Brian McCaffrey is in his third year of priestly formation at Saint Meinrad Seminary in southern Indiana. He hopes to be ordained deacon this spring and a priest the following year. Here Brian shares some thoughts about his vocation story and his hopes for his future ministry in the Diocese of Salina.

Growing up, the thought of becoming a priest was the furthest thing from my mind. In high school, I was active in my parish, St. Thomas More (Manhattan, KS), and I participated in youth groups and conferences, but if you had asked me then if I was going to be a priest, my answer would have been, “No way!”

In 2008, I had the privilege of attending a summer youth program sponsored by our diocese called Prayer and Action. As an integral part of this program, we did mission work here in the Diocese. We painted houses, did yard work, and helped people meet their basic needs—all in the context of prayer, worship, and reflection on the Word of God. This experience had a profound effect on me. It showed me that my faith is so much more than simply going to church on Sunday. It’s a way of life!

I still wasn’t ready to consider a call to priestly ministry. I wanted to be a history teacher. So, I spent five years studying Social Studies at the University of Kansas while continuing to be involved with the Church through the Catholic Campus Center, the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) and other faith-based activities. During this time, I began to consider the possibility of becoming a priest, and I prayed for God’s guidance in this confusing discernment process.

I was really blessed to have strong encouragement and support from my family and friends and from the young priests and seminarians I met who were full of life and enthusiasm! With their help, and by God’s grace, I made the decision to set aside my plans to be a history teacher and actively pursue a very different vocation.

Five wonderful, sometimes challenging years later, I am about to be ordained a deacon. It hardly seems possible!

My years at Saint Meinrad Seminary have taught me many things—personally, intellectually, and spiritually. They have helped me grow in my ability to be available to others, to allow God to work in my
life, and to help me carry out His will. I started out more self-centered, thinking that I needed to know everything. Now, I hope that I have learned to accept what I don’t know and to let God surprise me.

This past summer I served as a hospital chaplain in Kansas City. That amazing experience taught me to trust in the Holy Spirit and to let God work through me and make me more available to His people.

Once I’m ordained and begin my priestly ministry in the Diocese, I will go wherever my bishop sends me and do whatever is needed. But I know that I’ll find ways of incorporating my original vocation—teaching—into my work as a priest. Through homilies, parish workshops, and perhaps even some formal teaching in schools, I want to share with others what I have learned and experienced: There’s more to our faith than what we do on Sunday. All of us are called to live our faith fully through prayer, worship, and action. When we do, the results are amazing!

To meet the seminary costs of our future priests, $400,000 (or 25% of the $1.6 million goal for Bishop’s Annual Appeal) is required. Costs associated with study, faith formation, and living are not unlike the costs associated with sending a child to college.