

Quality or quantity – yes!

Seminarians aren't exactly a commodity. They are extraordinarily rare gifts from God, from our families, and from our parishes. Yet everyone wants to know the numbers. The question I get over and over and over as vocation director is this: how many guys do we have? The follow up questions are quite predictable. How many did we have last year? How many guys do we need? How many do you think we'll have next year? These questions are well-intentioned. I always take it well, as people caring about the Church and her mission and her priests. Still, it is important to remember that seminarians are much more than a commodity we are trying to produce.

I try to treat each new vocation to the seminary as a miracle heard and answered. Trust me, if you knew from my perspective the perfect storm of circumstances that it takes in today's world for a young man to successfully discern and answer a call from Christ to be a priest, you would be as humbled as I am that the Lord has blessed us with 28 men. Still, more important than the number, is the quality of men we have preparing to be priests. I hope you will agree with me, that given everything the Church has been through, the Church needs good priests more than she needs more priests. Our seminarians know and feel this pressure to be good priests. They ask for your constant prayers that they can become the men Christ has called them to be.

Even though I get asked about the quantity of our seminarians a thousand times more than I get asked about the quality, I am committed to improving both. If we had to make a choice in vocations, we would error on the side of quality, trusting that the Lord has always amazed us by his ability to do more with less. I would love to one day have 50 seminarians for our Archdiocese, yet as Mother Teresa taught us well, God doesn't measure success in quite this way, but calls us to be faithful no matter what.

Please join me in thanking God not just for an increased number of seminarians, but for the opportunity to pray for each one of these men individually. For these men are more than a commodity to us, they are gifts that God has entrusted to us. Let us pray not only for ourselves, that they might become what the Church desperately needs, but especially for them, that they may flourish in their relationship with Christ and in him become free to accept the incomparable good of the priesthood.