

Catholic Diocese

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

12th August 2020

Wishing you abiding peace and joy in the Lord!

Our policy on vocations states clearly that “the duty of fostering vocations falls on the whole Christian community and it is discharged principally by living full Christian lives”. Furthermore “all priests should show their apostolic zeal by fostering vocations as much as possible and should draw the hearts of young men to the priesthood by the example of their humble, hardworking and happy lives, as well as by their mutual charity and fraternal cooperation.” So, all of us without exception, in virtue of our baptism, are vocation promoters to matrimony, priesthood, diaconate and religious life. We are called, like John the Baptist to lead people to personal encounter with Christ.

I would like to present to you our seminarians, in terms of who they are, where they come from, how they are doing and at what stage of their formational journey they find themselves. The process of formation is described as “a singular ‘journey of discipleship’, which begins at Baptism. It is perfected through the other sacraments of Christian Initiation, comes to be appreciated as the centre of one’s life at the beginning of Seminary formation, and continues through the whole of life” (*Ratio Fundamentalis*,3).



Byron Bowers

Date of Birth: 07 February 1988

From Port Elizabeth

Studying at St. John Vianney, Pretoria.

“My home parish is St James. I am well and coping with the current challenge of the Corona Virus pandemic which is a learning and eye opening experience, both spiritually and pastorally. I am a third year Theology student at St John Vianney Seminary and am currently doing my pastoral internship in Somerset East at the parishes of the Church of the Assumption and at St John the Baptist (Bedford), under the supervision of Fr Ken O. Jones. The experience has been a learning and spiritually fruitful one. I have been working with Fr Ken in streaming Mass and reaching out to the community via whatsapp and facebook (social media). I am hoping to visit with my parish priest (Fr E. Maduka SVD) at the end of my internship.

In conclusion I am grateful for the journey of my internship with Fr Ken O. Jones and the communities of both Bedford and Somerset East, I have learnt from them and trust that they have learnt from me as well. Thank you, Rt Rev. Vincent Mduduzi Zungu OFM, I am grateful and appreciative of all your support, prayers and efforts. Praise be the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!



Clint Weldschidt

Date of Birth: 24 September 1992

From Port Elizabeth

Studying at St. John Vianney Seminary, Pretoria.

Currently in his 2nd year of Theology and will begin his pastoral internship in 2021 under the mentorship of Fr. Luvuyo Madikane.

“By the grace of God, I have been able to sharpen my intellectual formation during this pandemic through study by being in regular contact with my lecturers, formators and spiritual director at the seminary. I have also been graced with more time to pray and to improve my Spiritual life significantly. I must say that although we are constrained by not being able to attend Holy Mass frequently, because of the strict regulations that govern public worship during this pandemic, it really does help a great deal to be able to Livestream Holy Mass daily from my laptop and cell phone while being home. The graciousness of our Lord knows no limit!”



James Qege

Date of Birth: 22 February 1995

From King Williams Town

Studying at St. John Vianney Seminary, Pretoria.

Currently in his 3rd year Philosophy.

“Basically I am staying at home, taking care of my father. Every morning I go to Father Gabriel Muyenga's in King William's Town to do my e-learning at his house. He has been so welcoming and assists a great deal. Every day after studying and doing homework Father Patrick Misomali comes and says Holy Mass. This pandemic has changed me a lot, but thanks to Father Gabriel I have carried on with my formation and he is most welcoming and willing to assist. I hope and pray that you are all keeping well and away from the virus, and from all evil. In my prayers always.”



Piet Carstens

Date of Birth: 24 April 1981

From Windhoek, Namibia

Studying at St. Charles Lwanga Seminary, Namibia.

Currently in his 1st year Theology. His vocational journey began with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and was introduced to the Port Elizabeth Diocese through Fr. Joe Slattery who taught him in Namibia.

“I see myself as hardworking and always make time to strengthen my spiritual connection with the Almighty Father as all blessings are from above.”



Asemahle Mahlangu

Date of Birth: 04 February 2001

From Port Elizabeth.

Currently at St. Francis Xavier Seminary, Cape Town approaching the end of his Orientation year in October 2020.

The Formation and Training at St. Francis Xavier Seminary was not affected by the COVID pandemic as there are only 28 students. Therefore, they were able to continue their studies at the seminary with all COVID safety regulations adhered to.

“Growing up I had been thrilled by the idea of becoming a pastor of my former church. It was a burning and tingling feeling inside of me that was pushing me towards that, but I chose to ignore it and dreamt of becoming a Psychologist. In the year 2015 I converted to Catholicism after an entire year of not going to any church. My friends invited me to come watch them serve mass for the first time and after that particular Wednesday I never missed mass or altar server's practices on Fridays. I eventually became the co-ordinator of altar servers as well as Ushers which was when the feeling of enquiring about a vocation came back to me.

Up until today that feeling is still burning inside of me.”



Siphamandla Mpulo

Date of Birth: 16 March 1984

From Pietermaritzburg Kwa Zulu Natal.

Currently at St Joseph's Theological Institute, Cedara.

Siphamandla began his original formation with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate at Cedara and is now completing his final year in Theology, he will begin his pastoral internship in 2021.

He was introduced to the Port Elizabeth Diocese through Fr. Gabriel Muyenga and Priests working in the Queenstown Diocese.

“My love and zeal for the service of the Church and people of God has not diminished over the years I still feel strongly called to this way of life. Having done thorough discernment over the past few years I am positive that Lord of the vineyard still whispers my name for the service in his vineyard.”

There are many applications that we receive from other countries outside the boundaries of the SACBC. They mainly come from English speaking countries within the SADEC region, East Africa and as far as Ghana and Nigeria. Many of them would have just googled up the name of the Catholic Diocese of Port Elizabeth, they feel good about it and they apply; some would have met someone – a priest or religious who works in our Diocese and others would have been in a formation house of an international religious congregation in South Africa especially St Joseph's Theological Institute outside Pietermaritzburg. Those who have no known contact with our Diocese and country, we acknowledge their application and kindly recommend that they apply to their home diocese(s) and Conference area for vocational discernment because they are better known there in terms of their faith journey, education, family and cultural background. Those who may be from another country, have had an exposure to the local Church either because they have visited, worked or lived within our Diocese are considered.

Each inquiry is treated on its own merit. If they have participated actively in a parish community, are known to the priest in charge, have been accompanied by one of the priests and fulfill all other requirements they can be accepted as candidates and future seminarians for our Catholic Diocese.

When I was perusing through my notes I came across the Policy Document of the SACBC regarding the acceptance of foreign students into our Seminaries. I felt I would like to share it with all of you because you are our frontline vocation animators, promoters and directors. Many questions that relate to vocations in general are addressed to you by prospective candidates before they reach our Diocesan Vocation Coordinator, Fr Luvuyo Madikane who in turn refers them to me at the Chancery.

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all the People of God in our Diocese who takes their obligation to foster vocations seriously through persistent prayer; open invitation to the impassioned youth to consider a call to matrimony, priesthood and religious life; by their witness of life to God and lastly but not least, by contributing generously to the diocesan fund for the formation and training of our seminarians.

May God answer all your prayers and reward you abundantly.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vincent Zungu OFM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop Vincent Mduduzi Zungu OFM