

## **Nov 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Serra Club Meeting**

Deacon Andrew W. Clark is a member of a big Catholic family. Of his 37 first cousins, nearly all of them practice the faith. All his uncles and aunts are Catholic, including his uncle Father Stephen F. McGraw, a diocesan priest serving in the diocesan mission in Bánica, Dominican Republic. “The faith is so vibrantly alive in my family; it’s just really such a gift,” he said. The example of his family, especially his parents, helped Deacon Clark discern a calling to the priesthood.

Deacon Clark was born Sept. 23, 1990, in Fairfax, the second of Daniel and Laura Clark’s eight children. He grew up in Front Royal, attending St. John the Baptist Church, and was homeschooled from kindergarten through 12th grade. He graduated from Christendom College in Front Royal in 2014. After working for a home inspection company, he entered St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Wynnewood, Pa., in 2017.

His father’s prayer life made a lasting impression on Deacon Clark. “For as long as I can remember, my dad has had a very deep personal relationship with Christ,” he said. “Watching my dad pray at Mass, watching my dad pray the rosary, watching him pray with the psalms — the faith was always a very masculine thing to me. The example I was seeing and the example my mom was pointing all the kids toward was my dad.”

His mother encouraged him to pray about his vocation. “My mom was always big on all of us praying three Hail Marys every day asking God to reveal to us what he wanted us to do with our life,” he said. One day when he was 16, he went into church to pray his three Hail Marys. “Pretty much — boom — a deep desire to be a priest welled up inside of me,” he said. After several years, he acted on that calling and entered seminary.

Once he’s a priest, Deacon Clark looks forward to celebrating Mass. He especially looks forward to being the celebrant at the weddings of his cousin and a college friend. “Being so close to the altar has given me a greater and greater desire to be the one who offers the sacrifice,” he said.

Though he sees the many challenges in the world, he’s grateful God has chosen him and everyone on earth to be a light in this current darkness. “God is calling me to be a priest in this time, in this place, in these circumstances,” he said. “We have confidence and trust in God, but that’s kind of a vote of confidence and trust on his part, which is encouraging.”