

# TOGETHER

*a monthly bulletin insert from the archdiocese*



ARCHDIOCESE  
of DUBUQUE

Comments regarding this insert may be sent to communications staff by emailing [contactus@dbqarch.org](mailto:contactus@dbqarch.org) or by calling (800) 876-3546 and asking for the director of communications.

December 2023 Vol. 3 | No. 14

This document is available as a PDF at [www.dbqarch.org/together](http://www.dbqarch.org/together)



## THREE SEMINARIANS ADMITTED TO CANDIDACY FOR HOLY ORDERS

By Cassie Bird

Archdiocese of Dubuque seminarians Steven Kessler, Jackson Miller, and Matthew Smith were admitted to Candidacy for Holy Orders on Wednesday, August 30, at Mundelein Seminary.

Candidacy is an important step in priestly formation when a declaration is made by the seminarian that he is resolved to prepare himself for Holy Orders and ministry in the Church. That declaration is then acknowledged and received by the Church.

The current ceremony of Admission of Candidacy began to be used in the Roman Catholic Church on January 1, 1973. In its current form, the man in formation for the priesthood or the permanent diaconate states his intention to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders, and the clerical state. The bishop or archbishop will then formally accept him as a candidate. The ceremony calls to mind when the twelve apostles answer Jesus' call to be with him and follow him. It includes three parts: the call to candidacy, the scrutiny of the candidate, and the blessing of the candidate.

"To be formally admitted as a Candidate for Holy Orders, a seminarian has developed a relationship with Jesus as a disciple who follows the Lord, listens to His word, and



Archdiocese of Dubuque seminarians Jackson Miller, Steven Kessler, and Matthew Smith (pictured L to R) were admitted to Candidacy for Holy Orders on Wednesday, August 30, at Mundelein Seminary.

puts the word into practice," said Fr. Mark Murphy, Director of Vocations for the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

"He gives evidence of striving for a life of virtue, of prayer, and of human qualities that will be beneficial to him, and to God's people, as a priest. As it takes time to be formed as a disciple of Jesus with the intention of priesthood, a seminarian is formally admitted as a Candidate for Holy Orders after several years in seminary formation. He will then have several more years of formation until he is ordained a priest."

"In the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Holy Orders, a bishop asks the seminarians two questions similar to these below, and the seminarians respond with 'I do.'"

*1. Dear sons, the pastors and teachers charged with your formation, and those who affirm that they know you, have given a good report of you which we fully trust. In response to the Lord's call, do you resolve to complete your preparation, so that in due course you are made ready to undertake ministry in the Church through Holy Orders?*

*2. Do you resolve to form your mind and heart in such a way that you will be able faithfully to serve Christ the Lord and his Body, the Church?*

Below, the three newest candidates for Holy Orders in the Archdiocese of Dubuque share remarks regarding their experience of the ceremony and its significance.



Steven Kessler

The actual part of the Mass in which we were admitted to Candidacy for Holy Orders was short. We simply stood up when our names were called

and then answered two questions posed to us by the Cardinal. "In response to the Lord's call, do you resolve to complete your preparation so that in due time through Holy Orders you will be prepared to assume ministry within the Church?" and "Do you resolve to prepare yourselves in mind and spirit to give faithful service to Christ the Lord and his Body, the Church?" These two simple questions have a deep and very important impact on our lives. If you think of ordination like a wedding, then candidacy is like an engagement. We promised to continue to say "yes" to God's call and to do everything we can to prepare ourselves to be ordained into the priesthood and into service to God's people and His Holy Church.

It was short and simple, but so powerful, beautiful and moving. It's hard to put into words how I felt in the moment but now, looking back, it was a life-changing night. I felt a new sense of confirmation that this is what God is calling me to do, who God wants me to be. I cannot express the joy this brings me but I will say, it is a

great moment to look back on when I am struggling with classes, or with life. A great reminder that I am moving toward what God wants of me. I said “yes” to God’s call and now I have promised the Church to follow through with my formation so I am fully ready to say “I do” on the day of my ordination.



**Jackson Miller**

It was on me to kick off the process of admission by writing a formal letter to Bishop Pates requesting to be admitted to candidacy. I was grateful to express in handwriting that I freely wish to serve the people of God in Dubuque as a priest and that I resolve to guard and foster my vocation in preparation for priestly life. In the week before the ceremony, my classmates and I were on a silent retreat and were especially encouraged to pray about the resolutions we were going to make in a week. This time of reflection enabled me to make a firm and emphatic “Yes!” in front of the Church during the rite of admission. Since the Mass, it has been wonderful to know that the Church has received my resolve and is calling me to continue in formation for the priesthood!



**Matt Smith**

“You’re in the big leagues now” said a priest in one of the first Masses upon my arrival at Mundelein seminary. Two short weeks later I found myself standing in the front of the main chapel for the “Rite of Candidacy” where I made public my desire to become a priest and to serve the people of God. This “public declaration” was nothing more than professing five simple words total, but the gravity of the ceremony was not lost on me. It was a profession I was making in the presence of many witnesses, both human and divine! The gathered community and the heightened

sense of solemnity was a deeply personal call to me to approach my formation and my prayer life with a greater sense of intensity, purpose, and responsibility.

God-willing, it is only four short years until I am ordained, and that time will no doubt fly by quickly. This experience was a call to give myself over completely to the Lord so that He can mold me into the priest He wants me to be. As I continue this journey in major seminary, the phrase “you’re in the big leagues now” continues to echo in my mind as a constant reminder that there will be challenges ahead and that there are great expectations. But with each passing day I am fueled by the love of God and the anticipation of becoming the servant of God that seminary is preparing me to be.



**Fr. Mark Murphy,  
Dir. of Vocations**

Let us pray for our seminarians that God who has begun this good work in them will bring it to fulfillment. And I express gratitude

for those whose financial stewardship makes possible the formation of our seminarians for the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

#### Update on ArchdioceseOne Progress:

So far, over \$17.2 million has been raised for the ArchdioceseOne special appeal. Of which, \$8.2 million of this amount is unrestricted, and over \$2.9 million has been restricted for Seminary Education. Thank you for your support not only for current seminarians, but also for future vocations to the priesthood.



## 2024 Women’s Conference



**Beauty  
In Christ**  
Archdiocese of Dubuque Women's Conference

reviving our  
*hearts*

**SPEAKER**



**Mary Pedersen**

*Saturday*  
**JAN 27, 2024**  
**8:00AM - 1:30PM**

**SPEAKER**



**Mari Pablo**

Register now either through your parish or by going to  
**[www.archwomensconference.org](http://www.archwomensconference.org)**  
where you will find more information.