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# SEMINARIAN PROFILE

I began discerning my call to the priesthood on June 17th, 2006 at around 6:00 in the evening. It was the Vigil of Corpus Christi. Yes, I still remember even the day and hour. I have constantly replayed that event in my memory ever since. Here's the how my story began...

My father and I had always been very close. We truly were best friends. Had I gotten married in his lifetime, he would have been the best man. However, on June 8th, 2004, our Lord called my dad home. From that moment until the present day, I continue to be grateful to God for everything I learned from him, as well as every minute we spent together.

Two years later, in 2006, a priest at my parish, Fr. Michael Davis, announced a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was to take place from June 6th through the 15th. My first thought upon hearing these dates was that they encompassed the anniversary of my father's passing. I had to go on this pilgrimage! I had to be on holy ground on June 8th. My brother Luis and I signed up for the trip.

Upon returning, I attended a Saturday Vigil Mass, after which I greeted Fr. Davis as usual. This time, as I shook his hand, he pulled me in close and uttered three words that would change my life: "Consider the priesthood." My



Elkin and his fellow firefighters, suited for duty.



Elkin and his mother during a visit to Rome.



Elkin and his father, on the day Elkin obtained his pilot's license.

first thought was: "No wonder I haven't gotten married yet!" I rushed home, jumped on Google and began researching what it meant to be called to the priesthood. I needed to know what to expect as well as what I should do in order to discern the call, if that was in fact what I was sensing.

A rush of excitement accompanied the possibility of being called to the priesthood. I felt honored that Fr. Davis would consider me worthy of pursuing such a vocation. But was this real or fantasy? Much prayer ensued. I met with Fr. Davis regularly for spiritual direction. He helped guide me in deciphering my thoughts, fears and doubts. This was no easy task for him, because I had many doubts and endless questions.

I imagined how much my life would change, should I leave everything behind to enter the seminary. A lot was at stake for me. I was not a fresh young high school or college graduate. I already had a career in which I was very happy and I certainly was not looking to change. I was a fire lieutenant and paramedic for Miami-Dade County Fire Rescue. It was an occupation I loved and the reward of saving lives was worth more than any paycheck. I had recently purchased a home located just a block from both my mother and my brother, and also had a wonderful girlfriend at the time. Life was great! The thought of changing all of this was terrifying.

There were days in which I imagined myself as a priest celebrating Mass, preaching, elevating the host and chalice, and hearing confessions. Those thoughts were as beautiful as they were overwhelming. There were also days when I completely rejected those thoughts, instead embracing the notion of finishing my career and retiring as planned. This went on and on until I consulted with a priest who told me that the only way to know for sure was to enter the seminary. I met with our vocational director and decided to apply. A part of me hoped that I would *not* be accepted; this way, my conscience would be clear and I could get on with the life I had planned.

As it happens, I got accepted, and to my surprise, I was as joyful as could be upon hearing the news! After twenty-one years of service with the fire department, I retired early and am currently in my third year of theological studies, awaiting my diaconate ordination on April 14th, 2018. Doing my best to fulfill God's will has brought with it a joy that I didn't know existed. When asked how I'm doing, I simply reply that I couldn't be happier.

