



# Impact Update: Sustaining Faith at Holy Spirit Seminary



## A Note to Our Supporters

As a faithful supporter of Parramatta Catholic Foundation and the Bishop's Good Shepherd Appeal, we are honoured to share with you the impact of your generosity and how it enables us to serve so many in our community.

We hope you enjoy reading about the ministry of three of our four recently ordained priests, Fr Chris, Fr Galbert and Fr Jack. And we are delighted to introduce you to our four new seminarians Blake, Luke, Macky and Paul.

We are eternally grateful for your support and accompaniment which helps fulfill the Lord's call to help others.

Prayerful wishes,

Dianne Wigan  
Head of Fundraising



## Fr Galbert talks about his first year as a priest...

When I came to St Aidan's Parish, Rooty Hill, I was greatly amazed with the warm welcome of the people and from the parish priest, Fr Alan Layt.

Aside from celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, I consider administering the other sacraments, particularly the Anointing of the Sick and the Dying, as one of the highlights in my first year as a priest. As I administered this sacrament to the elderly people in the nursing homes and hospitals, who have mostly been surrounded by their family members, I have witnessed the beauty of it and the serenity it provides to the person receiving the sacrament. It also gives the family members the assurance that their sick loved one, who is about to leave from this earthly life, is ready to be united again to the Creator.

A couple told me when I gave them a blessing for their wedding anniversary that married life is not just a bed of roses. And I would say that priesthood as well is not just a box full of chocolates. While there is joy in serving the Lord in His vineyard, there is also some challenges to encounter and acknowledge.

I am very grateful to the Holy Spirit Seminary for preparing me in dealing with matters like setting up our own priorities. The Transformative Psychology training taught by the Rector, Fr John Hogan, in the seminary, is helping me to live with purpose and for a purpose.

This is why seminary training is very essential in developing our human aspect, so that we can be that instrument that God wishes us to be, that is, another Christ. In this sense, we can be capable of fulfilling our function for which we are being called.

Thank you for helping me answer God's call.



PARRAMATTA  
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## Fr Chris reflects on his first year in ministry

Fr Christopher del Rosario, assistant priest at St Patrick's Cathedral Parish, Parramatta talks about his first appointment. It has been incredible, I've been able to put all that I've learned over my seven years of formation into practice and it's been an absolute blessing.



I'm thankful to the community here as they have been extremely welcoming and supportive since I started. They've pushed me to deepen my love for Jesus Christ, which in turn has helped me grow as a priest. I'm extremely thankful to Fr Bob Bossini, Dean of the Cathedral, and the parish staff for journeying with me over this past year.

The highlights to my first year; apart from being able to celebrate Mass on a daily basis, I was blessed to prepare a man's soul for death. A friend of mine contacted me saying his grandfather was passing. He wasn't too sure when he would

die, so I made an effort to visit him every day, conferring the sacraments of Eucharist and Anointing. After a week or so, his grandfather quietly passed away surrounded by his family.

Upon reflection, I couldn't think of a more beautiful and comforting death than to be spiritually prepared to meet the Lord whilst being surrounded by one's family. This has certainly been one of my highlights.

The life of the priest has to be centred on Jesus Christ. Without a deep love for Him, the priestly vocation loses its meaning. As such, prayer is an essential part of my day and is a constant reminder of my need for Christ in every moment of my life. Additionally, good support has assisted me. Fr Bob has been a pillar of support over this year. I can't thank him enough for his guidance over this past year.

How has it felt being able to celebrate and consecrate the Eucharist? It's difficult to put into words the reality before your very eyes. At one point, it's just bread and wine, next it's the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. A great sense of joy and excitement comes when celebrating the Eucharist, but also an acknowledgment of unworthiness, as I know I'm not truly worthy to celebrate His most beautiful sacrament.

Ultimately, I'm grateful to God that He's blessed me with this vocation which has allowed me to celebrate the source and summit of our faith.

Welcoming a penitent back is one of the most joyous occasions. In this sacrament, God welcomes with open arms His lost child. It's a beautiful thought to reflect on as we all have our shortcomings. But to know that God draws you back through the priest, who is just an instrument, is truly beautiful. Some of the most beautiful transformations has come through the sacrament of Penance. I'll spare you the details.



## Fr Jack looks back on his first placement

It has been a real blessing and grace to be placed at Mary, Queen of the Family Parish, Blacktown. It is a great place to be, particularly as a young priest.

Other than saying Mass, I think the real highlight of my year as a priest has been hearing confessions. I am always humbled by people's confessions and have the awesome privilege of witnessing the grace of Christ work in their conversions.

How have you got through the challenges that you might have faced in your first year as a priest? Well, I would not be in this vocation if it were not for the grace of God and so I would not be able to handle all of its challenges without His grace, so prayer and the sacraments have been the primary way of negotiating the challenges as a priest. But there are many other things too. I speak to my spiritual director regularly and also seek the advice of some trusted wise friends. I also exercise regularly and make sure I see my family – it keeps me grounded, I hope. And, of course, I cannot forget one of God's greatest gifts: coffee.

I really can't describe what it is like to stand at the altar and say those words of Jesus and bring Him to the altar. All I can say is that it is not what I expected. I thought I would be an emotional mess – which for those who know me well might seem hard to believe. But it simply seems right. It fits. It feels like I am doing what I was born to do.

Before his ordination Father Jack said he wanted to give his whole life to Christ so "that He could be known and loved by others". How has he managed to do this through his ministry?

I hope I have done this by faithfully celebrating His sacraments and faithfully preaching His word, and by witnessing that I do know Him and I do love Him. Of course, there is always room for improvement, but if I try every day to hand on to others what I have received – the love of Jesus Christ – then I think they will come in their own life to know and love him.

In my second year, I hope to remain faithful to the promises I made on the day of my ordination and to the sacrament I received that day. I hope too that, with the grace of God, I keep trying to be a better priest every day.

*"it simply seems right. It fits. It feels like I am doing what I was born to do."*



For more information on how your kindness supports our Holy Spirit Seminarians visit [yourcatholicfoundation.org.au](http://yourcatholicfoundation.org.au)

For further information about a vocation to priesthood in the Diocese of Parramatta, visit [parracatholic.org/vocations](http://parracatholic.org/vocations) or contact Fr John Paul Escarlan Director of Vocations: Priesthood on (02) 9296 6300



## Starting a new life with a Faith Family

Local boy Blake Bano grew up in Western Sydney with just his parents and grandparents. Now, he has an additional family to love and support him in his journey of faith.

Blake, 18, is the youngest of the four first year seminarians at our Holy Spirit Seminary, Harris Park.

“The biggest difference for me in the seminary would be the daily routine and living in a place shared with 16 other men,” Blake said.

“I came from an environment where it was just my parents and I. Now, I’m spending most of my day with the other seminarians doing things communally. This has been great. All the seminarians have been really welcoming, which has made this new chapter in my life much smoother.”

After a few months of life in the seminary, Blake enjoys the ability to form friendships with the other seminarians.

“Having such friendships enabled me to settle in much quicker and get into the seminary routine much [more] smoothly. Everyone’s willing to help out, especially with assignments and other tasks. We are all practically brothers here. I really enjoy the atmosphere here, it’s a mixture of prayer, study and communal recreation.”

Blake’s advice for men discerning their vocation is to pray and to find someone to accompany them on their journey.

*“cast out into deep water”*

**“The world needs priests because the world needs Jesus Christ. To those discerning the priesthood, my best advice would be to ‘cast out into deep water’ and continue to pray.**

“Find someone who can walk with you on this journey and remember that it is God who calls you, place all your trust in Him.”



## An open heart to Jesus

Luke Thien Quoc Huynh had been living in Sydney for three years, practicing his faith and serving his Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement community as a youth leader.

“After joining the ‘Come and See’ program at the Holy Spirit Seminary in the Diocese of Parramatta, there was a desire, which burned in my heart, to join the seminary,” Luke said. “I recognised the call through my deep desire, which I still believe to be a mystery.

Luke, 27, was born and raised in Sai Gon, Vietnam, and is the eldest of two children. Luke was a member of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement, where he read the bible and would attend Mass every Sunday. Luke explained that his parents were astounded by his decision to join the priesthood, and that they didn’t completely agree. “After a few months of praying and sharing with them, they agreed with my decision. I thank God for giving them great joy and happiness as they saw my first day at the seminary.” Whilst working for the Diocese after completing a Bachelor of Accounting, Luke was fortunate to be able to start his vocational journey by living at the seminary.

“The relationship with my brothers gives me great joy and happiness. I enjoy working and sharing with my brothers in the seminary. We support each other on the way to become holy as Jesus Christ himself. I enjoy studying to understand deeply about human beings, the love of God and I am able to visit and stay with God every day. The most interesting thing I’ve learnt from my brothers and fathers is how we take care and support each other in the love of God.”

*“God always calls us to follow Him”*

“I believe that everyone will receive the call from God for a mission. God always calls us to follow Him, therefore, I wish that we always open our heart to say “yes” whenever we receive the sign from Him.

“Please do not pass any chance when you hear the call from God.”



## Trust in God, he will find a way

Macky, 31, was born and raised in the Philippines and is the eldest of three children in what he described as a devout Catholic family. He served in the children's choir where he "learnt to love singing and being involved in the parish activities, and at the same time, started to love Jesus."

In 2011, whilst working as a teacher at St Louise de Marillac College of Bogu in Bogu, Macky attended a vocations jamboree. "It was during this time that I met Sr Lilibeth Cortes DC, a sister of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul. 'Sr Beth offered me the phone number of Fr Rock Joseph 'Jay' Enriquez, the vocation director of the Congregation of the Mission of St Vincent de Paul – Philippine Province.

Inspired from his first mission trip, Macky aspired to enter the seminary, and spent a year in formation at the St Vincent Seminary in Tandang Sora, Quezon City. In December 2018, Macky forwarded his application to join the priesthood to the Diocese of Parramatta and arrived here in February 2020.

Macky is enjoying seminary life and the camaraderie and social bonding between himself, his fellow seminarians, staff and formators.

Macky's advice to men discerning their vocation is to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and accompaniment.

"Priestly vocation needs years of proper personal and spiritual discernment. Pray hard and ask God's Holy Spirit to guide and accompany you in your decision.

*"Pray hard and ask God's Holy Spirit to guide you"*

"God had a purpose as to why I didn't answer His calling the first time, why I waited until I graduated from college. Of all the things and events that happened, questions asked and confusion experienced, I know God always has a reason and purpose for everything.



## Responding to God's love

Growing up in southern Vietnam, Paul Tran Truong Tho, 32, was inspired in his faith by his parents and is the fifth of six children.

"I was influenced significantly by my devout parents. They reminded us to attend the Holy Mass, join some parish activities constantly; as well as say our daily prayers every night as a family," Paul said. It was during high school that Paul felt his initial call to a religious vocation.

"Joining the congregation, I grew up under the training of the Holy Spirit and formation staff. I was happy in the consecrated life in deepening my interior life in relationship with Jesus and wished to transmit God's grace and love by celebrating the sacraments.

"I continued my vocation in this congregation until my changing. Then, in 2018, I contacted Fr John Paul, Director of Priestly Vocations in the Diocese of Parramatta. Having been in Australia for less than a year, he described that everything is new to him, he has been made to feel at home in the seminary.

I am trying to deepen my life through the four pillars of formation in the seminary and always being aware of my training.

"I am really excited with Rector Fr John Hogan's teaching and reminders to live by heavenly values and grow up in practical virtues because I was created in God's image and likeness.

*"The purpose of studying is to be a better instrument in God's hands"*

"The purpose of studying is to be a better instrument in God's hands. Therefore, I hope to have more chances to see, talk and live with others."





Christian discipleship demands our moral courage, integrity and fidelity. The disciples were asked to go beyond the letter of the law and to interiorise holiness in a way that transforms their lives, relationships and behaviours. They were to set themselves apart; to become an alternative society rather assimilating and conforming to the value system of the dominant culture.

Priestly vocations are nurtured and formed in the womb of the family, the womb of the seminary and also that of the

larger Catholic community. We all have a part to play and to contribute to the formation and growth of these young men. Let us pray that nourished by the wisdom of God, they may grow and become leaders after the example of Christ who came not to be served, but to serve and give his life for others. Thank you for your accompaniment.

**Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv**  
Bishop of Parramatta



**With gratitude**

**we thank you for enabling  
these men to answer God's  
call, successfully transforming  
them into compassionate, loyal  
priests and aspiring leaders of  
tomorrow's Church.**

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