

How to become a priest

So you think you are being called to become a diocesan priest? Here is the typical path men take to become priests in the Diocese of Little Rock.

Discernment

Are you a Catholic man at least 18 years old, never married (or are you widowed)?

Do you have a high school diploma or GED and no criminal record?

Have you completed these steps, more or less in order?

Be active in your parish and pray for God's guidance in your calling.

Meet with your pastor and share what you are discerning.

Meet with a spiritual director or attend the diocese's Come and See weekend in Little Rock to discern more deeply what God is asking of you.

Meet with vocations director Msgr. Scott Friend or a vocations team member.

Visit a seminary to see what seminarian life is like.

Carefully explore the differences between consecrated life as a member of a religious order and diocesan priesthood. Determine that you are called to serve in Arkansas doing mostly parish work.

Fill out an extensive application, interview with the diocesan vocations team and take a psychological evaluation.

Pay off all personal debts, such as car loan and credit cards, and sell house.

NO

Discuss your "no" answers with your pastor or vocations director to figure out if you can correct them.

YES

Congratulations! You have been accepted as a diocesan seminarian.

Seminary training

Prepare to go to seminary. Do you already have a college degree?

NO

No, I don't have a college degree

Go to an undergraduate philosophy program to get your bachelor's degree.

You will either go to Holy Trinity Seminary in Dallas or live at the Formation House in Little Rock and take classes at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and from St. Gregory University in Shawnee, Okla. through the Little Rock Theology Institute.

During your summers you will be a member of the Evangelization Team and travel the state assisting in parishes.

After you earn your degree, the formation staff at the seminary or formation house will evaluate you to determine if you should proceed to a theology program. You will also take another psychological exam.

With a bachelor's degree and successful evaluation ...

YES

Yes, I have a college degree

Go to a theology program (four years, if you have the appropriate bachelor's degree) or pre-theology program (six years, if you have a bachelor's degree but need to take philosophy courses).

You will attend St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana, Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wis., or the North American College in Rome.

Along the way in your theology program you will reach several milestones and complete several important tasks.

First and third summers: If you are not already fluent in Spanish, attend Spanish immersion program in Mexico and Guatemala.

Second summer: Complete your clinical pastoral education program at Baptist Hospital in Little Rock.

Diaconate ordination and finishing preparation

At the end of your third year of theology studies, you will be ordained a deacon. The Mass will likely take place in your home parish.

In your last summer before priestly ordination, you are a deacon and will likely spend the summer in a parish, working alongside the pastor.

Priestly ordination

You have finally arrived at the day for which you and God have been preparing. Ordinations usually take place at the Cathedral of St. Andrew or Christ the King in Little Rock, or occasionally at Subiaco Abbey. Congratulations, Father.