



The Director of the Formation Department for the Diocese of Lansing Father John Linden

Father John Linden is the director of the Diocese of Lansing's Formation department since 2010. He succeeds Father Jerry Vincke, who is serving as pastor at Holy Family Parishes in Grand Blanc. *FAITH* sat down with Father John to find out more about him and about his work.

Father John was born in Tecumseh in 1966. His family moved to Onsted and grew up there and graduated from Onsted High School. He attended Ferris State University, Jackson Community College, Holy Apostles in Cromwell, Conn. and Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit. As a seminarian, he was an intern at St. John Parish, Davison, and as a deacon, he served at St. Patrick Parish, Brighton. Since his ordination in 2007, he served as parochial vicar of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Ann Arbor.

What is the most encouraging or hopeful thing about vocations today? I am so impressed and encouraged by the faith that so many of the young men have in Christ's love for them – and by their desire to convince others of his love. We have a lot of young men who are, primarily, so very humble, which is a very important characteristic in a priest. Humility gives the Lord room to work – like everything, it can be used for growth.

What are your biggest challenges as the director of the formation department? I hope to make sure that the fear of my own weaknesses and inadequacies doesn't get in the way of the Lord's work. I realize how important it is for me to continue my own growth in believing that this is predominantly his work, not mine. As I think about how vital it is to keep in mind that I am

doing Christ's work and not my own, I think of Bishop Mengeling's Episcopal motto, "He must increase." That keeps me focused on the real reason for everything I do.

Another challenge for anyone who works in vocations is to help convince men that Christ may be calling them to the priesthood. Often, these men hesitate because they think they won't be happy, or there is too much to give up, or they are just not worthy. I can tell them honestly that I

have gained much more than I've given up – even though it's not always easy, the rewards are great. And I also assure them that they only need to bring who they are to this process of discernment – Christ will supply the rest.

What is your primary goal? I hope to form men who have Christ's heart, who look on their flock with a shepherd's care, patience, perseverance, firmness, gentleness and love.

What about those called to lay ministry, the diaconate or religious life? I hope to lead all who God is calling to work in ministry within the church, whatever their particular vocation, to be fearless, not disheartened. We believe Christ is present in all of us – we need to allow Christ to flourish in our lives – to give him permission. ☪

>> If you are interested in talking with Father John about a vocation, please contact him at jlinden@dioceseoflansing.org or call 517.342.2507.

Photography by Tom Gennara