

## Matthew Ramsay of Humboldt & Geoffrey Young of Saskatoon will be ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Don Bolen 7 p.m. Friday, June 10 at St. Patrick Parish in Saskatoon.

The diocesan Vocation Commission will host an evening of prayer on the evening before the ordinations: "Come Pray With Us" 7 p.m. Thursday, June 9 at Holy Spirit Parish, followed by a social. All are welcome to attend.

### **John Paul II had role in Geoffrey Young's countercultural call to the priesthood**

BY GEOFFREY YOUNG

I was born in Saskatoon on Oct. 21, 1985, the third and youngest child of Maureen (Richelhoff) and Jerald Young. Prior to my birth, my family lived and farmed on land near Kerrobert, SK, which is my father's hometown. My mother's hometown is Major, SK and she became a teacher.

I have an older brother Tyler (who is married to Odette) and an older sister Natasha (who is married to Shaun Bzdel). We have a close family, in which our Catholic faith has always been a priority. As a young child, I was taught to say prayers before bed and meals, we would go to Mass on Sundays, and I was encouraged as a young child to go to the rosary club at my elementary school, St. Bernard. My favourite memories include playing hockey and spending my summers at Turtle Lake.

Following my confirmation I became an altar server at Holy Spirit Parish in Saskatoon, and I continued this up until the time I decided to enter seminary. From an early age, I always respected priests – yet I didn't understand much about the priesthood.

I graduated from Holy Cross High School in 2003 and although I didn't know what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, I had always been interested in politics, history, and religion. I studied for two years at the U of S, working towards a BA in political studies, but around this time I also began reading philosophy and theology, some works by Cardinal Ratzinger and Pope John Paul II.

Up until that point, I do not remember explicitly "thinking about being a priest". In 2005, with the events surrounding Pope John Paul II's death, I had an inexpressible conversion. During that year, I began re-engaging with my faith. I remember asking myself "what is it that *truly* makes me happy in life?"

Looking back now, I can see moments throughout my early life in which I believe God was calling me subtly to the priesthood. But this vocation was most directly inspired by Pope John Paul II. By his witness and faithful priestly life, he showed the depth of

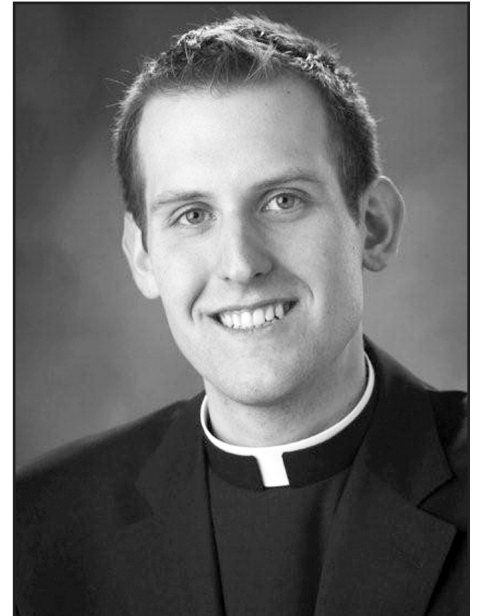
his love for Christ and His bride, the Church. As a 19-year-old young man with talent, ability to do many things, he found himself in a time of war – a dark time – yet he decided to give his heart totally to Christ, through the hands of Mary.

One Sunday Mass following Easter 2005, a gospel was proclaimed about the call of a disciple, who gave his possessions to the poor and followed our Lord. Then when going for communion, I saw the image of one of the *Stations* in which Christ is condemned by Pontius Pilate. I felt God was calling me to a radical conversion from my much divided heart. But I didn't know what this meant. After Mass, I don't know why, I suddenly found myself asking the priest about the vocation. He said that if I desired to find out more, he would set up a meeting with Bishop Albert LeGatt.

I didn't hear back for about a month, which at first I thought was probably for the best; because I hadn't really thought this out much! Eventually, I met with the bishop a few times and over the coming few months, with his support, I discerned that I could finish my BA in seminary while also discerning a vocation to the priesthood.

So I entered seminary, not knowing with any certainty, but trusting that God would continually guide me. In my heart, I believed in the words spoken by Pope Benedict XVI, "***Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything.***" I simply took it one year at a time, and promised myself not to make a decision during turmoil but to complete the entire year. During seminary, I know that I have matured in many areas; most especially in my spiritual life, my love of the sacraments, knowledge of the faith, and love for the people of God. Throughout my future ministry as a priest, I will always strive to centre my life on Christ – truly present in the Eucharist – and on a true devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Each year I find myself falling deeper in love with the Church I am called to serve and the sacred priesthood that is *still today* a gift from Christ to his beloved. I also find that I



Geoffrey Young

am a more joyful and loving person because I have heard that calling that fulfills my deepest longings.

My ordination to the priesthood will be June 10 in Saskatoon. I find it providential that Pope John Paul II will be beatified May 1, exactly six years after I decided to follow his example of priesthood and enter seminary. I know that he will remain to be a holy intercessor in heaven for myself and for all the youth of our Church.

***Pope John Paul II said repeatedly to young people: "You are the hope of the Church and of the world. You are my hope."***

I believe that there are young men called to be priests in each of our parishes.

It is my prayer that our local Church will continue to foster a positive environment promoting vocations to the sacred priesthood. There are amongst us also young persons who are called to be religious brothers and sisters; there also are the future married couples and families that will transform the Church and the world. I pray that many will discern their call to all forms of Christian life and love. Such a *radical call* is indeed *counter-cultural*; but it is life-giving – one of joy, peace, and fulfillment.

Pray for your priests, love them; and know that God will always remain faithful to his promise spoken through that young prophet Jeremiah: "***I will give you shepherds, after my own heart.***"

# Ministering to prisoners brings insight about meaning of priesthood for Matthew Ramsay, who will be ordained June 10 in Saskatoon

By MATTHEW RAMSAY

A key moment in my journey to the priesthood was an assignment I received in my first year of theology at Mount Angel Seminary.

I was sent to work at a youth prison. The high-school-age guys I worked with were Catholic, but couldn't get to the Mass offered at the prison. My job was to bring them communion. They had all committed violent crimes and were going to be locked up for a long time. At the same time, they all wanted forgiveness, respect, love, and a fuller life than they had known so far.

The days when I met these young men began in the seminary chapel. I would pray over the readings of the day, looking for a message that would speak to their lives in prison. Then I would take a few hosts from the tabernacle and bring them to the prison. After the communion service we would talk, sometimes about forgiveness, redemption, and the struggles to live a Catholic life in prison – other times about baseball.

This ministry has sat with me as an image of what the priesthood is. I was literally bringing Jesus to those young men, and over the year I came to see Jesus in them as well. Walking alone through the prison for the first time was a frightening experience, but it brought me to a lot of grace.

The path to communion in the youth prison began in Humboldt. Born Dec. 25, 1981, I grew up with a loving Catholic family, attending St. Dominic school and going to Mass at St. Augustine parish. My faith grew through the parish youth group and retreats at St. Peter's monastery at Muenster, SK. As involved as I was, the priesthood was not even remotely on my mind.

This changed with a conference I attended

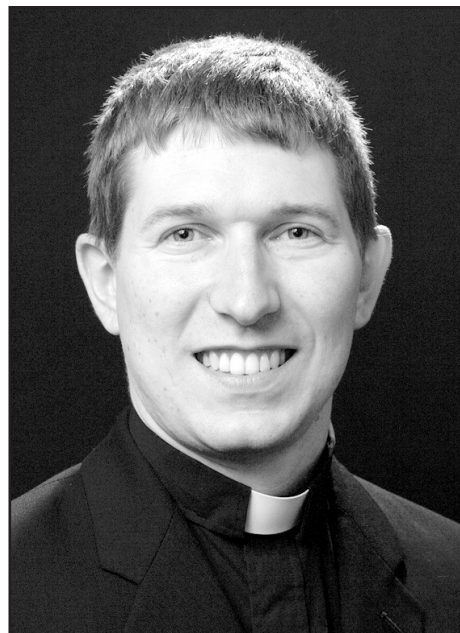
outside Edmonton the summer before my grade 12 year. A priest challenged us to pray a simple prayer every day: "**God help me to know your will and do it in my life.**" What he said made sense, and I began to pray. This was a dangerous move. I prayed that prayer every day, and gradually, silently, the thought of priesthood appeared in my mind. I tried to push it away, but I kept on praying, waiting for God to give me another answer. Another answer didn't come, and the answer I didn't want got stronger.

God put three important events in my path that helped me accept his call. First was World Youth Day 2000 in Rome. There I learned to love the Mass. We had daily Mass with anywhere from 20 people in a convent chapel to two million people with the pope in a field outside Rome, and I saw a beauty and power I had never seen before.

Second was the John Paul II Bible School in Radway, Alberta. There I learned to love prayer. This school is now closed, but the year I spent there taught me serious prayer. Prayer became a deep conversation and union with the God who loves me. And this God was still calling me to be a priest.

Third was joining *Behold the Lamb*, a traveling missionary team. There I learned to love the people. We worked across Saskatchewan, Alberta, BC, and the Territories, and I saw the difference God makes in people's lives. If one year helping people discover God was so meaningful, what about a lifetime?

Over these years and in hundreds of ways, God changed my heart. The call to priesthood, which looked impossible, unpleasant, and dull, became exciting, beautiful, and real. Finally, after a few years of university in San Francisco, I entered



Matthew Ramsay

Mount Angel Seminary for the diocese of Saskatoon.

My journey to the seminary happened largely outside the diocese, but since entering seminary, the diocese has played a much bigger role. I am grateful for the wonderful people I have met throughout the diocese, working in hospitals, schools, parishes, youth programs, CCO, Face to Face, and many other places. The lesson I learned at the youth prison appears again and again. Bringing Jesus to people and finding Jesus in people is the way I want to spend my life.

Halfway through my seminary years I came to a wise old monk very frustrated. I had been working and praying for years, trying to grow into a good priest, but I realized that I didn't even know what I wanted to grow into. What does it mean to be a priest?

The monk sat back, closed his eyes, and gave me an answer: "**To be a priest is to sacrifice yourself, in union with Christ, for the salvation of souls. I try to do that. When I do, I find that sacrifice is never just sacrifice. Christ's sacrifice moved to Easter, and any sacrifice I make with Christ moves to its own resurrection. That is to say, I always get back far more than I give.**"

Looking ahead now to my priestly ordination what I'm most looking forward to is watching people encounter God. This might happen through the Mass, the sacrament of reconciliation, or other prayers and conversation.

However it happens, helping the people loved by God know the God who loves them is an experience worth giving my life for.

## Two seminarians to be ordained deacons: taking a step on the journey to priesthood



**Gregory Roth**  
Ordination to  
transitional Diaconate:  
**Friday, May 20**  
St. Theresa, Rosetown

Bishop Don Bolen will ordain two seminarians as deacons this May, in celebrations at the parishes where they served their internship year in 2009-10.

**Hoang Nguyen** will be ordained to the transitional diaconate Thursday, May 19, 2011 at Holy Family parish in Saskatoon. The next day, Friday, May 20, 2011 **Gregory Roth** will be ordained a transitional deacon at St. Therese parish in Rosetown. Both celebrations begin at 7 p.m. All are welcome.

This is another step in the process of preparing for ordination as a priest. In the fall, the two new deacons will engage in another year of study and discernment. It is anticipated that the two men might then be ordained to the priesthood in 2012.



**Hoang Nguyen**  
Ordination to  
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