

His education trained him to look at foundational texts; so to learn about Holy Cross

and to find practical advice, he read through the Constitutions. He continues to turn to them when he faces doubts in his vocation. One of the things he learned is that "doubt never goes away," he said. "It can only be countered with hope."

Two Holy Cross history scholars inspired John to explore the Congregation: Fr. Stephen Koeth, C.S.C., and Fr. Bill Miscamble, C.S.C. "I saw the joy they had in priesthood and realized that I wanted to see if I was destined for that same joy," John said.

He also appreciates the Congregation's "sense of community and the stress on education," he said. "I firmly believe in the synthesis of faith and reason and Holy Cross seemed to hold that same mentality."

Integration is an important dynamic in the way that John is working out his vocation. "Discernment involves the whole person. No matter what we find our path to be, we always discover a new aspect of our being," he said. "The way is trying and difficult, but in the end, worth it."

John grew up in Mundelein, Ill., the third of four children. He was an Arthur and Mary White Scholar at Notre Dame and a 2008 graduate of Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein. He enjoys golfing, fishing and reading.

He tries not to treat formation as if he were to be ordained tomorrow, he said. He has learned to "take it one step at a time, trusting God every step of the way. Every day I ask for faith that God is leading me down the right path."



**CHARLES NATHAN  
HOLDEN-CORBETT**

Charlie credits an anonymous donor for his decision to enter the Postulant Program.

The donor sponsored a vocations retreat weekend in Montreal as part of



Saint André Bessette's canonization celebration. "That weekend opened my eyes in countless ways," Charlie said, "and by the time I returned to the States, I knew I needed to apply."

Growing up in Michigan the oldest of four children, he first encountered Holy Cross while studying at Notre Dame, majoring in English and minoring in film, theater and television. After graduating in 2001, he spent two years with the Alliance for Catholic Education and has since been working in the film industry in California.

The zeal of the priests he met at Notre Dame was important in his own formation. So when he started to hear God's call to explore a vocation, Charlie turned to Holy Cross first.

Blessed Basil Moreau's vision for education also resonated with Charlie. "Moreau's goal of educating the mind and the heart strikes a strong chord in me," he said. "It's the reason I joined ACE and, strange as it may sound, it's the reason I started working in film production. Who will educate and guide the hearts of this next generation?"

Charlie found the interviews with the Vocations staff to be helpful in his decision to apply to the Postulant Program. "I remember leaving each of the meetings feeling like they were two-way interviews that were as much about my own discernment as evaluating my candidacy," he said.

For a long time, Charlie was prevented from fully exploring his vocation because of fear. "I was afraid to make the wrong choice," he said. "What if God really wants me to be a priest? What if I really want to be a father?" It can be paralyzing."

Insight that allowed him to let go of that fear came on a weekend retreat. "I was reminded that God doesn't think less of us or love us less because of our choice," he said. "Once I really accepted this truth I was able to start discerning with more clarity and peace of mind."

Charlie still likes to work with video editing and also enjoys reading and writing, tennis and foosball. He is a 1997 graduate of Traverse City High School in Traverse City, Mich.



**CATHAL JOHN KELLEHER**

The patrons of Holy Cross – the Holy Family – have been an inspiration for Cathal to apply to the Postulant Program. "Family was always a central part of my life and I thought a focus on its importance is a

strong path to take into the future," he said. "The close camaraderie I witnessed and heard tell of, sets a vocation to a religious order such as the Holy Cross apart from other vocations for me. That the Holy Cross fathers are especially dedicated to the Sacred Heart was



**"If the imitation  
of Christ is our  
duty, it is also  
our glory."**

Blessed Basil  
Moreau, *Spiritual  
Exercises*

also special to me, since members of my family have always had a special dedication to that devotion."

Cathal, the second of five children from Kilkenny, Ireland, was introduced to Holy Cross when he came to the University of Notre Dame after graduating from the University College Dublin in 2011 with a degree in mechanical engineering. He was the 2007 valedictorian at Christian Brothers High School in Kilkenny.

In August, he graduated from Notre Dame with a master's in entrepreneurship and was a Naughton Fellow with the University's ESTEEM program.

The influence of Cathal's parents during his discernment, along with the guidance he received from religious and lay people around campus, have been extremely beneficial. He is grateful for the support of Fr. Brad Metz, C.S.C., Fr. Sean McGraw, C.S.C., and Dean of Engineering Peter Kilpatrick.

"While here (at Notre Dame), I had a fair bit of interaction with the priests through a personal connection between my Irish sponsor and one of the priests on campus, but also through my own involvement serving and assisting as a Eucharistic minister at the Basilica," he said.

He said he gained reassurance about his vocation choice from the Gospels and the book, "In the School of the Holy Spirit." "Frequently words spoken at Mass or just by people I met had an impact on me even though they weren't deliberately spoken to dispel doubts."

Attending daily Mass and placing a stronger focus on personal prayer are important for Cathal as he prepares for the Postulant Program. He also spends time reflecting while hiking, fishing or reading.

Cathal looks forward to a life in Holy Cross and finds the diversity of missions appealing. "The possibilities to explore different vocations abound," he said. "I feel it gives me a special opportunity to find my own particular place in service to our Lord where my skills may best serve Him."



**KEVIN JAMES MCKENZIE**

An ever-deepening prayer life drives the center of vocational discernment for Kevin.

"Prayer is most helpful for truly understanding yourself and for seeking God's will in your life," he said. "God works in His own ways in our lives and it is up to us

to trust Him in where He is leading us."

As a native of Tucson, Ariz., Kevin enjoys golf. He also plays racquetball and cooks for his friends. He graduated magna cum laude from Notre Dame this year after studying theology. He is a Phi Beta Kappa and received the Keough Hall Spirit Award. Kevin is a 2008 graduate of University High School in Tucson.

Getting to know the priests who lived with him in the dorm helped him learn about Holy Cross. The more he looked into Holy Cross, the more he realized what he was looking for, he said. "I was drawn by the shared community life of Holy Cross in prayer and living."

Community was an important part of Blessed Moreau's vision for Holy Cross; he sent Fr. Edward Sorin to establish the community that eventually would become the University of Notre Dame. Moreau said, "Our work here is the work of each and everyone, and we are all, individually and collectively, responsible for it in the eyes of God and humanity."

Kevin, an only child, relied on the advice of friends and family as he worked through his discernment to enter the Postulant Program. "The realization that entering the seminary is not the end of the road, but the beginning of a longer process of discernment really allowed me to finally go ahead and apply," he said.

He explained that it was important for him to see how everything was pointing in one direction, which gave him courage to "take the leap."



**JUSTIN MICHAEL  
NOVOTNEY**

As the youngest of five children in his family, Justin enjoys active sports such as waterskiing, ultimate Frisbee, basketball and running.

Justin grew up in Ottawa, Ill., and attended St. Louis University, where he stud-

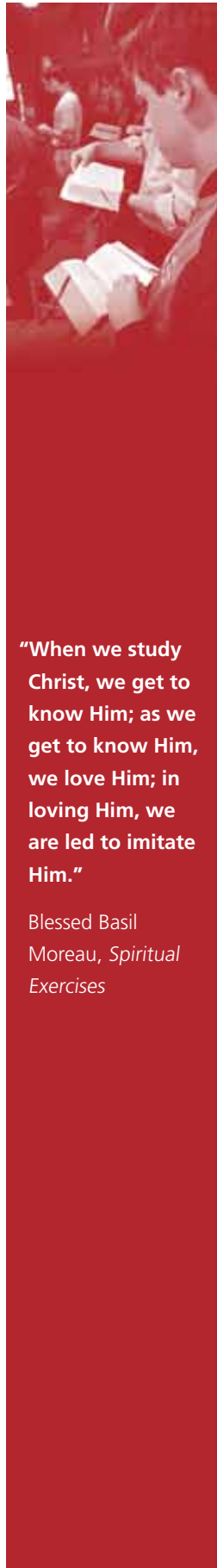
ied engineering and graduated in 2009. This spring, he finished the ACE program at Notre Dame, where he learned about Holy Cross.

Between school years when he taught middle school in Sacramento, Calif., Justin spent his summers at Notre Dame. "The summers were rich with encounters of the brotherhood shared among priests of Holy Cross and the joy they find in their vocations."

Justin attended a discernment retreat at the St. Joseph Oratory in Montreal, where he first encountered the Holy Cross motto, "*Ave Crux, Spes Unica*," or "Hail the Cross, Our Only Hope." This expression spoke to him, he said. "I began to take seriously the possibility that I was specifically being called to Holy Cross."

Listening to priests that he knows – both in Holy Cross and in diocesan ministry – has been an important way for Justin to attend to the call to the priesthood. He also finds it helpful to seek the fruits of the Spirit – what offers peace and joy, what makes him feel most alive.

"I know I can trust the things in my life that lead me to joy and peace. My doubts are dispelled by the fact that I continually feel peace about the decision to enter the seminary. While many other feelings come



**"When we study  
Christ, we get to  
know Him; as we  
get to know Him,  
we love Him; in  
loving Him, we  
are led to imitate  
Him."**

Blessed Basil  
Moreau, *Spiritual  
Exercises*

and go, lasting peace comes from the knowledge that I am called to enter into seminary life to continue my discernment of the priesthood," Justin said. "Listen to the different ways that God speaks to you and be patient."



**BROGAN CHRISTOPHER  
RYAN**

Brogan has five words of advice to anyone considering a vocation: "Get to know a priest!"

That is what drew him to the Postulant Program, after all. As a student at Notre Dame, he met and

lived and studied and worked with priests on campus. Watching them "made me want to learn more about the community," he said. "I learned that the vigor and passion that each had for their ministries was not just an individual thing, but hallmarks of the community."

As a middle child in his family of 11 children, Brogan was paying attention to how the priests related to their brothers in community. He was impressed by how they seemed to draw strength from one another, he said.

Having grown up in Columbus, Ohio, Brogan attended Notre Dame to study business and theology. After graduating in 2008, he spent two years studying with Notre Dame's ACE program, teaching middle school and earning a master's in education.

For the past two years, he has been working in public accounting and recently passed his CPA exam.

Brogan found the application to the Postulant Program to be a rigorous preparation for his vocational journey. "It gave me a lot of opportunity to think about old questions in new ways and to formalize an answer to questions that I had been asking myself for quite some time," he said.

He also finds conversation with family and friends to be a valuable discernment tool.

"Just acknowledging that I had doubts, talking through them and asking lots and lots of questions was very helpful," Brogan said.

His interests include cooking, running, reading and spending time outside and with family and friends. He graduated from Saint Charles Prep in Columbus in 2004.

Three of our men professed Final Vows on Aug. 25, 2012. Take a look in the photo and video galleries at [vows.holycrossvocations.org](http://vows.holycrossvocations.org).



#### MICHAEL SCOTT THOMAS

The most difficult part of Michael's vocational journey so far has simply been getting it out in the open.

"Actually admitting that I may have a vocation was the hardest step of the journey for me," he said, "but it

was also an enormous relief to finally be able to talk about it with someone."

The older of two children, the Lakeville, Ind., resident spent his grade-school years around Holy Cross priests at St. Joseph Grade School in South Bend, Ind., where he first met the Congregation.

Michael graduated from St. Joseph High School in South Bend in 2008 and attended Indiana University to study political science, philosophy and Spanish. After graduating this spring, Michael decided to apply to the Postulant Program because he observed priests and seminarians at a discernment retreat. What he saw encouraged him — the men had an "obvious energy and excitement about their lives for the Church and the mission of Holy Cross," he said.

He has been preparing for this next step in his vocational journey by deepening his prayer life, growing in his devotion to Mary and participating in the liturgical life of his parish.

"Without a doubt, frequent attendance at Mass was the most powerful antidote to doubts," Michael said.

### CONTINUING FORMATION

**These men are advancing in the structured formation program that is available to University of Notre Dame and Holy Cross College students who entered the Old College Undergraduate Seminary Program. They move to the Postulant Program at Moreau Seminary during their senior year or upon completing their undergraduate degree and share in the immersion in Holy Cross community life.**



#### STEPHEN CARL BARANY

Stephen was first attracted to Holy Cross by the breadth of its apostolates. "As a seminarian, the writings of Blessed Basil Moreau continue to make me believe that God has many more blessings to shower upon the world through Holy Cross," he said.

He said he has prepared for the Postulant Program by praying the Liturgy of the Hours "with greater focus and discipline."

A South Bend resident and 2008 graduate of Marian



**"...we must study the details of the Savior's life and know the love which inclined Him to act. We must be filled with the spirit of His example."**

Blessed Basil  
Moreau, *Spiritual Exercises*

High School, Stephen is a senior majoring in philosophy and minoring in industrial design at the University of Notre Dame. The younger of two children, his interests include sports and art.

Stephen said those closest to him have been most influential in helping him to make the decision to explore a vocation with Holy Cross. "Those people who have influenced me the most are my family and friends who understand their vocations as calls to follow God's will in their lives," he said. "The example and support of these people encourage me to explore what God asks me to do each day and for the rest of my life."

Getting a proper understanding of the seminary helped dispel his doubts. "I was at a conference in 2009 where someone asked Bishop Morlino of Madison, 'What advice do you have for young men considering the priesthood?'"

"He replied quickly and joyfully, 'Go to seminary!'"

"Bishop Morlino proceeded to explain that seminary is the best and most appropriate place to discern a call to the priesthood. Seminary is not a commitment to become a priest; it is a commitment to grow as a man of God and discern if He is calling you to become a priest after His Son, Jesus Christ," Stephen said.

That's really the center of his advice to others considering their call: "Reflect on what it means to enter the seminary. If young men enter the seminary and leave after a year, thanks be to God! They will have grown in holiness and gained clarity in their vocation. If they enter the seminary and become priests, thanks be to God! They will have grown in holiness and gained clarity in their vocation," Stephen said.



#### DANIEL LOUIS CRUICKSHANK

Fellow Rockford, Mich., resident and seminarian Matt Fase, C.S.C., invited Dan to a "Come and See" Weekend at Old College.

The weekend retreats offer high school juniors and seniors a chance to spend a weekend at Old College to get to know the seminarians. They join the community for Mass and prayer, learn about Holy Cross and its mission and tour the Notre Dame and Holy Cross College campuses.

The sense of peace Dan found during his visits there inspired him to apply to the program. "It felt like I was at home among family," he said.

Family life is what helped dispel his doubts: "Getting to know Holy Cross priests and seminarians and recognizing the way they live as a family — a family I could see myself joining," Dan said.

The priests and religious have been a source of encouragement in Dan's discernment, he said, particularly the formation staff — Fr. Kevin Rousseau, C.S.C.,



Fr. Steve Lacroix, C.S.C., Fr. Stephen Koeth, C.S.C., and Fr. Drew Gawrych, C.S.C. – and his spiritual director, Fr. Lou DelFra, C.S.C.

Dan said the habits of prayer and community life fostered in Old College have helped prepare him for the Postulant Program.

A senior in the program of liberal studies at the University of Notre Dame, Dan graduated from Rockford High School in 2009. He is the third of five children and enjoys playing sports, hiking, reading and discussing good books.

Dan's advice for those discerning a vocation involves trust. "Pray for complete trust rather than complete understanding," he said. "If God has placed a call on your heart, trust that He is calling you to a life of joy and fulfillment, even if you are unsure exactly where He is calling you."



**JOSEPH JOHN DEAGOSTINO**

Joe, the second of six children, is a senior majoring in medieval studies at the University of Notre Dame.

The Jerome, Mich., resident had already expressed an interest in the vocation of a priest when his father

came across the Holy Cross Vocations website one day and forwarded the link to his son. An older sibling attended Notre Dame, so Joseph knew about Holy Cross.

"The strong sense of community espoused by all of its members, as well as the wide and varied range of apostolic ministries that members of Holy Cross find themselves in" are what inspired Joe to apply to the program.

He said he has prepared for the Postulant Program by forming good habits in his spiritual and social lives through these past three years in the Old College Program.

Holy Cross priests and brothers he has encountered have been influential in his decision to continue to explore his vocation in the Postulant Program, he said, especially rectors and assistant rectors during his time at Old College: Br. Ed Luther, C.S.C., Procurator of Old College; Fr. Tom Jones, C.S.C., Spiritual Director; and Fr. Jim Gallagher, C.S.C., Director of Vocations.

Fr. Tom and the formation staff at Old College also were helpful in dispelling Joe's doubts.

Joe's interests include reading, writing, computers, board games and athletics. He is a 2009 graduate of Lumen Christi High School in Jackson, Mich.

Joe recommends patience for young people considering a vocation. "Do not get stressed out or feel like a decision is required instantly; all things take time," he said. "Also, one should recognize that discernment, especially a religious one, is an ongoing process. Yet at



**"Every action of the Word of God is an action for us to imitate. His life is such a clear model of what our own should be."**

*Blessed Basil Moreau, Spiritual Exercises*

the same time, never be scared to take an initial step to explore further one's vocation. Keeping all of this in mind, one should also take the time to pray daily and ask for guidance and help and also talk about it with people of trust such as good friends, family and mentors."



**KARL MICHAEL ROMKEMA JR.**

Karl's advice for others considering a vocation is that silence is important during the discernment process. "Begin discerning early and create time for silence in your life," Karl said. "God

speaks in silence."

In January, Pope Benedict XVI also stressed the importance of silence as a safe haven for reflection and to bring about a greater awareness of and sensitivity to people and their needs. It's also a key to the new evangelization. "If God speaks to us even in silence, we, in turn, discover in silence the possibility of speaking with God and about God," the Pope said.

"A vocation contains not only happiness, but also the Cross. Jesus Himself said, 'If you wish to follow Me, take up your Cross.' No vocation is easy, but the happiness involved is indescribable. This joy is what enables one to carry his cross," Karl said.

Karl is the second in a family of 10 children from Clarkston, Mich., and has been interested in the University of Notre Dame since he was young. He will graduate in 2013 with a degree in philosophy and theology.

Karl graduated summa cum laude in 2009 from Waterford's Our Lady of the Lakes High School, where he was a Phi Beta Kappa, a scholar-athlete and Catholic League All-Academic. He also received an award for outstanding volunteer service. Prior to enrolling at Notre Dame, Karl was on the honor roll at Holy Cross College.

Karl said he was inspired to apply to the formation program because of the balance it offers. "But as I continued to research Holy Cross, I became increasingly fond of the original mission and spirituality of the order," he said. "I feel that I share many similarities with the founder (Blessed Basil Moreau). Furthermore, the apostolates which Holy Cross is currently involved in seem to fit well with my personality, gifts and talents."

He said he has prepared himself for the Postulant Program by getting to know Blessed Moreau and St. André Bessette through prayer and reading.

Karl said his parents were influential in helping him to make the decision to explore a vocation. "For a long time, they were the only people who knew about my vocation to the priesthood and they were supportive all the way," he said. "Since I have entered formation, I have found great examples of Holy Cross priests and religious at Notre Dame, especially on the formation staff."

He said he prays to Our Lady to help dispel doubts by “asking her for purity of heart and guidance in my discernment. Placing my vocation entirely in her hands has given me a deep sense of peace and hope. This helped me before applying to Old College and continues to help me today, for I still have my doubts.”



#### **BENJAMIN DIRCK RUSCH**

A Davisburg, Mich., resident, Ben is a senior at the University of Notre Dame, majoring in philosophy and theology.

He received an invitation to a “Come and See” Weekend at Old College. “Later, after looking into the char-

acteristics of different religious communities, I realized that Holy Cross had a lot of what I was looking for. So I decided to take up the invitation,” Ben said.

Holy Cross priests and seminarians he met while visiting Old College “and all the possibilities for future ministry in Holy Cross” are what inspired Ben to apply to the program. Preparation for the Postulant Program included his time in Old College and living out the habit of prayer he formed there.

Ben’s parents were the most influential in helping him make up his mind about exploring a vocation with Holy Cross. They were both supportive and open to his discernment, he said.

Finding out more about Holy Cross and what it means to enter the seminary, as well as the ability to ask questions of the Vocations team helped dispel doubts in Ben’s mind.

His advice for another young person discerning? “Vocation is something that is lived out every day in the ordinary ways. If you work every day at loving Christ more and responding to that love, the bigger discernment questions will fall into place,” he said.

Ben’s interests include running, baseball, piano and blogging. The Eagle Scout is the oldest of four children and a member of the Notre Dame Chapter of Right to Life.



#### **JOHN WILLIAM WHITTAKER**

The emphasis on community and brotherhood of the Congregation of Holy Cross caught John’s attention and influenced his decision to apply to the program.

“I love the family atmosphere where I always have brothers to help me grow,” he said.

John, who lives in Romeo, Mich., grew up with stories of Holy Cross (and Notre Dame football) because his mother, aunts and uncles graduated from the



**“If we follow  
Jesus and carry  
our cross, we will  
have life. Life is  
to be found in  
the Cross and  
nowhere else.”**

*Blessed Basil  
Moreau, Christian  
Meditations*

University. “I found it to be a natural step to look into Holy Cross and Notre Dame where a big portion of my family went to school,” he said.

His mother, uncle Don Longano — a ND graduate — and grandfather Gerald McLean were influential in helping John to decide to explore his vocation with Holy Cross.

As preparation for the Postulant Program, “Old College has helped me deepen my prayer life and enthusiasm for my Catholic faith,” John said.

In fact, it’s that prayer and faith through which the Lord will take care of his concerns that help dispel John’s doubts.

John is a senior majoring in political science. He graduated in 2009 from West Forsyth High School in Cumming, Ga. The second of four children, he enjoys basketball, golf, photography and traveling.

He advises others discerning a religious vocation to pray and take time to get to know themselves before entering the seminary.



#### **BRYAN ALAN WILLIAMS**

“When I was looking at different colleges, I was already thinking about entering the seminary,” said Bryan, who is from Sugar Land, Texas. “Each time I would meet an admissions officer, I asked them if their college or

university had a seminary program attached to it. I didn’t actually hear about Holy Cross until I visited Notre Dame and learned about Old College during the summer before my senior year of high school.”

He was attracted to the idea of going to college and entering the seminary at the same time. “When I entered Old College my freshman year, I did not know much about Holy Cross, but after studying with them for the past three years, I have grown to love the men in Holy Cross and their charisma,” Bryan said.

Learning about the charisma and growing in and becoming more disciplined in his prayer life during the past three years have prepared Bryan for the Postulant Program.

The roots of his desire to become a priest came from his elementary and middle-school pastor, Msgr. Bill Young, who introduced the thought to Bryan. “Also, the Jesuits have played an influential role in introducing me to religious life, specifically an apostolic one,” he said.

Bryan said he has met many great Holy Cross priests since he entered Old College, especially those with whom he has lived in community, including Fr. Kevin, Fr. Stephen, Fr. Steve and Fr. Drew. Bryan said Br. Ed Luther “has been an excellent showcase of a Holy Cross brother for me.”

Bryan said he brings his doubts to prayer. “When we



tell God that we earnestly want to follow Him, ask for His help and then are open to His help. He will send us His Holy Spirit to give us courage. That is also not to say that He will not challenge us to grow in faith along the way," he said.

Staying close to prayer is part of Bryan's advice to someone considering a vocation. "If you are discerning a vocation to the priesthood, stay close to the Eucharist and prayer," he said. "It is God who will call you. Do not try to over-reason God's ways; they are not man's ways. There will inevitably be some aspect of faith involved, some time when you will have to simply say, 'All right, God; I'll do it.'"

The Eagle Scout is a senior majoring in philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. Bryan, the eldest of three children, is a 2009 graduate of Strake Jesuit High School in Houston.

## INCOMING OLD COLLEGIANS

**The Old College Undergraduate Seminary is housed in the University of Notre Dame's original building, which was constructed in 1843. It is more than a residential community; it provides a well-rounded life that includes prayer, recreation, conversation and shared meals.**

**Old Collegians pursue their academic interests as students at Notre Dame or Holy Cross College, while at the same time being introduced to religious life in Holy Cross through a process of spiritual formation in the context of community living.**



**ANDREW DAVID FRITZ**

In a roundabout way, Andrew's oldest sister is responsible for connecting him to the Congregation of Holy Cross.

He participated in ND Vision, a summer camp, while his sister Melanie

was a sophomore at Notre Dame and serving as a camp counselor. Andrew attended a luncheon at Old College, toured the house and met some of the guys living there.

Melanie met some young men in the Old College Program when she was a freshman and she "planted in me the seed of religious vocation, so to speak," Andrew said.

His parish pastor, Msgr. Luca, played a later, but important, role in Andrew's exploration of Holy Cross. "Afterwards, I found myself to be much more relaxed and free, knowing that I had made the right step in answering God's call. Sometimes there is doubt and he encouraged me to push those feelings aside and focus on God's love," Andrew said.

Msgr. Luca gave him a book, "To Save a Thousand Souls," written by a priest who is a close friend. Andrew read the book, along with a daily reflection book given



**"In our attempts to love others, Jesus Christ is our model. Notice what great charity He practiced in His public life. This charity was evident everywhere, especially in His bearing, His reserve and His constant patience with others."**

*Blessed Basil Moreau, Christian Meditations*

to him by Fr. Drew Gawrych, C.S.C., Associate Director of Vocations. "These two prayer aids helped me to understand my vocation to Old College," Andrew said.

Andrew said he was drawn to Holy Cross because of the brotherhood and bond among the priests. "As Catholics, we always tend to view priests as leading very solitary lives," he said. "Holy Cross stays true to the root of the Church — Jesus and his 12 disciples. These men were like brothers and each one helped the other grow stronger in faith and trust in God, just like Holy Cross strives to help each young man willing to follow God's call."

He is preparing himself for the Old College Program through prayer and service to his church and the disadvantaged.

A 2012 graduate of Wilde Lake High School in Columbia, Md., Andrew is undecided on his major at Holy Cross College. His interests include lacrosse, playing trumpet and singing. He is the second oldest of four children and the only boy.

His advice to those considering a call? "Trust and take a leap of faith," he said.

Andrew suggests taking the time to pray to weed out "false calls." "At the same time, however, we should not be afraid to act on what our heart tells us. A vocation is just like anything else in life — a stepping stone that helps us find out who we are truly called to be," he said.



**ETHAN SAMUEL LOTT**

Ethan, who is from Greenville, Tenn., is preparing himself to begin the Old College Program through prayer, spiritual discernment and attending Mass.

While there's no Holy Cross parish in the Tennessee

River Valley, Ethan learned about the Congregation of Holy Cross during a "Come and See" Weekend to Old College at Notre Dame and was inspired to apply by "the importance of education in the faith, the sense of brotherhood and the passion of the priests and brothers."

His high school junior- and senior-year spiritual director, Rev. David Carter, helped Ethan decide between a diocesan or religious order. Fr. Drew "has also been a source of guidance and wisdom."

Ethan's parents helped to dispel doubts by listening attentively and advising their son to follow God's plan for his life. And that's where his advice to others considering a vocation lies: "Always be open to God's will. Even if it is something that you have never thought of before or seems foreign to you, follow God's plan and He will reward you."

Ethan graduated in 2012 from Morristown-Hamblen High School West in Morristown, Tenn. He was president of the science club, head of the high school recycling team and a member of the nationally ranked

quiz bowl team, the French club and Beta club. He ranked in the top 15 in the country on the national French exam. An Eagle Scout, Ethan also attended the Tennessee Governor's School for International Studies.

His interests include photography, hiking and reading. He is an only child.



#### DANIEL JACOB PASSON

Dan, the middle of three children, is a 2012 graduate of St. Mary Catholic Central High School in Monroe, Mich. He learned about Holy Cross through an administrator at his high school who is an

alumnus of Notre Dame.

The administrator introduced Dan to Fr. Kevin Russeau, C.S.C., Superior and Novice Master at the Holy Cross Novitiate in Cascade, Colo. "The stories he shared with me about the job of Holy Cross religious and the men of Old College led me to conduct research on Holy Cross and eventually to sign up for a 'Come and See' Weekend," Dan said.

The retreat led to a sense of community and joy, which was key in Dan's decision to apply to the program. "I felt welcome at Old College and I was blessed to experience a Christian community of selfless young men entirely open to the Lord's will," he said. "I was actually drawn more to Holy Cross as I reflected upon my weekend; I missed the guys at Old College and the sense of community that I experience there."

Dan said his mother is his "spiritual role model" and her loving example was important in helping guide him to an order with a special devotion to the Blessed Mother, which Holy Cross has. His faith community at school, especially his spiritual director, Fr. Steve Vileo, and Fr. Drew "were pillars of support and guidance throughout my decision-making process," Dan said.

Incredible support from friends and family and a sense of peace with his decision have been helpful in dispelling any doubts in Dan's mind about his choice. He said he's prepared himself for Old College through the grace of contemplative prayer, Scripture and the Eucharist and by praying that the Lord's will be done. And that's part of the advice he has for other young people discerning a vocation: "Be absolutely open to the Lord's will. Be willing to step outside of your comfort zone and meet God in the middle in discerning your vocation," Dan said. "Trust in the Lord. He will take care of you no matter which path you choose to follow. Rejoice in the words of Romans 8:28: *'For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.'*"

Dan, who was a St. Mary Catholic Central High School Scholar (top graduate), plans to major in history and minor in philosophy at Notre Dame.



**"Whatever may be your interior dispositions, whatever may be your situation in life, behold your model, the Heart of Jesus, and set yourself to imitate it."**

Blessed Basil Moreau, *Sermons*



#### STEVEN MARCUS SANCHEZ

Steven was an altar server at St. John Vianney Catholic Church in Goodyear, Ariz., a Holy Cross parish in his hometown. He became familiar with the community through the Holy Cross priests who would talk

about their religious life and serving God.

Steven said he learned more about the Congregation through "discernment nights" sponsored by the priests. He was inspired to apply because of community life and the unity among the priests, deacons and seminarians. "They are a very welcoming community, accepting everyone around them and are very open with others. I was able to hold conversations with the priests here and they are very inspiring, holy people. When I visited Old College, the seminarians there were welcoming and they made me feel at home."

His Holy Cross parish priests, including Fr. John Herman, C.S.C., Fr. Eric Schimmel, C.S.C., Fr. Paul Ybarra, C.S.C., and Fr. Tom Eckert, C.S.C., were helpful in his decision-making. Steven said Fr. Drew helped him to grow closer to his faith, talked to him about the seminary and has helped guide his spiritual direction. "My parents have also played a huge role in this process," Steven said. "They have always wanted me to do God's will and have encouraged me to give God a chance in my life. Without their love and prayers, I would not be here today."

To prepare for Old College, Steven has been praying more often, especially saying the Rosary with his family. He also attends Mass daily and practices the Sacrament of Reconciliation weekly.

Steven graduated in 2011 with honors from Desert Edge High School in Goodyear. He attended Arizona State University in Tempe, studying in the health science pre-professional program. He is the older of two children and enjoys volunteering, being in youth ministry, weightlifting and playing sports such as football, hockey and wrestling.

His advice for others discerning a vocation is to "Let go and let God."

"Our lives are not in our hands, but in God's," he said. "He knows what is best for each and every one of us. If God is calling you, do not be afraid, for He knows what He is doing. Trust and believe in the Lord; He will never leave your side."

To learn more about all of our seminarians, as well as Old College and Moreau Seminary, check out our web page at [seminarians.holycrossvocations.org](http://seminarians.holycrossvocations.org).

## OUR LADY OF SORROWS, PATRONESS OF HOLY CROSS

*"There stood by the Cross of Jesus his mother Mary, who knew grief and was a Lady of Sorrows. She is our special patroness, a woman who bore much she could not understand and who stood fast. To her many sons and daughters, whose devotions ought to bring them often to her side, she tells much of this daily cross and its daily hope."*

*(Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross, 8:120)*

When deciding on a patron for the Congregation of Holy Cross, founder Blessed Basil Moreau selected Our Lady of Sorrows.

Moreau's original vision was that the Congregation of Holy Cross be one community of priests, brothers and sisters living and working together in imitation of the Holy Family. He consecrated the priests to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the sisters to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the brothers to Saint Joseph, but he placed the entire Congregation under the patronage of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Moreau often stressed the importance of conforming one's entire life to Christ, which Mary models through her Seven Sorrows. He said, "It is (in her sorrows) that we shall see to what extent she has loved us! She stood at the foot of the cross, among the executioners and soldiers, so close to her dying Son that no detail of his death could escape her. ... What did she do in this circumstance, so painful for her heart, being minister before the altar on which the sacrifice of our redemption was accomplished? Truly, she fulfills fully her part in the work of Christ, to 'fill up, in her own flesh, those things that are lacking in Christ's afflictions for his body, which is the Church.'"

Mary suffered Seven Sorrows during her life, beginning with the prophecy of Simeon during Christ's presentation in the temple when Simeon said to Mary, "And you yourself a sword will pierce ..." (Luke 2:35) The Sorrows continued with the flight into Egypt and the loss of Jesus in the temple. They culminated with the events leading up to and including Jesus' suffering and death on the cross.

The Holy Cross motto: "*Ave Crux, Spes Unica*" — "Hail the Cross, Our Only Hope" — reflects the idea of seeing ourselves standing at the foot of the cross alongside Our Sorrowful Mother. Seminar-ians are encouraged to foster a devotion to our Lady of Sorrows from the very beginning of their formation process for that reason.



"As apostolic religious, we realize that suffering is very real in our world and that many of those we serve experience heavy crosses each day. Sometimes we are in a position to alleviate this suffering and sometimes we are not. What we always have to offer, however, is hope. Mary is the perfect model of this hope. Even in the midst of her Seven Sorrows, she never despaired. Her faith endured through this suffering and so she shared in her Son's victory over death. We believe that her intercession and patronage can help us do the same," said Fr. Steve Lacroix, Director of the Old College Undergraduate Seminary.

The Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows is September 15, the biggest feast day for Congregation of Holy Cross priests, brothers and sisters throughout the world. Each community honors the feast day differently, but members usually come together as a larger community for prayer and celebration.

*The Icon of Our Lady of Sorrows on this page was written by Holy Cross Seminarian Anthony Stachowski, C.S.C., and is copyrighted.*



# “Come follow me.” It was the Lord Jesus calling us.

We asked how we might follow,  
and we found many footprints on  
the road. A great band of men had  
passed this way, men who had  
made and lived by their vows, men  
who had walked side by side in  
their following of the Lord. They  
beckoned us to fall in step with  
them. We wanted to be part of the  
family they formed in order to  
share in their life and work.

Constitution 1,  
Congregation of Holy Cross



If you have ever had the feeling that  
God may be calling you to religious life  
or the priesthood, please visit us at

[holycrossvocations.org](http://holycrossvocations.org)