

My name is Matt Pajor and I'm a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Chicago. I was born in Chicago to two Polish immigrant parents. That means that we went to church every Sunday and all the days in between.

My Catholic faith was nurtured at Misja Milosierdzia Bozego in Lombard, IL. It was there that I grew as a Catholic, but also as a Polish person. Even though English was my primary language, religion for me was in Polish. To this day, I feel more comfortable praying in Polish. In some ways, this has to do with traditions that I learned growing up.

These traditions taught me a lot about the Polish culture, but also about my faith. What I learned from these beautiful Polish traditions and the joy Polish people have in their faith drew me toward the idea of becoming a priest.

As of last August, I have been officially studying toward the priesthood. The decision to pursue this course in my life is rooted in my upbringing—in my culture. In Polish culture, most, if not all, holidays have a religious component to them. So growing up, I equated religion with having fun. On Sundays and Holy Days, my parents would have the day off and we would do something at home or outside. I associated church with joy and happiness that come with holidays.

To this day, I get feelings of childhood nostalgia when I go to church. I am reminded of the joy people have after leaving church. Even as a little child, I could see how Catholics became better and holier people the more they got involved in the life of their parish.

That is part of reason why I am considering the priesthood. I want others to be able to experience the joy I had growing up in a Catholic Polish community. I want to share the wealth and beauty of Polish traditions with as many people as I can. The joy of faith was brought to me through Polish traditions—I want to bring that same joy to others.