

Biographical Information for Seminarian Jose Cortez

My name is Jose Cortez. I was born in Manila, Philippines on April 17, 1999 to my parents, Aurel and Lolita, and a brother to my sister, Julianna. My family and I are parishioners of Blessed Trinity parish in Jacksonville, FL, where I am an altar server. I graduated from Atlantic Coast High School in Jacksonville in May 2018. I was raised for the most part in San Fernando City, in the province of Pampanga, in the Philippines and have briefly attended a private Catholic school run by Benedictine nuns for two years in the ‘next-door’ city of Angeles. I was born, raised, and baptized Catholic. After having our immigration papers approved, my family and I set our eyes to move to the United States, arriving on October of 2012.

I have always considered becoming a priest, blossoming at a young age, particularly because of my Catholic education. I remember being very interested in the lives of saints which I would read from my religion class textbooks. I also faintly remember hearing the Benedictine nuns in the nearby chapel angelically singing the Divine Office. From a young age, I have considered having a religious vocation in the Benedictine Order because of my experiences with the Benedictines. From then too I began to love, explore, and become increasingly interested in many aspects of Church teaching, especially the liturgy. Moreover, I was very attached and moved by the Benedictines’ charism of “prayer and work” (*Ora et labora*), as well as their simplicity of life.

In another experience, around my late freshman year in high school, the then-seminarian Fr. Briggs Hurley was serving his pastoral year at our parish at Blessed Trinity. I became acquainted with him and he invited me to attend Vocations Awareness Weekend at St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami, at which I met the seminarians for the first time. Having already been considering the priesthood for a long time, I was even more determined to become one, especially that I saw these men serve the Lord in joy, happiness, and seemingly leading a life which the Lord has called them to do. Since then I have frequented the Diocese’s many discernment events.

During the discernment retreat held by the Diocese last summer of 2017, I was able to talk to the vocations director about applying to become a seminarian, and on November 28, 2017, I was accepted by Bishop Estévez as a seminarian. I am beginning my first year at St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami, FL in August of 2018. I am very much looking forward to starting a new chapter in my life, following the Lord’s calling, and I am more than open to be molded in the priestly Heart of Christ, whose “thoughts of His Heart are from generation to generation; to deliver their souls from death and feed them in famine” (Ps 32 [33]: 11, 19).