

their concern, some warned us and a few admonished us for not ‘turning Michael off,’ as most priests in the long term ‘end up lonely and unhappy,’ ‘turn to drink’ and ‘ultimately regret choosing a life of celibacy’.”

**Paul:** “While these issues may well become a reality for some individuals, we thought their objections were very negative as we had had some close associations with inspirational priests over the years“

**How do we feel about Michael’s vocation now?**

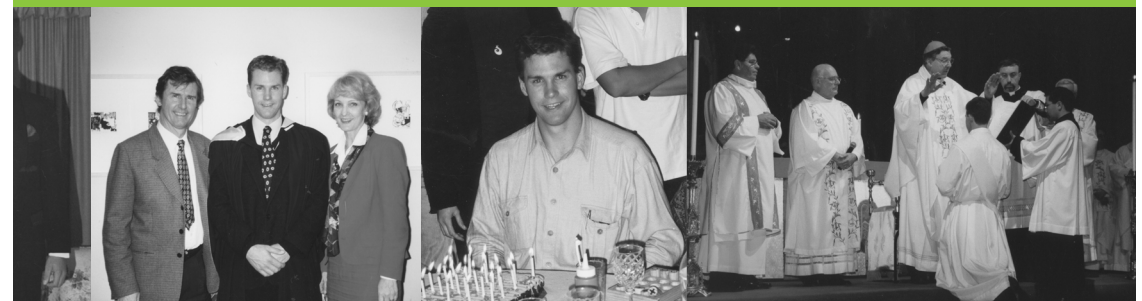
**“Apart from the admiration we feel for the great work he is doing, we know he has found great personal fulfilment. He is well grounded, especially by his brothers and sisters who remain very close.”**

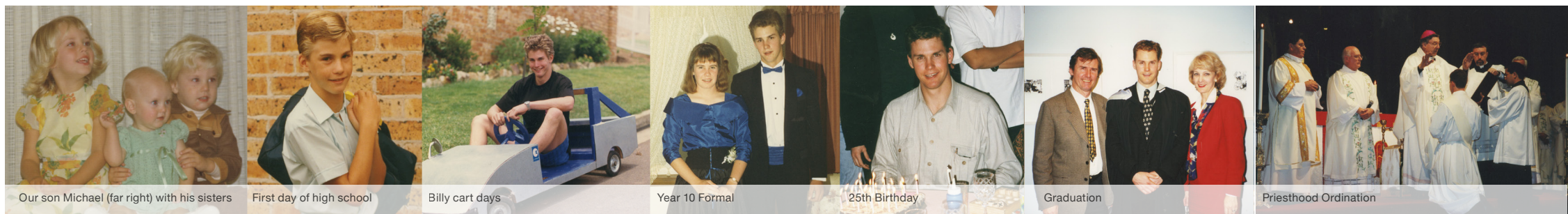
Michael understands the importance of maintaining close ties, playing sports and having ‘time out’ (they taught him this in the seminary!) Sure, there are difficulties we all encounter in life, but fundamentally he runs on ‘love’. Love for God and His Church and gets it back threefold!

God bless,  
Paul and Christine de Stoop

Vocation Centre  
Archdiocese of Sydney  
Level 11, 133 Liverpool St,  
Sydney NSW 2000  
P: 02 9390 5287  
E: [vocations@sydneycatholic.org](mailto:vocations@sydneycatholic.org)  
[www.vocationcentre.org.au](http://www.vocationcentre.org.au)

# A Letter to Parents From the Parents of a Priest





## Dear Parents,

We are Paul and Christine de Stoop. We were asked to share with you our experience of what went through our minds and hearts when our son, Michael, told us he wanted to become a priest.

### How did we feel when Michael made his desires known?

**Christine:** “Here was a young man in his early twenties, stepping out and working hard, but he still had a lot to learn about life, people and the world in general. We feared a certain kind of vulnerability because although he was a strong, manly fellow he was also guileless, sensitive and soft-natured. We were concerned too, that he hadn’t even finished his studies at university.”

**Paul:** “Surely, for his own security, we felt he should finish these before he even considers such a radical step as the Priesthood!”

**Christine:** “Could it have been just a brush with idealism? How could he make such a life changing decision when he was so young?”

**Paul:** “Did he really understand the sacrifices to be made, the commitment necessary, the pressures he would endure?”

**Christine:** “We wanted to be assured that he was being objective, realistic and not ‘caught up’ with some ‘outside’ influence. Even if we were convinced he was thinking clearly, should we, on account of his age, try to hold him back? His future happiness was all important and so, we were open to what Michael was thinking and feeling. As Catholics, we know that human fulfilment has a deep spiritual dimension that is integral to life and we understood his yearning.

**Paul:** “We were not surprised in one way that he expressed his ‘calling’ because he was prayerful and thought deeply about things. Nevertheless, it seemed to come ‘out

of left field.’ We discovered that he had been agonising over his decision for some time and we found consolation that over this searching period he appeared to have reached a solid ground of clear direction and determination. He was certain that this was what he wanted.

**“On the one hand, we felt elated and humbled that our son had such noble aspirations, but on the other, we still wanted to be certain that this was best for him.”**

**Christine:** “We discovered that those who apply to enter the seminary do not enter straight away. He would be put through all kinds of tests and assessments. This relieved any pressure we might have felt and put us at ease. It was a testing time for Michael – he needed our support and prayers.”

**Paul:** “Unlike marriage, when a son wants to commit himself to the Priesthood he has 7 to 8 years to think about it and even do ‘work experience’! We knew Michael didn’t have to ‘dive in the deep end’ and would be given every opportunity to re-examine his motives and commitment. Some did indeed leave the seminary during his time, while others grew in their conviction.”

**Christine:** “Our family enjoyed lots of contact and milestones along the way and these days we often see Michael on his days off and during other breaks.”

### What did our friends say when they heard our son was studying for the Priesthood?

**Christine:** “I was rather ‘taken aback’ by some of the reactions we encountered. ‘Are you happy about this?’ was the most common response. Others openly expressed