

Young woman stitches together faith and fashion to create timeless liturgical garments

'Her love for the priesthood is just another thread in the fabric of her devotion to God'

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WARWICK — From her home studio in Warwick, Emily Boni, is combining a love of faith and fashion through her creation of intricate and beautiful vestments for Catholic priests.

A skilled sacred seamstress, Boni is led by her love and respect of vocations and a bond with her brothers in Christ, to create garments for the most important days in a priest's life: ordination, first Masses and those many divine moments at the altar to come.

"A seminarian at my parish knew I loved to sew and when he came back from Rome for his diaconate year, he said, 'I want you to make my first vestments.' It was really intimidating because of the faith he had in me to create a vestment collection. But with God's grace I was able to do it."

She graduated in 2018 from Casenovia College with a major in fashion design and minor in business. Boni — who is dedicated, devout and delightful — relies on patience, prayer and a little humor in her work.

"It takes coffee and Jesus," she laughed. "It's a beautiful gift to be able to do this. I knew that once I made that vestment it was surreal. It made me realize this is what I was created for — this is what I want to do. And there is no greater feeling that you are using the gift God gave you and giving it right back to his shepherds. Seeing them walk down the aisle brings tears to my eyes. It is so beautiful."

After completing those first vestments, word got around and the next year she was asked again. She has since made 13 collections and is working on completing her 14th. Boni has an entire 3" binder of sample fabrics and possible vestment ideas and is a "frequent flyer" of a fabric company in New York City who specializes in liturgical fabric shipped straight from Italy.

"It's a lot like picking out a wedding dress — they have a say. It's really nice for them to have the opportunity. One of my favorite parts is customizing the vestments for them."

Lining, trims, cross designs, Boni can make the religious apparel as specific as possible de-



pending on what is in stock.

"I encourage them to go on their website, see what they like and then we put it all together. Priests and seminarians are such a blessing to work with — they're not definitely 'bridezillas.' They have their own tastes but at the end of the day they're so grateful. It's so, so special for me. They are so grateful."

Boni has always been incredibly involved in the church through CYO and through her parish of Saint Joseph in Woonsocket. Today, she volunteers as parish seamstress, serves on the financial council, and helps to run the parish bazaar. She is also a member of the ocean state chapter of the Serra Club which supports vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the Diocese of Providence.

"Making the vestments for them is beautiful. You get to be a small part of a Mass that nobody really knows about. A lot of them have become good friends of mine."

Boni worked with Father Nick Fleming, now pastor of SS. John and James and St. Mary Mission, West Warwick, on her first assignment, to make the vestments he wore for his first Mass as a priest: A full set of vestments; green chasuble, stole, maniple, veil, and burse.

"She was nervous at first, but I

had no doubts in her ability," said Father Fleming. "She was great to work with. It was clear from the start that Emily uses her talents to glorify God and it shows in her craft. Her love for the priesthood is just another thread in the fabric of her devotion to God and her desire to serve him. I look forward to seeing how God will use Emily and her talents in the future to continue this great service for the Church."

Boni also prepared a chasuble, stole and cope that Father Francis McCarty's family gifted him for his ordination. He wore the stole and chasuble for his first Mass of Thanksgiving at Saint Anselm Abbey in Manchester in September 2022, where he now serves as campus minister.

"Working with Emily on this project was a joy," said Father McCarty. "She is very precise and good at what she does. She is definitely a 'measure twice, cut once' type of person. It was especially edifying because she knew what she was creating and more importantly what it would be used for. Because of that, the whole process was also a prayerful one. I am very quick to recommend Emily to fellow priests because of the prayerful and meticulous work she does. I hope this is something she is able to do more and for years to come."

The entire process of designing



Photos: Laura Kilgus; Father Francis McCarty/Dachowski Photography

'HOLY SPIRIT DO YOUR THING': Emily Boni, a parishioner of St. Joseph Church in Woonsocket, is a seamstress using her skills for good by working with priests to design beautiful vestments for their ordination day, first Masses and other Holy Masses at the altar. Boni is also working toward the opening of her new Catholic business venture designing clothing (and more) with inspired messages. Above, vestments designed and prepared for Father Francis McCarty, O.S.B., campus minister at St. Anselm University. **Visit and follow Emmy B. Catholic, LLC** on Facebook and Instagram for updates and official store launch.

and creating the vestments is a lengthy one, but so worth it, Boni explains. Some projects are basic and can be an average of 20-25 hours, but a large 10-piece collection could take 108 hours.

"I try to say a quick prayer before I start working: 'Holy spirit do your thing.' It takes a lot of patience — I'm learning spirituality — more patience. I just try to do everything piece by piece. Vestments are no joke, they are very heavy, and require a lot of fabric. There are seven machines that I work from. I also invested in an embroidery machine. It's really fun to look around and see how I can organize, work efficiently and be creative."

While also employed full-time at a manufacturing company in Cranston, and impressively juggling her parish responsibilities, Boni is working toward launching her own online Catholic shop with affordable and modest products authentic to the faith.

"To be a Rhode Island business owner: That was my goal from day one. I want to own my own shop that sells items for weddings, baptisms, First Communion, evangelization-wear, prints, stickers, t-shirts, sweatshirts and more. It's such a niche market and you don't really have a lot of inexpensive options."

Boni expressed her sincere gratitude for the support from her family, friends and community which, she says, has been overwhelming in the best way.

"Everyone has wanted to see this business shine and God is helping make a way for it. God provides, especially when he wants me to use it for his Church. That doesn't mean the spiritual attack doesn't sneak in: 'you're not enough,' 'why are doing this?' You have to just completely ignore it and ask God to give you the grace to get going and focus on his work. That's a beautiful affirmation."