



## **BIOGRAPHY FOR OUR SUMMER SEMINARIAN--ALEX SMITH**

I started discerning the priesthood during my senior year in high school in Beebe. I was very active at my parish youth group and played sports in high school. I had the mindset of wanting to run track in college. I wanted to be a collegiate athlete. But I kept feeling Christ was calling me to play for a “bigger” team.

My mom and dad, Gilda and Jessie Elizondo, have been the biggest advocates in my priestly discernment. My parents, being cradle Catholics, encouraged my siblings and me to see our faith as our own. We would travel to St. Jude the Apostle in Jacksonville every week for religious education, youth ministry and Mass regardless of living in another town.

Growing up, I experienced the call of the priesthood by the examples of Father Les Farley. Then, in high school, through helping at my parish with the diocesan youth ministry, and talking to my pastor, Father Andrew Smith, about the priesthood, I felt the call. I felt the Lord encouraging me to be the hands and feet of Christ for other people. As a result, I answered the Lord’s call to discern.

I started my studies in philosophy at Holy Trinity Seminary in Dallas and completed my degree in philosophy through St. Gregory’s University in Shawnee, Oklahoma in 2017. Now, I am finishing my studies in theology at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio, Texas. By the grace of God, I anticipate my ordination to diaconate in August 11, 2020. As well as, I will be anticipating my ordination to priesthood in 2021.

My time in seminary has helped me appreciate the necessity of being multicultural. My studies have helped me to serve every person God presents to me. In formation, I have come to appreciate my Filipino roots, the joys of serving our Hispanic brothers and sisters, and recognizing the efforts it takes to build our Catholic faith at home.

I am blessed with the advantage of being able to interact with my fellow seminarians, both away from and near the diocese. The fraternity of all my seminarian brothers helped me realize how very grateful I am for the unity we have together as a family. Truly I say we are more than a fraternity of brothers, we are a family of brothers. We help each other with schoolwork, life and assist each other in becoming multicultural, which is necessary for evangelization and bringing forth love to all people in our diocese.

From north to south and east to west, I am very grateful to all the families of the diocese that have supported me and prayed for my discernment. I am thankful to the Knights of Columbus and their wives, the Serra Club, my home parish, the youth, the Catholic schools and so many other Catholic families that believe and provide generously to my vocation.

Those days when school can be grueling, I recall the great people of this diocese reassuring me, and it keeps me motivated to stay “all in.” I am thankful for the incredible journey and support from this diocese. It has been a beautiful journey, and I would not have it any other way. There is certainly a lot of work to be done, and I am grateful and joyful to be able to serve with the wonderful Catholics and the brother seminarians of this great diocese.