

John Martin

My name is John Martin, I am 53 years old and I was born in Dublin, Ireland. Both my parents are Dubliners. My father died in 1981 and my mother lives in Aspley, Nottingham. I have two brothers and five sisters. We were all born in Ireland except my youngest brother Paul who was born in the City Hospital, Nottingham. My family arrived in Nottingham in 1968 when I was nine years old. I went to Saint Mary's Junior School, on Derby Road, by the Cathedral and from there I went to Bishop Dunn, Secondary School, in Aspley. While at school I felt God was calling me to religious life. That's a story for another time.

On leaving school I went to work in an exotic fruit and vegetable store in Smithy Row, in Nottingham's city centre for about six months and after getting the offer to train as a chef with the Sisters of Nazareth, I took this and spent the next three years doing my City and Guilds. During the three years of my training I once again felt God calling me to be a religious Brother and in September 1978 and I entered the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God, to become a Brother of Saint John of God. Both my religious and professional studies took about nine years to complete. During that time I took some time out as my father was dying and being the eldest son I felt I had to support my mother.

After my return to the Order, I made both my Simple and Solemn Profession following my studies in scripture, moral theology, liturgy and ecclesiology and my Hospitaller studies. I then went on to gain my degree and diploma in social work and the social sciences. As well as doing various other studies in management and counselling, I held a number of responsibilities in leadership within the Order: prior, pastoral care, regional manager, provincial councillor, chief executive, trustee and provincial. As provincial, I had the overall responsibility of 1,200 staff and 28 Brothers and a budget of £21K. My focus was to keep the vision and charism of Saint John of God and the Catholic ethos alive within our services.

For 24 years I have felt the call to priesthood and I have at various times tried to answer the call of God. However, there were times when I felt may be God is not calling me to priesthood. I wrestled with what I thought God was asking and at the same time trying to be true to my call as a religious Brother. When I finished my 12 years as Provincial I was allowed to take a sabbatical and take some rest and some spiritual input. As I was preparing to return to the province to take up a new ministry I was reflecting on what that new ministry could be when the question of priesthood came up yet again. It was at this point I thought I am free to discern God's will and see where he is asking me to go. I spent sometime with my new provincial to look at ways I could remain a Brother of Saint John of God and still be a priest. But it was not to be, the provincial felt the Order had enough Brother priests and I was told if you want priesthood you must leave the Order to study for the priesthood and here I am now studying for the priesthood for my home diocese of Nottingham.

I have just completed my first year at Saint Mary's Seminary in Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands. There are 55 students training for the priesthood. I am about to

go on my first placement and you lucky parishioners along with Father Paul Newman will be my first teachers in helping me to understand and get to know about life in a parish. My only experience of life in a parish was as a child. I have lived in a religious community, and religious community chapels are very different to parish churches! I am looking forward with great excitement to coming to Saint Albans and Oakwood. I ask you all to pray for me as I will pray for you, that together we will build up the kingdom of God.

Stay blessed until we meet!

John Martin
Seminararian for the Diocese of Nottingham