



THE MOST REVEREND  
GREGORY J. HARTMAYER, OFM CONV.

March 19, 2025

Dear Brothers,

Peace and all good!

As Archbishop of Atlanta, I have been personally invested in the formation of our seminarians. Working alongside our Vocation Director, Fr. Rey Pineda, I have seen how the Lord is at work in our midst calling prayerful and courageous men to follow him. As you know, this is the first year in recent history that we will not be celebrating an ordination to the priesthood. While this is unusual and we don't anticipate this happening again soon, it is nonetheless sobering and unfortunate. Our call to invite those under our care to be attentive to the voice of the Lord is more important now than ever before.

While we are blessed to have over forty seminarians studying for our Archdiocese, we all know that this is simply not enough to provide for the future of our local church. Encouraging vocations is a work that the Lord entrusts to each one of us.

Fr. Rey and I are excited to introduce a new initiative to create parish-level vocational support ministries. We are partnering with Rhonda Gruenewald, founder of Vocation Ministry, to implement this new effort beginning this Fall. As a priest and shepherd, your participation is essential.

Rhonda and her team have helped several dioceses bolster their vocations programs by training priests and laity to foster a culture of vocational discernment in their parishes. This helps us reach and accompany more young people as they discern and, more importantly, take steps forward in their vocational journey. Many of the dioceses who partner with Vocation Ministry report significant increases in new seminarians after only a few years: Austin, TX increased seminarian numbers from 28 in 2022 to 60 in 2024; Greensburg, PA increased from 7 to 10, San Angelo, TX from 7 to 14, Albany, NY increased from 17 in 2021 to 33 in 2022.

We are excited to invite you to attend one of two upcoming workshops on June 6 or 7, to learn more about what this entails. Providentially, these workshops will take place on the same weekend when we should have instead been welcoming new brothers into our presbyterate. I know you have many responsibilities, some of which may cause you to hesitate about participating in this project. The truth is: you will always be this busy unless you invest in the success of this effort. I expect every parish to participate.

This workshop is designed to give you helpful direction as you discern who among your parishioners should be entrusted and empowered to lead this new ministry. If done well, this project should not add to your workload but instead give it more purpose and allow it to bear even greater fruit. Please see the enclosed flyer to register. After this training, you will return to your parish to identify which of your faithful could be founding members of a Parish Vocation Ministry and they will then receive an invitation to a separate training in the next few months. By this Fall, we will be postured to begin the new endeavor and see how the Lord continues to bless our Archdiocese with many more laborers for the vineyard.

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THE OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

Thank you for all of your support.

With prayerful best wishes, I am

Yours in Christ,

*+ Gregory J. Hartmayer, OSM, Conv.*

Most Reverend Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM  
Archbishop of Atlanta

Sincerely,



Reverend Rey Pineda  
Vocation Director