



A special grant was created from donations given at the closing Mass of the 10th National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. This gift of nearly \$79,000 will fund scholarships for 16 seminararians selected by their bishops in mission dioceses and eparchies. Four of these Catholic Home Missions Eucharistic Seminararians will be highlighted in each quarterly issue of *Neighbors* as part of the continuing National Eucharistic Revival efforts in 2025.



Blake Bernard

Diocese of Alexandria

“My name is Blake Edward Bernard and I am from Marksville, Louisiana. I am 18 years old and a seminarian for the Diocese of Alexandria. I am the youngest of the family with an older brother, older sister, and of course my loving parents. They are all practicing Roman Catholics who support me very much in my seminary formation and have helped me grow in my faith. I first felt my call towards priesthood when I was in sixth grade and didn’t really think much of it until my senior year in high school because of every time I went to Mass, I would be so attracted to the priest and how he worked through *Persona Christi* to transubstantiate bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. I went on a pilgrimage in November of 2023 with my church parish to Mexico City to see the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe and it was there that I gave my will to Christ and accepted my calling to discern priesthood. Ever since then, I have never been so happy knowing that this is exactly what I need to be doing because I can never see myself doing anything else.”



Hakam Nouri

Syriac Eparchy of Our Lady of Deliverance

“My name is Alhakam (Hakam) Nouri and I am from Jamul, California. I am the oldest of four children. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor. My vocational journey began with the encouragement of my eparchial bishop, who was one of the first to suggest I may have a calling. This was reaffirmed in meetings with other clergy members, including a vocation director and one of my spiritual directors. Along with the pastor of my parish, they fostered my vocational interest by supporting my involvement in church activities and providing opportunities for me to deepen my faith. For example, the bishop made it possible for me to attend the National Eucharistic Congress this past year. I first felt called to the priesthood a little less than two years ago during a period when I began to take my relationship with God more seriously. This inspired me to attend daily liturgies and participate regularly in the Sacraments. I was especially influenced by the young priests at the local church, with whom I felt a strong connection. Through their example, I came to understand the significance of their service to the Church and the people.”



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Grant Sharstrom

Diocese of Duluth

“My name is Grant Sharstrom, and I was born and raised in Willmar, Minnesota. I grew up with my parents, Steve and Maggie Sharstrom, and two older siblings, Melissa and Dustin. I hold a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from North Dakota State University. The idea of the priesthood first started in 2008 while I was considering becoming a pastor or music teacher. In 2020, I began conversations with a priest who helped me understand that the priesthood is a calling, and that what I had been experiencing could indeed be a call to the priesthood.

“I was blessed to attend multiple events for the National Eucharistic Congress. The first was the Star of the North Congress, which preceded the beginning of the Marian Route in Bemidji, Minnesota. When the Marian Route came through Duluth, I had the opportunity to assist with music for the Liturgy being held, as well as participate in the procession that followed. There were three major highlights: sitting with my diocese’s pilgrimage group, including Bishop Felton, as we supported Fr. Mike Schmitz; seeing Bishop Barron speak; and, most profoundly, when Bishop Cozzens brought the Blessed Sacrament for the opening ceremony and the profound silence that fell across the stadium.”



Patrick Wallace

Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter

“I was born in San Antonio as the fourth eldest of 12 siblings and was homeschooled with my siblings from pre-K to high school. My dad also worked from home as a software developer and I was blessed to grow up in such a close family. This facilitated daily Mass and altar serving where I first thought of maybe being a priest. A field trip to the seminary when I was 11 furthered this desire but I mostly kept my feelings to myself as I wanted other things in life. As a member of Our Lady of the Atonement [a parish of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter], I felt a strong call to this particular mission. I was blessed to attend discernment days with the Ordinariate in Houston during the summer when I turned 18 and it was inspiring to see all the Ordinariate priests together there also for an ordination. Despite the non-territorial aspect of the Ordinariate, we were united in our worship, liturgy, and desire for Protestants to return home. I loved it and entered seminary that fall.”

Editor’s note: Founded in 2012, the Ordinariate is a non-territorial diocese with the particular mission of unity among Christians. The Ordinariate parishes have come into full communion with the Catholic Church from the Episcopal/Anglican tradition and continue to bring that rich patrimony of English Catholicism to new fruitfulness.