Good, holy, and compassionate priests are a gift to God’s people and the parishes they serve. Our future as a Catholic community will be even more vibrant if we have a flourishing priesthood.

We are grateful that so many young men are now discerning a priestly vocation, nearly 30 men are currently enrolled as seminarians for the Diocese of Grand Rapids. In the past five years, we have been blest with a 45 percent increase in the number of men entering the seminary. We look forward to their gifts and leadership as a large group of faithful and faith-filled diocesan priests enter their well-deserved retirement.

As a diocese, we are committed to ensuring these young men get the best possible formation and education so that they and we will benefit for decades to come from their priestly presence among us. It is in support of this commitment that the Diocese of Grand Rapids is undertaking the *Our Shepherds – Our Future* Capital Campaign, a $33 million-dollar campaign to support seminarian education and priest retirement.

We are asking everyone in the diocese to participate. How deeply reassuring would it be if 100% of the families in our diocese stood in solidarity with these young men as they pursue their formation?

We do not expect you to make such a commitment lightly. A gift of any amount to this campaign will be deeply appreciated because we know that what may be considered a small dollar gift for some may well be a large sacrifice for others. We also know that you and others have questions. This insert is the final one in a series that answered some frequently asked questions about the campaign.

If you have a question that was not answered, please submit it to Annalise Laumeyer, diocesan director of communications: *alaumeyer@grdiocese.org*. She will attempt to provide you an answer promptly.
Dear Parishioners of the Diocese of Grand Rapids,

As a seminarian preparing for the priesthood, it is common to be asked three questions: What is discernment? How does someone discern the priestly vocation freely? And how can parishioners offer support?

Discernment really comes down to three things; to be aware, to understand, and to respond accordingly. To be aware is to pay attention to the spiritual movements of the heart in our day-to-day lives. To understand means to take the time to reflect upon our spiritual experiences and to stay with them until we have a clear understanding of which spirit we are listening to or experiencing. To respond means to accept, to follow, whatever is coming from God, and to reject, to turn away from, whatever is coming from the enemy, or Satan.

In order for a seminarian to discern the priestly vocation freely, it is imperative that he is provided with adequate time and space to not only learn about Jesus, but to know Jesus. Life at the seminary should be centered around building up an authentic, intimate prayer life with Jesus. It is through prayer that one’s vocation is realized. It is for this reason that a seminarian will leave a career, dating relationships, and other possible vocational distractions in order to be wholly and freely invested in this endeavor.

It is for this reason that we first and foremost ask for and continue to be grateful for the support from parishioners in our diocese in the form of prayer; your prayers have the power to cleanse and transform the Church. It is for this reason too that we are eminently grateful for your continued financial support which enables us to freely discern this vocation to the priesthood for the Diocese of Grand Rapids. Know of our prayers of thanksgiving and petition for all of you.

Thank you, and God Bless,

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