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HEEDING GOD'S CALL *to the Priesthood*

ORDINATION SET FOR JUNE 24 • STIRRING NEW VOCATIONS • EUCHARISTIC PROCESSIONS UNDERWAY

SERVING THE COUNTIES OF HARTFORD, NEW HAVEN AND LITCHFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Sean Patrick Yates, left, and Andrés Felipe Galeano, right. In the center is Auxiliary Bishop Juan Miguel Betancourt.



Heeding GOD'S CALL

After years of preparation and prayer, two men will be ordained as priests in June.

Story by **SHELLEY WOLF** | Photos by **AARON JOSEPH**

After years of discernment, study and formation, two men are readying themselves to say their final “yes” to God to become laborers in his vineyard. On **June 24** at 11 a.m. at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford, Deacons Andrés Felipe Galeano and Sean Patrick Yates will be ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Hartford.

Galeano, who grew up in Manchester, is a parishioner of North American Martyrs Parish in East Hartford, where he and his family attended the Spanish Mass at St. Rose Church.

On the day of his ordination to the priesthood, Galeano will be vested with the stole and chasuble, symbolic of the office of the priesthood, by mentor Father René Pulgarin, a parish priest from the Diocese of Trenton, N.J., who he met during his first years in seminary. “He’s shown me what it really means to be a good shepherd,” Galeano says.

Yates, who was raised in South Windsor, belongs to St. Junipero Serra Parish, where he attended St. Margaret Mary Church. He will be vested by Father Michael Dolan, his former parish priest, who is now pastor of St. Thomas & St. Timothy Parish in West Hartford and president of Northwest Catholic High School. “You can see the joy in his face every day, and especially at Mass,” Yates says.

Both Galeano and Yates share their faith journey to this point, their anticipation of ordination to the priesthood and their hopes for the future. Their responses to questions asked by the *Catholic Transcript* are published on the next two pages.



ANDRÉS FELIPE GALEANO: *Moved by the Catholic Community*

Q How did your upbringing affect your faith?

Coming from Colombia, a predominantly Catholic country, faith was always very present in my family and within my culture. My parents really instilled the faith in us.

The Christmas novena is a tradition in Colombia. Every night, nine days before Christmas, we gathered as a family to read Scripture, say prayers, sing some songs and have a meal as family and friends. Lent, especially Holy Week, was a somber time in the Galeano household. No music. Holy Week was reading Scripture and praying together as a family.

Q When did you first recognize the presence of God in your life?

I was attending church during high school, but not consistently. I never took my faith seriously until I did my Eagle Scout project at my home parish. I refurbished the church hall at St. Rose of Lima Church in East Hartford. We painted the walls, cleaned up the floors. I built two bookshelves for CCD. I received a lot of help, not only from the Scouts but from parishioners as well.

It was through my Eagle Scout project that I was able to see the communal aspect of the church, and I saw it as a big family and a loving family that I wasn't really a part of because I wasn't involved in any group or in ministry. And that really struck a chord in my heart. When I finished my project, I went upstairs in the church and had some alone time with Jesus. I made a promise that I would take my faith more seriously.



Q When did you decide to discern a call to the priesthood, and why?

In growing my relationship with Jesus, I started getting more involved in youth group and social justice ministry, and then I found myself going to Bible study and helping out with Masses. It just kind of grew organically. People started asking me if I wanted to be a priest, and I began to think about it, began to pray about it and to find out a little more about it.

I started attending discernment nights at St. Thomas Seminary (the Pastoral Center in Bloomfield). Hearing the vocation stories and ministerial stories from different priests confirmed the interest that I had in the priesthood. I finally came to the decision, "OK, maybe this is what God is calling me to do."

Q Now that ordination is around the corner, what are you looking forward to as a priest?

A lot of things. Having the opportunity to be with the people during their times of tribulation as well as their times of joy. Being able to help people grow in their relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, and to see that unfold. Being able to pour out God's mercy in the confessional. And having the awesome and beautiful gift of being able to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, with and for the people.

Q Looking back, what has surprised you the most about your journey to the priesthood?

Just being awestruck by God's guiding hand at every moment in these eight years. I never expected to go to Philadelphia or Detroit. I didn't know what to expect at these two different seminaries, at my parish assignments and from the different people I've met. But God is always guiding me. I never cease to be amazed at his work and his grace in my life. I'm just always reminded that I have to be open to his love and his grace and allow him to be the one that guides me on the right path.

Q What advice can you give others who are thinking about discerning a call?

Don't be afraid to say "yes" to what God might be calling you to be. When I was first thinking about it, I talked to a deacon and asked, "What if this isn't for me, and I just lose a whole bunch of time?" He said, "Formation in seminary will make you a good Catholic father, whether that's as a priest or as a father of a Catholic family." If the call is on your heart, it shouldn't be pushed aside. It should be brought into prayer or to a priest or cleric to help you to discern.