

Press Release
Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan to Ordain
Seven Seminarians to the Priesthood
Class of 2015 largest in 50 years
Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Santa Fe, NM

Saturday, May 23, 2015
10:00 A.M. Mass

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – Thursday, May 21, 2015— IMMEDIATE RELEASE-- On Saturday, May 23, 2015 at 10:00AM at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis in Santa Fe, Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan will be rewarded for his many years of support and encouragement for priestly vocations by ordaining seven men to the priesthood. This is the largest ordination class in recent memory, certainly the largest class in the past 50 years.

The seven men who will become Roman Catholic priests represent the great universality that is the Church. Three of the men are from Vietnam, one is from Poland, one from Mexico, and the two from Raton and Albuquerque, New Mexico represent rural and city parishes of our archdiocese. This day will be a cause of great joy for all Catholics in the archdiocese as we have been blessed not with a shortage but with an increase of seminarians in recent years.

Archdiocese of Santa Fe Seminarians - Class of 2015

Brief Biographies provided by the ASF Office of Vocations

Michael Garcia is 46 years old and is from Albuquerque. He is one of five children. He has always felt the call to the priesthood since childhood, but when his parents died when he was a teenager, he decided to join the Navy. When he left the Navy, he cared for his grandmother until she passed away. He attended Sacred Heart Parish where he was involved in many ministries. In the summer of 2009, he met with Fr. Michael DePalma, Director of Vocations for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. Fr. DePalma encouraged him to enter the seminary. He attended Holy Apostles Seminary. During the summer months, he helped out in St. Anne's in Santa Fe, Our Lady of Guadalupe in Taos and San Juan Bautista in Ohkay Owingeh. For him, "the priesthood is a life of love – love for Christ and His church."

Valentine Phu Ngoc Au is 39 years old and is from Cantho, Vietnam. He has four brothers and four sisters – he is number seven in line. His parents are very devout Catholics. He has always wanted to be a priest because he greatly desires to completely give his life to Christ. He joined the Congregation of the Holy Family in 1995 and took perpetual vows in 2009. He wanted more, so in 2011, he started taking theology at Holy Apostles College and Seminary. With the aid of Fr. DePalma, he became a seminarian for the archdiocese. He spent several months at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Peralta and Our Lady of the Annunciation in Albuquerque in preparation for his ordination and his ministry.

Edgar Sanchez is 43 years old and is from Mexico City. When he was very young, one of his teachers encouraged him and planted within him a religious vocation. He could not however foster what the Lord wanted until he came to the United States in 1997. While attending DePaul University in Chicago, he felt the Lord calling him again. Through a series of events, he ended up joining the Jesuits and did one year as a novitiate. He discovered he did not have the right fit for the Jesuits, so he went to Pecos Benedictine Monastery where he felt drawn by the prayers and the atmosphere of our state. He went to Mt. Angel Seminary to study theology and served in various parishes including

Holy Ghost and San Martin de Porres in Albuquerque, Sacred Heart in Española and San Clemente in Los Lunas.

Benoit Trieu Van Vu is 43 years old and is from Vietnam. He is the youngest of a fervent Catholic family of seven children. He has wanted to become a priest since he was 10 years old. He grew up not always having access to the sacraments because they did not have a pastor in his village. In Vietnam, it was difficult to be Catholic. When he was 22 years old, he entered a Benedictine Monastery in Saigon but always sensed there was something more. When he was 37 years old, he went to Mt. Angel Abbey in Oregon to study scripture. This experience strengthened his desire to become a priest. Through the help of Christ in the Desert Monastery, he was led to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe Vocations Office to finish his studies and become a priest. He spent the last year of 2014 on a pastoral year at St. Charles Borromeo in Albuquerque getting ready to serve the people in the archdiocese.

Joseph Van Tao Nguyen is 34 years old and is from Ha Tinh City, Vietnam. He is the youngest of five boys. He felt the call to priesthood at the age of 12. With the help of his parish priest, growing up he was able to get an education because his family was very poor. He studied in the Philippines and then in Rome. It was in Rome where he met seminarians from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. This sparked his desire to come to the United States and become a priest here. To finish his studies, he attended Holy Apostles seminary in Connecticut. He spent a summer at Our Lady of Belen and served a six-month pastoral year at St. Thomas Aquinas in Rio Rancho. For him, the priesthood means “to be a disciple of Jesus – to follow in his footsteps. It is more than a job, it is a way of being and living in this world. To be a priest, I will give my whole life to Christ as His servant.”

William Woytavich is 55 years old and was born in Poland. He has spent several years here in New Mexico; first with the Monastery of Christ in the Desert, then with the Benedictines in Pecos. Though he greatly benefitted from the monastic life, he felt through prayer he had to pursue the diocesan priesthood. He has a varied background being a former U.S. Marine and working in telecommunications for a period of time. He graduated from Holy Apostles Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut. He is a man of great common sense and has a very good sense of humor, so he should be keeping his parishioners awake at his Masses! His previous summer assignments include serving the people at Our Lady of Belen, Our Lady of the Annunciation in Albuquerque and studies Spanish at the Mexican American Catholic College in San Antonio.

Rob Yaksich is 46 years old and is from Raton, NM. He went to college at Trinidad State in Trinidad, Colorado and then the University of New Mexico. He has lived in Amarillo, Seattle, Alaska, and Arizona. It was in Arizona where he first felt the calling to become a priest. The Lord brought him to Our Lady of Annunciation in Albuquerque. There he became an active member which assisted him in growing his faith. Through much prayer and discernment, it became clear he was meant to be a priest. He studied for the priesthood at Holy Apostles in Cromwell, Connecticut. For the summer, he assisted in many parishes, including Our Lady of Guadalupe in Portales, St. Alice in Mountainair, Our Lady of Belen, and St. Patrick in Chama.--END