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**Catholic Extension shares how the pandemic is impacting the seminarian class of 2020 as students are sent home, facing uncertainties for their ordinations**

CHICAGO (April 17, 2020) – Across the country seminaries have been disbanded. Many seminarians have returned home. Some students have no home to return to and have struggled to find a location to shelter-in-place during this time of social distancing. Many continue their studies with online courses, hoping to finish out this very surreal academic semester.

Perhaps the greatest cloud of uncertainty surrounds those set to graduate and be ordained priests in 2020. For years they have studied and looked forward to this culminating moment of ordination, planning to celebrate with friends, family, and faith communities in their home dioceses. For this class, however, things might be very different than what they had dreamt of all these years.

[Catholic Extension](http://www.catholicextension.org/) has helped poor dioceses support the education of nearly 500 seminarians across the country by contributing more than $12M in the past five years alone. There are approximately 100 ordinations scheduled to occur this year in the 87 dioceses supported by Catholic Extension. Vice President of Mission Joe Boland recently checked in with vocation directors and those set to be ordained this year. His conversations reveal how this might truly be a year to remember for this year’s “ordinandi,” who typically receive the sacrament in the spring or summer months.

The Diocese of Yakima (Wash.), is supported by Catholic Extension and has been very successful in recruiting seminarians and ordaining a high number of men relative to their population. Vocations director, Fr. Felipe Pulido, said, “I have spoken with a few of the men regarding the online courses and they would much rather be in an actual class. This is especially true for those set to graduate this year, who typically relish these last weeks of fraternity with their classmates.”

The Diocese of Yakima will not postpone their two ordinations this May, which includes Edgar Quiorga as a priest, and Michael Kelly to the transitional diaconate. Nonetheless, Pulido explained, this will not be a normal ceremony.

“Ordinations will comply with the regulations that are in place (social distancing, and groups less than 10 gathered).” He added, “Both ordinations will include the immediate family of the seminarian playing a role in Mass and both will be live-streamed.”

In the small Diocese of Juneau, Alaska, which has had few ordinations in recent years, church leaders are trying to decide how to proceed with the ordination they were joyfully anticipating this year.

The lone 2020 candidate for priestly ordination, Deacon James Wallace, is at home with his family in Los Angeles, far from Alaska, as he finishes up his semester online.

Fr. Michael Galbrath, the diocesan vocation director of Juneau said, “At this point everything is on hold for him and his presbyterial ordination. We will have to see how the State of Alaska does in opening things up before we can make a final decision on the date of his ordination. We originally had it planned for June 19, but we will leave that up to the bishop to decide if we postpone or go ahead with this date.”

He added, “I would like to thank Catholic Extension for all the help it has provided for all seminarians, especially with James Wallace. Because we are a mission diocese, it would be difficult to support our seminarians without all of the help and support that Catholic Extension provides.”

Things are similarly fluid in the Diocese of Gaylord, Mich., where there are two ordinations slated for June 20, one to the priesthood and one to the transitional diaconate. Vocations director, Fr. Ben Rexroat, acknowledges, “Obviously things are subject to change.”

He is especially hoping to keep their original ordination date, because their bishop, John Raica, will be installed on June 23 in his new assignment in the Diocese of Birmingham.

Elsewhere in the diocese, seminarians are living in pairs in various rectories to maintain some semblance of fraternity as they take online courses.

As Catholic Extension continues to support seminarians throughout the U.S., it invites those interested in contributing to their education as an act of solidarity in this difficult time, to do so by visiting catholicextension.org.

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**About Catholic Extension:**Founded in 1905, Catholic Extension works in solidarity with people in America’s poorest regions to build up vibrant and transformative Catholic faith communities. For more information visit [www.catholicextension.org](http://www.catholicextension.org/); follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/catholicextension](http://www.facebook.com/catholicextension) or on twitter at [@CathExtension](http://www.twitter.com/cathextension).