

From the Seminarians of St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, Boynton Beach, FL

ISSUE XXVI | FALL 2021

# SEEDS OF HOPE



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL  
REGIONAL SEMINARY

## The Family: *A Seedbed of Hope and the First Seminary*

A Day in the Life of a Seminarian  
AVE O CRUX, SPES UNICA

Family as the First Seminary  
MEET THE GORDON FAMILY

What is Hope?  
ASK THE PHILOSOPHER

Hope Ever Before Us  
GOD IN THE LITTLE THINGS





## THE FAMILY: Seedbed of Hope

### editors' note

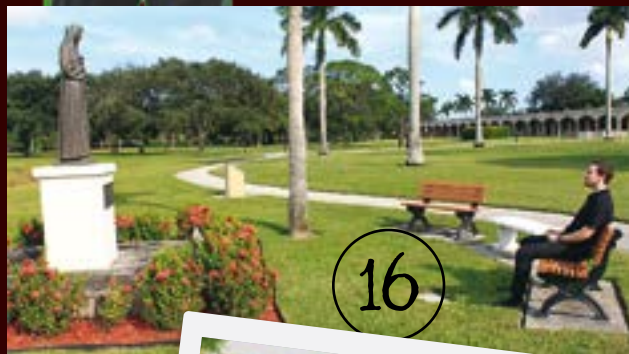
Welcome to the 26<sup>th</sup> issue of Seeds of Hope, a magazine providing a glimpse into the spiritual, intellectual, pastoral, and everyday life of our seminary community. As you begin your reading, we make special note of the cover page. The photograph is of the seminary's Holy Family statue, located in front of the campus administration building. We felt inspired to include it, first and foremost, because Pope Francis previously dedicated the year 2021 to the family. In addition, this issue also features an article on the family: a seedbed of hope and the first seminary.

We hope that you find joy in reading this edition which explores our many reasons for hope during this time of the Church. May the Holy Family intercede for us and increase within each of us faith, hope, and charity. We remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Jacob C. Gwynn, CHIEF EDITOR

Drew E. Navarro, MANAGING EDITOR



### Where are They Now?

14



# STAFF

## FR. ALFREDO I. HERNÁNDEZ

Diocese of Palm Beach, Rector/President

## FR. GREGG CAGGIANELLI

Diocese of Venice in Florida,  
Vice-Rector, Dean of Human Formation  
and Administrative Moderator

## MS. DEB LINDSAY

Director of Development and  
Public Relations

## MRS. CARMELA GRANDE

Assistant Director of Development and  
Public Relations

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## JACOB C. GWYNN

Diocese of Venice in Florida, Theology II

## MANAGING EDITOR

## DREW NAVARRO

Diocese of Raleigh, Theology I

## WRITERS

## ANDREW VITRANO-FARINATO

Archdiocese of Miami, Theology III

## GABRIEL NUGENT

Diocese of Raleigh, Pre-Theology II

## ADAM P. CAHILL

Archdiocese of Miami, Theology II

## WILLIAM D. GIBSON

Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee,  
Theology II

## ZIEMOWIT JANASZEK

Diocese of Savannah, Theology II

## JACOB BUTZ

Archdiocese of Atlanta, Theology I

## REV. MR. ZACKARY B. GRAY

Diocese of Orlando, Theology IV

## SAM GORDON

Diocese of Orlando, Pre-Theology I

## CHRISTOPHER E. HOLCOMB

Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee,  
Theology I

## PETER R. O'STEEN

Diocese of Charleston, Theology II

## BRYAN ROBERTS

Archdiocese of Atlanta, Pre-Theology II

## GRAPHIC DESIGNER

## JUDY JOHNSON

"Always  
be ready to  
give an  
explanation  
to anyone  
who asks  
you for a  
reason for  
your hope,  
but do  
it with  
gentleness  
and  
reverence."

I PETER 3:15-16

# CONTENTS

Issue XXV Spring 2021

## EDITORIAL

### MANY REASONS FOR HOPE / p. 4

Very Rev. Alfredo Hernández,  
Rector/President

### A YEAR IN THE PARISH: WITH GENTLENESS AND REVERENCE / p. 5

Andrew Vitrano-Farinato

### WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF / p. 6-7

Staff

### A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SEMINARIAN / p. 8-9

Dcn. David Portorreal,  
Matthew McCauley, Charles Bemis

### WHAT IS HOPE? ASK THE PHILOSOPHER / p. 10

Gabriel Nugent

### WHAT IS HOPE? ASK THE THEOLOGIAN / p. 11

Adam Cahill

### CONTEMPLATING AND ADORING GOD IN THE LITTLE THINGS / p. 12

William Gibson

### IN MEMORIAM: A LETTER OF THANKS TO FR. NICHOLAS CACHIA / p. 13

Ziemowit Janaszek

### Where are They Now? p. 14-15

### LIVING A SPIRITUALITY OF HOPE / p. 16

Jacob Butz

### GRIEF, HOPE, JOY: A SUMMER IN HOSPITAL MINISTRY / p. 17

Dcn. Zack Gray

### THE FAMILY: A SEEDBED OF HOPE AND THE FIRST SEMINARY / p. 18

Sam Gordon

### "BELLA" LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION, HOPE! / p. 20

Chris Holcomb

### DEVELOPMENT PAGE / p. 21

Development Team

### ASK A SEMINARIAN: TWENTY QUESTIONS, TWENTY ANSWERS / p. 22

Pete O'Steen

### ASK A SEMINARIAN: WHAT IS THE REASON FOR YOUR HOPE? / p. 23-24

### TO GIVE AN EXPLANATION OF THE REASON: EVANGELIZING / p. 25

Bryan Roberts

### EXAMPLE OF HOPE: BISHOP FELIPE J. ESTÉVEZ / p. 26-27

Staff







## RECTOR'S WELCOME:

# Many Reasons for Hope

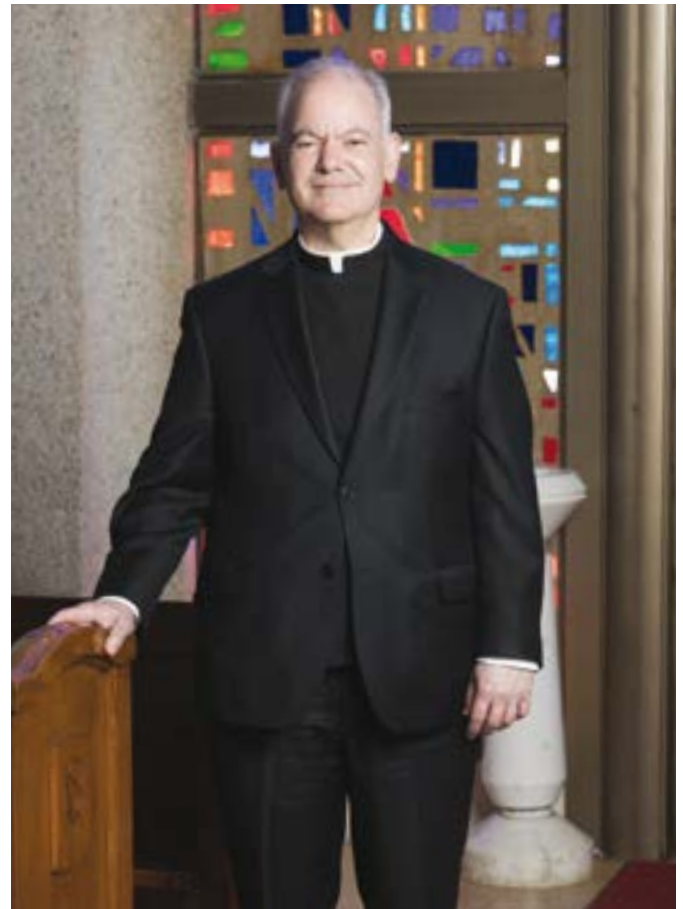
FALL 2021

## Dear Friends of SVDP,

The magazine you are reading bears the title, *Seeds of Hope*. We often remind ourselves here at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary that the People of God look to us, especially to the seminarians, as beacons of hope. This edition draws from our theme for the year, to discuss different ways in which we are called to offer hope to those who so much need it: “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15b–3:16a).

Flowing from this theme, you will find articles describing how hope is expressed, lived, and explained in different aspects of pastoral year internship and ministry. There will be pieces on the pastoral year, summer experiences, and day to day life, as well as some of the fruits of our seminarians’ philosophical and theological study. All will hinge in some way on our motto for the year. We have also brought back a feature that received many plaudits last fall, *Where are They Now?*, which features a number of our alumni celebrating significant anniversaries this year. We thank God for their truly *hopeful* ministry. There is nothing quite so edifying to hope as a well-lived example.

Along those very lines, we offer special honor in this edition to two men who have brought hope to many. Every day, we miss our former faculty member Fr. Nicholas Cachia, who passed away on July 28, 2021. The reflection by Ziemowit Janaszek (Theology II, Savannah) presents a beautiful picture of Fr. Cachia’s witness to hope in his earthly life. We also honor Bishop Felipe J. Estévez who, having served as Rector of SVDP from 1980–1986 and Dean of Spiritual Formation



from 2001–2003, is about to conclude his time as Bishop of St. Augustine. Bishop Estévez has continually reminded this seminary community through word and example of its charge to bring hope to the people of the southeastern United States.

Finally, let me thank all of you for your support of SVDP and our mission to form hope-filled and hope-giving priests, permanent deacons, and lay Catholic leaders. We were so glad to be able to celebrate Friends of the Seminary in person again and to welcome so many people we love to campus. It was especially good to honor two groups that have brought great hope to the Church of Florida: the priests of the *Obra para la Cooperación Sacerdotal Hispanoamericana* and the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine.

As the Year of St. Joseph draws to a close, we are reminded that St. Joseph lived his life “not with mere resignation but with *hope* and courage” (Pope Francis, *Patris Cordis*, #4). May this edition of *Seeds of Hope* equip us to face the challenges of life in the manner of St. Joseph and all the saints.

In Christ our Hope,

Very Rev. Alfredo I. Hernández, PhD, STL  
Rector/President





# A YEAR IN THE PARISH: *With Gentleness and Reverence*

A famous television program has the tag-line: “You never know what’s gonna come through that door.” As I think back to my experiences during the pastoral year, that tag-line is an apt description. Seminary formation provides seminarians with tools to be used in ministry, but pastoral year really shows one how those tools are best implemented. The difference between hypothetical situations described in the classroom and the true needs of a parish in person can be significant. It is important for one to begin to learn how to handle this difference prior to diaconal and priestly ordination. In this sense, the pastoral year is something like an internship. The seminarian shadows the pastor while on assignment, gains insight into the ministerial and administrative dimensions, and gradually takes on various responsibilities. In my own experience, amidst the busyness of parish life and the challenge of the pandemic, I found it essential to treat every moment, person, and interaction with “gentleness and reverence.” (1 Peter 3:15). It may help to share a story to explain this point.

Soon after arriving at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Doral for my pastoral year, I was given the opportunity to substitute for the staff member who normally made funeral arrangements. On my first day, a family visited the parish to schedule a funeral mass. As we talked together, the family shared the difficulties they were experiencing in their grief. As they shared this with me, I was taken back to the time when, four years earlier, my own grandmother had passed away. I recalled sitting in the funeral parlor and working with the director in a very business-like way, thinking to myself, “this isn’t how I was hoping to mourn my grandmother.” Back in the present moment, I looked at the family before me and saw myself in them. In that moment, although I did not use the exact words, I resolved to treat their unique situation with great reverence and gentleness. I could never perfectly understand what they were experiencing. But, I could absolutely be present to them in a personal, genuine way. I accompanied them through each step of the process, arranging the mass, serving in it, and leading the committal rite at the graveside.

The pastoral year can be a pivotal moment in a seminarian’s vocational discernment. It fortified my desire to become a priest by giving a glimpse of what it means to be a spiritual father. I realize now how integral reverence and gentleness are to the priest and, by extension, to the father. They go beyond mere respect we show for someone or the mild-mannered way in which we conduct ourselves. Reverence is nothing short of the affirmation of the dignity of the person before us, whomever they may be. Gentleness, likewise, is our response of mercy. With Jesus Christ as my model and guide, I hope to practice both as a deacon and then as a priest.



Andrew Vitrano-Farinato  
(Archdiocese of Miami, Theology III)





# *A Warm Welcome:* **OUR NEW STAFF**

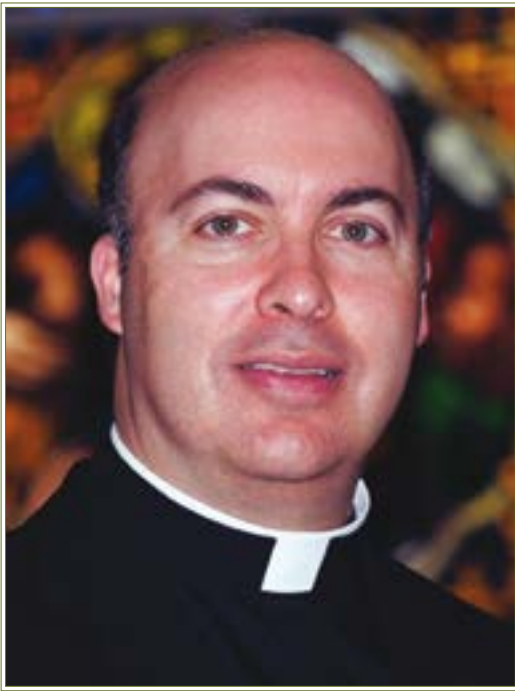
## **Bishop Silvio José Báez**

was born in Masaya, Nicaragua, on April 28, 1958. He entered the Order of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers in 1979. He studied philosophy and theology at the Theological Institute of Central America (ITAC), in San José, Costa Rica. He was ordained a priest in the city of San Ramón, Alajuela, Costa Rica, on January 15, 1985. He studied at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, obtaining a degree in Sacred Scripture in 1988. In that same year, he studied Biblical geography and archeology at the École Biblique et Archéologique in Jerusalem, Israel. From 1988 to 1994 he was a Professor of Sacred Scripture in various centers of higher studies in Guatemala and a Professor of Old Testament in special renewal courses for Carmelite Priests in Haifa, Israel. In 1999 he defended his Doctoral Thesis in Biblical Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy, with a dissertation on the subject of silence in the Hebrew books of the Bible, having obtained the maximum mark of *summa cum laude*. His doctoral dissertation was published in the book: *Tiempo de callar; tiempo de hablar. El silencio en la Biblia Hebrea*, ed. Teresianum, Roma 2000 (in Spanish). He was ordained a bishop in Managua, Nicaragua, on May 30, 2009. Bishop Báez is currently Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Managua. He has been Secretary-General of the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua and bishop in charge of the doctrine of the faith, religious life, vocations and seminaries, and family ministry.

## **Father Alex Padilla**

Fr. Alexander T. Padilla II, a priest of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, joined the Faculty of St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in 2021 as Assistant Professor of Canon Law and member of the Formation Team. Prior to entering priestly formation, he studied for two years at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. He then entered formation at St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami, and, upon graduation, continued formation at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. While there, he studied theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University and Canon Law at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) and the Catholic University of America. Ordained in 2016, he eventually served as Parochial Vicar at the Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle in St. Petersburg and, later, at Christ the King parish in Tampa. In addition to absolutely loving being a priest, he also enjoys, among other things, reading, cinema, and soccer (especially his beloved A.S. Roma).





## Father Nicholas Azar

was born and raised in the southeastern United States in Atlanta, Georgia. He is enjoying his thirteenth year as a priest of Jesus Christ for the Archdiocese of Atlanta and has served as a priest in four parish communities within that local church. He worked for over ten years in corporate America with most of that time spent in finance and marketing roles. He has business degrees from The University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia, and Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He studied philosophy as a seminarian for two years in Emmitsburg, Maryland at Mount Saint Mary's University before moving to Rome, Italy, to attend the Pontifical North American College. Fr. Azar holds degrees in theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University (STB), the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (STL), and the Pontifical Lateran University – Alphonsian Academy (STD). He has recently completed post-doctoral coursework at the Congregation for the Clergy in Vatican City as well as courses in moral theology at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum). In July of 2021, at the start of this academic year here at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary. He joined the formation faculty as both an assistant professor and formation advisor for seminarians. He appreciates many outdoor activities, including hiking and both local and international travel.

## Sindy De León

is the Executive Assistant to the Rector at St. Vincent de Paul Seminary. She is originally from Guatemala and started her career coordinating public relations for Off-Broadway theatres in New York, such as the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater and Pregones Theater. She worked at the Seneca Center, from 2001 to 2003, in the South Bronx, New York, for a Youth Program for high-risk individuals. She graduated from Palm Beach State College in 2010 with a B.A. in Management and Supervision. She was the manager for Youth Co-op., Inc. from 2005 until 2021. Sindy was nominated for the "Esperanza Award in 2019" for 17 years of community service by the Palm Beach Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. She has been a board member of the Guatemala Mayan Center since 2007. Sindy is also a member of the Columbiette Council 3393 Lake Worth since 2021.



## Jennifer Correia

joined SVDP in August 2021 as the new Controller. She was previously part of the Archdiocese of Miami family during her time with Catholic Health Services. Jennifer will utilize her 20 years of experience working in the Education, Healthcare, Banking, and nonprofit industries in her new role. While attending Rollins College and Nova Southeastern University, she also worked there, earning her BA and MBA. Jennifer has always had a passion for nonprofits, and it is where she feels most at home. She currently lives in Coral Springs with her husband, daughters, and three rescue dogs.



# A Day in the Life

## AVE O CRUX,

### Pre-Theologian

Of the stages in seminary formation—Discipleship, Configuration, and Pastoral Synthesis—I am in the first as a second-year pre-theologian. At this first stage in seminary formation, my brothers and I are welcoming the love of God in Jesus Christ and giving a free yes to follow him—to be his disciple. We renew this yes every day.

To that end, my day usually begins at 5:45 am. I rise and brew a cup of coffee before praying the Office of Readings (part of the Liturgy of the Hours). From time to time, neighboring brothers will join me. After prayer and some conversation, we head to St. Vincent's chapel for

Lauds (Morning Prayer) and Mass with the entire community. After being strengthened by the spiritual nourishment of Christ's Body and Blood, we normally have class throughout the morning with a break for lunch. Our courses cover a range of philosophies, including ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary. This initial period of philosophical study prepares us to study theology well in the coming years.

The afternoons include some mixture of house jobs, studying, exercise, and apostolic work. The evening begins with a holy hour, Vespers (Evening Prayer) as a community, and dinner. From then on, we are free to study, exercise, play ping pong, or relax. As Grand Silence approaches at 10 pm, some of us gather together to pray Compline (Night Prayer), walk the grounds praying a rosary for our friends and family, and return to our rooms to rest, sleep, and begin the next day. What gives me *hope* in all of this? The spiritual nourishment of the two liturgies of the Church: the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours.



Matthew McCauley  
(Diocese of Orlando, Pre-Theology II)



### Deacon

As a Deacon, I am in the Pastoral Synthesis stage of priestly formation. Having been ordained, the majority of my schedule is built around growing in intimacy with Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. He is preparing my heart to soon share in His Priesthood.

In light of this, I normally begin Monday (and every day) with an individual Holy Hour, followed by communal Morning Prayer (*Lauds*) and the Mass. The morning includes classes in pastoral counseling and the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick as well as meetings as the Student Council President. After lunch, I make time for study until Vespers and, following dinner, a team of us from Student Council washes



Rev Mr. David A. Portorreal  
(Diocese of Venice, IV Theology)



# of a Seminarian: SPIES UNICA



Charles Bemis  
(Diocese of St. Augustine, Theology II)

## Theologian

As a second-year theologian, I fall under the Configuration stage. Who are we being configured to? God-willing, Jesus Christ himself! Our entire schedule is built around this principle.

As such, most weekdays for me start at 6:20 AM, as I rise to prepare for the day. At 6:45 AM, we pray the Morning Prayer of the Church, known as *Lauds*, followed by the Mass. These are the rocks on which the foundation of the remainder of the day is built upon. This dual encounter with Jesus Christ increases within us the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

The morning hours are then filled with classes in theology. Again, being in the Configuration stage, we study so as to take on the mind of Jesus Christ and his Body, the Church. The present semester includes courses on the Trinity, the Sacraments of Initiation, Prophetic Literature in the Bible, and Church History.

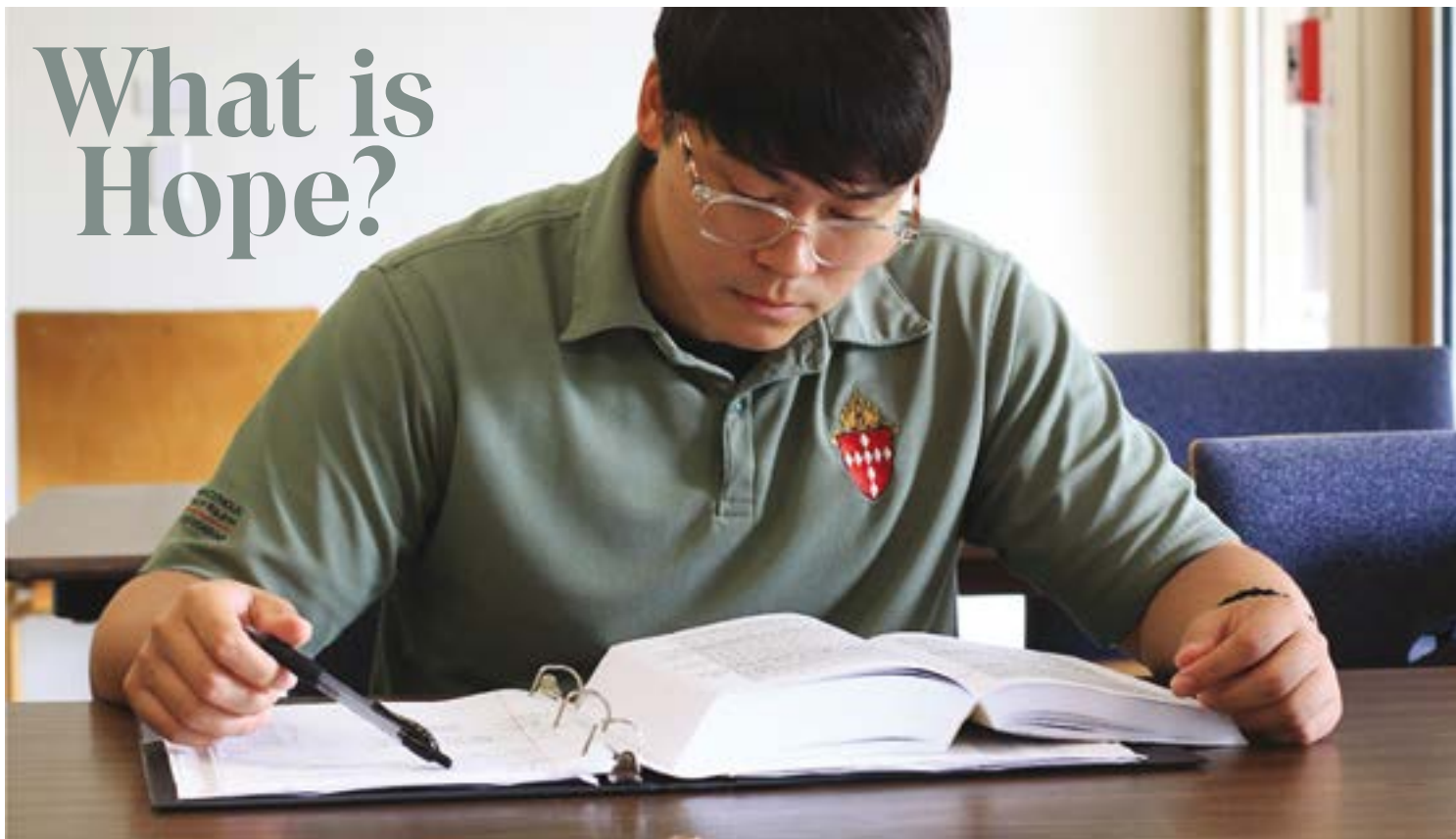
Knowledge and competence in these areas will serve as fuel for future preaching and teaching. The afternoons typically include time for prayer - the anchor of my day - study, and apostolic work. My apostolic work this year is at a local hospice center. Each evening ends with Compline (Night Prayer) before I rest and prepare for the next day of the blessings the Lord has in store for me. What gives me *hope* in all of this? The simple but consistent encounters with Jesus Christ in prayer throughout the day.



dishes. I then head over to the lake where I lead a community Rosary Walk and, from there, pray Night Prayer with my brothers from the Diocese of Venice. I will often then head to the Rathskeller with some of these brothers for additional fraternal time before heading to bed.

Some people dread Mondays. I do not. After having spent the weekend preaching, serving the Mass, and celebrating Baptisms at my pastoral assignment for the year (St. Ann Catholic Church in West Palm), I am renewed. What gives me hope in all of this? I find hope in seeing Jesus Christ daily in my brothers, formators, and parishioners.

# What is Hope?



## Ask the Philosopher

One of the joys of studying philosophy at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary is engaging the rich intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church. Our Lord has given us numerous intellectual giants, and I know that any question I could ask is likely to have been addressed by one of them. This year at our seminary, our Scriptural theme is taken from the first epistle of St. Peter: "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope." Naturally, my philosopher's mind asks these questions: "What is hope? What does it mean to hope, or to have hope?" Praise God for giving us St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest philosophical minds in the history of the Church. He addresses these questions and more in his *Summa Theologiae* or "Summary of Theology." The following ideas are taken from his writings.

Hope is one of the three theological virtues: faith, *hope*, and love. What purpose do these theological virtues serve? For Aquinas, virtue in general helps complete and perfect human nature. In other words, virtue leads to true flourishing of the human person. A virtuous person is a truly happy person. Aquinas notes that our happiness is two-fold. The first type of happiness is that which we can obtain ourselves; it may be considered a natural happiness. The intellectual, moral, and cardinal virtues help us to obtain it: justice, temperance, fortitude, prudence, gentleness, compassion, etc. The second type of happiness is that which we cannot obtain ourselves but only in and through God's help; it may be considered a supernatural, eternal happiness. The theological virtues, given by God, help us to obtain and secure this eternal, supernatural happiness.

How does hope work then? Hope helps each of us to strive for eternal happiness with God during this earthly life. God made each



Gabriel Nugent

(Diocese of Raleigh, Pre-Theology II)

of us for eternal life, which consists of the enjoyment of God Himself. According to Aquinas, this eternal happiness is arduous but possible to attain. It is like a beautiful mountain in the distance. We want to enjoy being on that mountain, and it is the hope of enjoying it that encourages us to take one step after another toward it.

Where does this *hope* come from? It does not come from ourselves. Hope is a gift from God and directs all things to God (that is why we call it a *theological virtue*). God is constantly offering us encouragement to keep moving forward in our spiritual life. This encouragement often comes in the form of hope. Perhaps, we have all experienced it: a moment of prayer that lightens our heart, a conversation with a loved one, holding a grandchild or child for the first time, and so on. These and so many other ordinary things fill us with hope. That is, they turn our hearts to God and to the very real possibility of a future of eternal happiness with Him. In hope-filled moments, we find ourselves emboldened, consoled, and enthusiastic for God and the things of God.

Hope then, first and foremost, is the source of our motivation to strive for eternal life with God. Aquinas writes, in fact, that it is a reassurance that eternal happiness is indeed attainable. When filled with hope, we have the confidence to rely upon God for that which we cannot know for certain. We lean on his help and trust that eternal life has been made available to us because of Christ's saving work. We see that the beautiful mountain is there, that Christ has paved a path for us, and that - with his help - we can one day arrive at it.

Because this hope is a gift, a gift that God surely desires to give, let's pray for it daily. Let's also pray to be aware of the many little happenings that God sends us each day precisely to increase our hope.





# What is Hope?



Adam P. Cahill  
(Archdiocese of Miami, Theology II)



## Ask the Theologian

What is hope from a theological perspective? It is an excellent question and one whose answer affects all persons. The best place to begin looking for this answer is in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. It is a must for any household!

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “the virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men’s activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.” (CCC 1818)

From this definition, we see that hope directs the human heart to heaven, keeps him from discouragement, sustains him in times of abandonment, and preserves him from selfishness. While any number of examples of the virtue of hope in action may be given, one particularly clear example is in St. Paul. St. Paul suffered a great deal while spreading the Gospel in the first few years after Jesus’ Resurrection. In the course of his journey, he admits, “three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I passed a night and a day on the deep; on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers...robbers...my own race...Gentiles...the city...the wilderness...sea...false brothers...in toil and hardship...many sleepless nights...hunger and thirst...frequent fastings...cold and exposure...the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. (1 Corinthians 11:23-28).

What allowed him to persevere through so many trials? It was

certainly not his natural strength. Time and again, St. Paul confesses his frailty and weakness. It was a hope born of having encountered Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. He writes, “Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Romans 5:3-5) In the case of St. Paul, these words were tried and true. Later on in the same letter, he writes, “Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.” (Romans 12:12)

St. Paul lived in the hope of the Resurrection, having encountered the risen Jesus Christ on his way to Damascus. This single encounter, surely deepened and renewed through daily prayer, filled St. Paul with a hope that “did not disappoint.” Just as St. Paul, we are called to live in the hope of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and one day come to see Him face to face – surely this is a reason for our hope. If Jesus Christ did in fact rise from the dead, as St. Paul and so many men and women have believed since, our cause for hope could not be more excellent and true.

In the spirit of St. Paul, I would like to share with you this prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Hope. May it bless you in whatever circumstances surround you, your family, and your friends: “I pray, O dearest Mother, that through your most powerful intercession, my heart may be filled with Holy Hope, so that in life’s darkest hour I may never fail to trust in God my Savior, but by walking in the way of His commandments I may merit to be united with Him, and with you in the eternal joys of Heaven. Amen.”



# Hope Ever Before Us:

## Contemplating and Adoring God in the Little Things



William D. Gibson  
(Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Theology II)

For many, the words *little* remind one of Saint Therese of Lisieux. For others, the words *work* and *prayer* may remind one of Saint Benedict. For still others, the words *simple* and *humble* remind them of St. Patrick. While their individual lives were quite different, there was something that these saints - and every saint - had in common: namely, an ability to encounter and love God in the little, everyday, ordinary moments of life. The encounter and love were not compartmentalized to the chapel but occurred practically everywhere. As such, the saints walked the earth brimming with faith, *hope*, and love. How could they not when their God and King, their only hope, was ever before them? Can we live like these saints? One practical means of doing so is through simple acts of service.

In any community, be it the seminary, a school, a workplace, or a family, opportunities to serve abound: opening a door for someone, taking the dishes from others at your table, lending a brother your time, being hospitable and present to all and not simply those whose company you enjoy, and so on. All of these require an extra effort, and though they may go unnoticed by others, none go unnoticed by Him who “did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life for a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28). When these gestures are done cheerfully, a change occurs in us. For a moment, however small, we go outside of ourselves. Our self-preoccupation, concerns, thoughts, and present attitude fall away. The person in front of us becomes everything. In that moment, our heart is sufficiently open to see God revealing himself in the person before us and, thus, is sufficiently open

to love him in return. We need only keep our eyes open for those little opportunities to serve others. I will share a concrete example.

At the seminary, we are blessed to have *house jobs*. These basically amount to chores that must be done a few times per week. My house job is to clean the refectory after dinner. While the majority of brothers leave immediately after dinner to attend to other responsibilities (e.g. homework), my team and I remain behind to clean. The work is truly a blessing. At the end of each day, my brothers and I have the opportunity to love others and God through our work. When done cheerfully - when we give ourselves fully to the work - it softens and opens our hearts. Although it does take away from personal time for things like homework, this simple-love-in-action increases the faith, *hope*, and charity in our hearts. Again, it is a blessing.

It is good and beautiful to experience increases in faith, *hope*, and charity during formal periods of prayer and the worship of the Mass. But, even for monks, these formal periods make up only part of the day. Like the saints, we must also choose to adore God in simple, mundane, and often unnoticed actions. I think of the woman who anointed Jesus Christ’s head with costly perfumed oil in Matthew 26. When the disciples criticized her for such an act of adoration, Jesus responded, “Why do you make trouble for this woman? She has done a good thing for me.” (Mt. 26:10). Let’s adore our Lord and Savior in little but common ways this day. Let’s recognize our only hope as he truly is: ever before each of us.





# IN MEMORIAM

## A Letter of Thanks to Fr. Nicholas Cachia

Dear Father Nick,

The last time I texted you was on Monday, July 26, 2021. It had been nearly two years since I had last visited my family in Poland. I sent you some pictures of my family and shared that I was having a very blessed time with them. You responded with, "Wonderful pictures. So much love. Enjoy!" Knowing your health situation, I remained in prayer. Two days later, I received news of your death. I was heartbroken but consoled. I thought, "If you are not in heaven, Father Nick, who is there? If you did not make it, who will?"

As I prayed for the happy repose of your soul, I recalled memories from the past three and a half years of my priestly formation under your guidance. I do wish I had told you more often of my gratitude to God for you. May this simple letter express all of that thanksgiving and more.

### **First, Fr. Nick, I thank you for your love of listening.**

I am reminded of our regular formation meetings. You always asked me at the beginning of every meeting a simple question: "Ziemek, first of all, how are you?" The question was never superficial. You were genuinely concerned. When I answered, sharing the struggles, challenges, and graces I had recently received from God, you listened attentively.

Jesus Christ was the origin, end, and focus of your response. I was never afraid of sharing with you even the most profound grace. You would simply help me step-by-step to "unpack" the grace, revealing its deeper meaning and significance. Such graces were holy ground and you treated them with great reverence. Thank you, Father Nick.

### **Second, Fr. Nick, I thank you for your love for the Eucharist.**

I am reminded of our second mission trip to the Dominican Republic in 2018 with the new pre-theology class. One day, we had Mass in a small village called Mamey. After the Mass, I accompanied you as you brought Holy Communion to a sick person in the village. You wore a humeral veil and held Jesus Christ close as we moved through the streets and the people. I felt as if time slowed down. When we arrived at the small home, you entered the dark room. I remained outside, looking in through the glassless window. A small candle was lit, and the light immediately reflected off the golden ciborium in your hands, casting rays of light all about in the darkness. You lifted up Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and said, "The Body of Christ," delivering to that sick and fragile man the most precious gift of this world. I will never forget it. With our Lord Jesus Christ, you were a light when nearly all other lights had gone out for that man. Thank you for loving Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and so loving Jesus Christ in others.

### **Finally, Fr. Nick, I thank you for your love of your flock.**

You were an authentic Shepherd who loved his sheep. At the end of the spring 2021 semester, we had a farewell gathering for you, composed of current and former pre-theologians at the seminary. At the time, we were all expecting you to move to Omaha, Nebraska that summer to begin a new mission as a Priest of St. Joseph with the Institute for Priestly Formation. During that evening, each seminarian and priest present expressed his gratitude and appreciation for all things you had done for us. Hearing so many moving testimonies from my brothers revealed three things to me.

First, you treated the concerns of others with great care, even when the concerns seemed small. One brother expressed deep appreciation for your provision of, on a weekly basis, a list of the page numbers for the Breviary. This simple act of service allowed him to pray the Liturgy of the Hours in peace, free of preoccupation with finding the right page numbers (a common occurrence). Second, because of your fidelity to those small concerns, many felt they could rely on you during more difficult situations. For many of us, you were a present father in times of great need. Third, I have never met anybody who built profound friendships with so many people. Every brother, nearly thirty in all, had something unique to share that evening.

You were a good Shepherd who met his sheep where they were, walked with them, and supported them. You dedicated your priesthood early on to forming good and holy shepherds after the Heart of Jesus Christ. Although your earthly mission has ended, I do believe your heavenly mission is underway. Your work in forming good and holy shepherds has only just begun.

Thank you, Father Nick, for your example of a life given over to Jesus Christ. Please intercede for us in heaven.

See you soon,  
In Christ,  
Ziemek.



**Ziemowit Janaszek**  
(*Diocese of Savannah, Theology II*)







50 years  
Juan J. Sosa  
ARCHDIOCESE OF MIAMI

I have always imagined embarking on 'time travel' to meet Jesus who would then ask me this question: "Which of my disciples has inspired you the most over the years?" "Lord, how can I pick and choose?" I would answer, and then (under His pressure to respond), "St. Paul, Lord, a saint and a sinner!" I know that Paul was not of Cuban ancestry, but he could have been a great Cuban shepherd: the biblical extrovert, for whom 'living' was Christ, many times impulsive, but never afraid to defend Christ's Gospel while either praising community leaders or warning them about deviating from the Way.

Putting aside all imagination, I have come to realize that 'time travel' is not necessary. As I recall my priestly ministry during the last five decades, I must recognize that Jesus has always made me walk with Him, the Blessed Mother and St. Paul, among others, by serving the Church under four archbishops, a series of pastors, supported by Paul-like classmates and brothers who in all honesty always spoke their mind and lived up to their priestly commitment while sharing their humanity and their spiritual depth without arrogance or pretense.

Given the opportunity, I recall with gratitude how much I learned while serving the Archdiocese at the Shrine of Our Lady and at four other parishes, including St. Mary's Cathedral, as well as at the Pastoral Center in Religious Education, Permanent Diaconate, the Ministry of Worship, Popular Piety, and, for almost three decades, as Adjunct Professor at both Florida seminaries. I cannot be more grateful to God for His blessings, received through so many committed leaders at the diocesan, national and international levels; indeed, these many Paul-like bishops, clergy, religious brothers, and sisters, and committed laity, both living and deceased, have shaped my ministry. I will always remember them at the Eucharist. May they never forget to remember me! With so many blessings, how can I pick and choose?



30 years  
Michael Carruthers  
DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

Pope St. John Paul II shared in various ways: "To follow the Lord is an incredible adventure." Having been asked to share highlights of the last thirty years of that journey in the ministerial priesthood, I offer three words for reflection: Generosity, Courage, and Trust.

**Generosity.** To live as His priest means to give beyond a human capacity to love generously. To celebrate the sacraments with people, to share with them their joys and sorrows, to serve in the office of the Archbishop of Miami in an even broader love of the bride, to be called to a more generous fatherly care in seminary ministry and university chaplaincy: all these things were vehicles of grace to stretch a human heart to be more generous.

**Courage.** Christ is both Priest and Victim. Throughout my assignments, there were periods of struggle, incapacity, and darkens. For these moments though, I am also grateful, for they were an invitation from the Lord to share intimately in His Victimhood, in the pain of His pierced and courageous heart.

**Trust.** I have experienced Him being with me in joys and in sorrows. At some point that just sunk in: the Lord is ALWAYS FAITHFUL. I know the Lord will call me to more joys, struggles, and growth, but I am grateful to Him for the journey he has given me thus far.

Pope Benedict XVI, the Pope Emeritus, teaches us: "The essential foundation of priestly ministry is a deep bond to Jesus Christ... The priest must be a man who knows Jesus intimately, who has encountered him, and learned to love him."



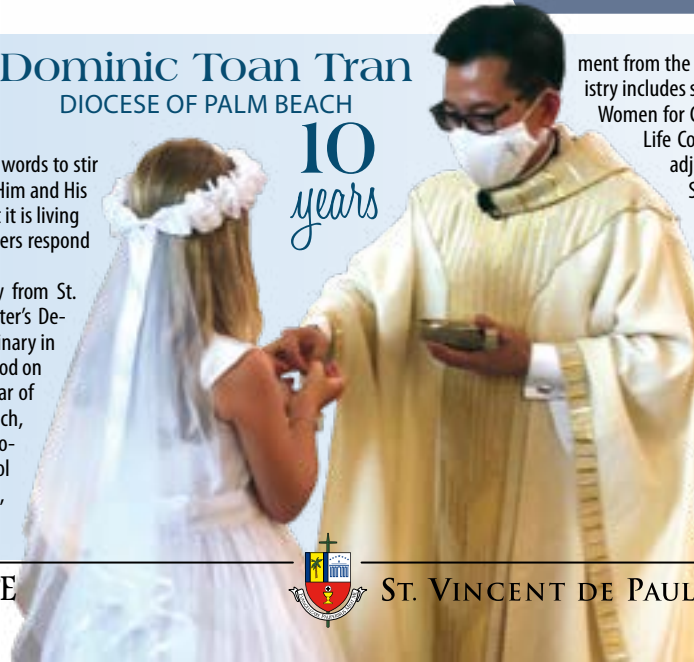
10 years  
Timothy Holeda  
DIOCESE OF PENSACOLA-TALLAHASSEE

I am Father Dominic Toan Tran, Diocese of Palm Beach. When I was in the college Seminary, the scriptural words in John 15:16 "You did not choose me but I chose you and I appointed you to go and bear fruit" really spoke to me. God used those words to stir a desire within my heart to respond to a call to serve Him and His people. I thought to myself: how incredibly significant it is living a life working in the vineyard of the Lord helping others respond to God's saving and sanctifying grace.

I hold an undergraduate degree in philosophy from St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami and a Master's Degree in Divinity from St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, Florida. I was ordained to the priesthood on May 7th, 2011, and went on to serve as Parochial Vicar of St. Juliana Catholic Church and School in West Palm Beach, Florida. On October 31st, 2020, while serving as a Parochial Vicar at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church and School in Boca Raton, I received a Master's Degree of Science, specializing in Ecclesial Administration and Manage-

Dominic Toan Tran  
DIOCESE OF PALM BEACH

10 years



ment from the Catholic University of America. My priestly ministry includes serving as Spiritual Advisor for Council of Catholic Women for Central Deanery, being a member of the Priestly Life Committee of the Diocese of Palm Beach, and an adjunct Spiritual Director at St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami, Florida. I am currently serving as the Pastor of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Boca Raton, Florida.

As I look back on the ten years of my priestly life, it has been enormously enriched by all the various experiences I have had at the different parishes where I have served while daily celebrating the Eucharist and praying for God's people as I journey along with them. I am deeply grateful for each passing year - for the good that I can accomplish and for the happiness that I can share. I pray that I can be faithful to this call until the Lord calls me home.

God is good - all the time!



# are They Now? SVDP Alumni share their lives



## WE ALSO HONOR

**Msgr. Bob Morris**  
**Fr. Len Plazewski**  
**Fr. Bill Swengros**  
**Fr. Tom Anastasia**  
**Fr. David DeJulio**

*For 30 years*  
**OF PRIESTHOOD**

**TOGETHER IN THE DIOCESE OF  
 ST. PETERSBURG. THANK YOU ALL  
 FOR YOUR MINISTRY.**

***Ad multos annos!***

## Rev. Craig Morley DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

I have been ordained a priest of the Diocese of St. Petersburg for 20 years. I have been a parochial vicar at three parishes, and I am now serving in my second assignment as pastor. I have been at Holy Family Parish in St. Petersburg for just over 7 years.

When I was ordained a priest for the Diocese of St. Petersburg in 2001, I honestly believed I was ready for what life, the Church and God had in store for me. I knew about the sacraments and how to administer them. I knew how to celebrate Mass and how to "hear confessions." I knew that being a priest was what I am and not what I do. I had the education and knowledge to answer questions and teach people the faith. I could counsel those in distress and help the troubled marriage. I knew my strengths and my weaknesses, and I knew I still had so much to learn. With the exception of the last point, I was so wrong.

I have learned that the priesthood is so much more than I expected. It is about being present to the people and being the representative of God and His Church. One thing I enjoy about being a priest is that I am never sure what my day will be like. Yes, I have appointments and scheduled events for the day but many times they are just suggestions. Woody Allen said, "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him our plans." I know exactly what he meant.

One day can go exactly as planned; nothing unexpected happens and no problems come up. But there are other days that are not even close to what I had scheduled. Whatever happens in the day, I know that when a person asks to see me or I have to go to them, the presence of a priest is what that person needs at that moment. I can bring them comfort just by being there. It is such a humbling experience. As a priest I have shared in so many special and graced moments

in people's lives; from the birth and baptism of a new child to the death of a parent or spouse. I have listened to children tell me how much Jesus loves them and I have been hugged more times than I can count. Each of these moments is a gift from God.

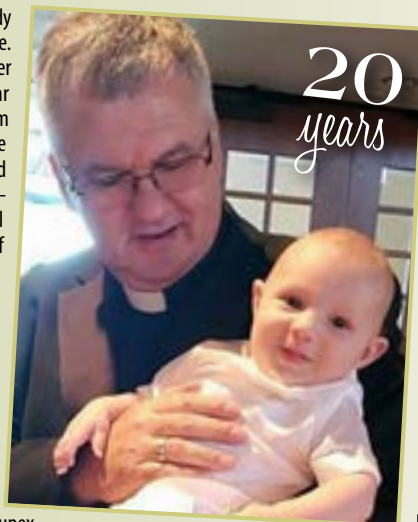
I know that I do not have the abilities to do all these things on my own. I rely on the help of others and most assuredly on the Grace of God. He has helped so many times and in so many ways when I most needed His help.

I always tried to learn something from my pastors that I could use when I became a pastor. From my first pastor I learned that I don't know everything I need to know but there is someone else who does. From this I learned that I don't have all the answers and to rely on others. From my second pastor I learned not to get involved unnecessarily in people's personal lives. Again, I don't have all the answers but more importantly, I can't fix all problems. From my third pastor I learned probably the most painful lesson; not everyone is going to like you

and you can't please everyone. One needs to do what needs to be done. Someone will always complain. I think the most important advice I've been given was from my seminary rector. Paraphrasing he said, "this might be your 10th confession of the day but it could be the first time they've been to reconciliation in years, or it might be your third funeral of the week but they've never buried their mother before." Always give each person the attention they deserve.

For those in the seminary studying for the Priesthood, you cannot imagine what being a priest is truly like. It is worth all the hours, all the tests, all the pastoral assignments, everything you have to endure. It is truly a blessing beyond belief.

I know above all that I could not be the priest God expects me to be without His help and so many graces. I truly love my priesthood and thank God daily for such a wonderful gift. I pray that He continues to bless me and all His priests throughout the world.



I am often asked especially by young people, what is my favorite part of priesthood? The truth is that I love it all. I love preaching, teaching, hearing confessions, celebrating mass, weddings, funerals, spiritual counseling, vocations work, and being a 'father' for so many. It is easier to answer what I dislike the most about being a priest, paperwork and annulments, but thankfully that is a small portion of my day to day life. The most poignant and precious moments in my vocation so far have also been some of the most difficult. It is a great honor and privilege to be present to so many who lose their children, spouse, or other loved ones to suffering and tragedy. It is tremendously healing for all to celebrate the funeral liturgy after such a loss and speak with confidence about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the eternal life he promised us. That beautiful moment in which a bride walks down the aisle to her groom as they prepare to give their lives to one another never gets old! Since serving five years at Blessed Sacrament in Tallahassee, I have been at the Co-Cathedral of St. Thomas More where I currently am the chaplain to the Catholic Student Union at FSU and the Diocesan Director of Vocations and Seminarians.

## 5 years **Dustin Feddon** DIOCESE OF PENSACOLA-TALLAHASSEE



After ordination, my first assignment was at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Pensacola, Florida and serving at Saint Anthony's, a Black Catholic parish in Pensacola. My first year as a priest was a wonderful year of service and dreaming of all the possibilities to increase the mission of the Church especially in the margins of society.

After spending years visiting the incarcerated in Florida's massive prison system, I believe that the church has the resources and the community to assist those that are returning back into society from prison. Currently, I'm serving as administrator of two parishes, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton in Crawfordville and Sacred Heart in Lanark. These are two rural parishes in what is often called Florida's "Forgotten Coast." I also serve as the founder and executive director of Joseph House, a community for the formerly incarcerated where myself, staff and community volunteers can accompany those reintegrating back into society in the Tallahassee area. I also teach a Philosophy of God course at Saint John Vianney Seminary. One of the great blessings these past few years has been the opportunity to teach philosophy for seminarians and lay ministers. Over the years, I have sensed how gracious God is with how God calls each of us into this mysterious journey filled with unpredictability and abundant possibilities to love and serve others.



## Michael Hartley DIOCESE OF PENSACOLA-TALLAHASSEE

From June 4, 2016 (Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the Jubilee Year of Mercy) until today, nobody could have predicted my first five years of priesthood. Around the Easter season, prior to my ordination, word was released that I would be assigned to Saint Rita Parish in Santa Rosa Beach and Christ the King Mission in Freeport, both of which I had

to utilize the wonderful services of Google™.

Unlike some of my classmates who have had one, two, or three different assignments including changing parishes or further studies, my journey thus far has been quite different. In this very mysterious little nook of the Florida panhandle you will discover the most beautiful beaches in the country, often visited by Catholics throughout the Southeast and Midwest.

My assignment might have had a gorgeous landscape, but also a pastor in bad health. For the first year and a half of my assignment I had an amazing pastor to guide me on the beginning stages of my priesthood. Sadly for me, but happily for him, the Lord called him home during that time. I was named pastor on the feast of Saint Rita seventeen months later. Currently, I have the great blessing of ministering to my parishes with a longtime friend from college who was ordained 364 days after me, Fr. Luke Farabaugh. *Non nobis Domine, sed nomini tuo da gloriam!*





## LIVING A SPIRITUALITY OF HOPE:

# St. Ignatius and the Discernment of Spirits

During this past summer, I had the opportunity to attend the Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF) on the campus of Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. Each summer, IPF offers a program dedicated to the instruction and spiritual formation of diocesan seminarians throughout the country. This summer saw more than twenty American dioceses represented from Florida to Maine to Alaska and everywhere in between. One highlight of the nine-week program was a series of lectures on St. Ignatius and his Rules for the Discernment of Spirits. These simple rules have offered me a practical way of living a life of greater *hope* in Jesus Christ. I share them with you so that, perhaps, you can do the same.

Each rule describes a specific situation in the spiritual life and advises how to best respond. The relevance of St. Ignatius' recommendations are remarkable. The one rule that I found most impactful was rule 5. It reads,

"In time of desolation never make a change, but be firm and constant in the proposals and determination in which one was the day preceding such desolation, or in the determination in which one was in the preceding consolation." (taken from *Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living* by Fr. Timothy Gallagher)

The spiritual life is full of consolations and desolations (highs and lows, respectively). In consolation, we feel very close to him and want nothing but to pray to him. In desolation, we feel far from God and have no desire to pray to him. Still, at other times, we find ourselves somewhere in between in a sort of quiet peace. When we experience desolation - that sense of being far from God and not wanting to pray - the temptation is always to follow the feeling: to avoid praying to God and turn rather to some distraction (e.g. television, music, food, and so on). In a moment of spiritual consolation, we may have resolved to pray a Rosary, go to Confession, or reach out to someone in need. But, in the desolation, these resolutions seem burdensome and undesirable. The temptation is to let them go. In this fifth rule, St. Ignatius asks us to be "firm and constant" to our resolutions.



During the summer, there were moments when my desire for prayer or helping those in need would dry up (i.e. desolation). In such moments, I at first felt trapped and a bit helpless, like being stuck in a rut. It was in these moments that the Holy Spirit would remind me of rule 5. I would stick to the prior resolution, and, amazingly, it was not uncommon for the desolation to ease or disappear altogether. Beginning the prayer or the act of helping another was difficult but midway through it had often improved.

As St. Peter reminds us in his first letter, we should be ready to give a reason for our hope (c.f. 1 Pt 3:15-16). My hope is grounded firmly in a God who bends down to lift up his children stuck in desolation. In our humanity, our emotions and resolve may waver, but our hearts need not. Desolation is a challenging but normal part of the spiritual life. With the help of Jesus Christ, it can be resisted and even overcome simply by remaining true to any prior commitments to prayer and love. This is a great cause for hope! Thanks be to God for revealing these rules, these spiritual guidelines, through St. Ignatius.



Jacob Butz  
(Archdiocese of Atlanta, Theology I)







# Grief, Hope, Joy:

## A SUMMER IN HOSPITAL MINISTRY

This summer, I was able to attend Clinical Pastoral Experience (CPE) at Advent Health Hospital in Orlando, Florida. As a deacon and minister, it was a great joy to be a part of this and see the Lord reach out to his children. The Lord used me to minister to people in some of the darkest moments of their lives, and I was also able to see the love of God in full measure for the people to whom I ministered.

I recall one moment in particular. As I was working my usual shift, I received a call from the nurses on the pediatric floor. I came up to answer the call and found a mother and father in deep grief. Their child had fallen in the pool and was unconscious. The doctors did not expect him to survive and were preparing the parents for the worst. Into this situation, I entered.

The nurses called me to minister to them, but I must admit feeling lost. What could I possibly say? What could anyone say in that situation? The questions as they arose frightened me. In spite of any fears, I knew that I needed to enter this room and do whatever I could for them. So, asking the Lord to guide me, I entered the room and greeted the family.

I quickly found that my instinct to say nothing was the correct one. There was simply nothing to say. I could not take any pain away with answering “why,” nor did I have the answer to begin. What I did have was love.

I stayed with that family for nearly an hour, without saying anything. Occasionally, the mother would start

to cry, and I was simply there. Eventually, the mother began to speak to me, sharing how her son was such a joyful presence, and how they had planned to have him baptized but never had it done.

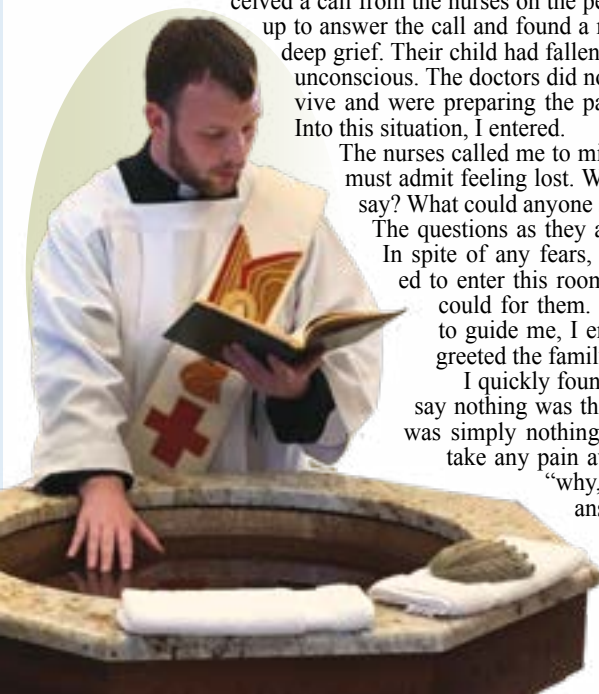
At this moment, I could feel the Holy Spirit prompting me, and it was as if the words came from me involuntarily, “would you like me to baptize your son?” They tearfully agreed. We had little of what we needed for the Rite. I simply blessed some water and poured it gently on the boy’s head, saying the words of Baptism while his family looked on. I preached to them about how the Lord was giving him eternal life and how he was with us here and now. After this, there was not much to say. We sat in silence a bit longer, and I excused myself when the time seemed right.

That child would eventually pass away. I would visit that family a few more times, and they grieved the loss of their son, turning to the Lord for comfort. I found myself experiencing emotions as well: sadness, joy, grief, and *hope*, all at once. God brought me into their life at such a sad moment, and through me gave that child eternal life, while also giving *hope* to parents in the midst of great sorrow. It reminded me of who I was: a servant of God and his people.

I will carry that moment with me for the rest of my life, and it was only one of the many that I experienced this summer. I will always remember the many people whose lives I touched and what the Lord did through me. He can give *hope* in the darkest hours, no matter how dire the situation seems. Being a small part of that *hope* is why I was ordained a deacon, and it is why I aspire to the priesthood. May God bless you.



Dcn. Zackary B. Gray  
(Diocese of Orlando, Theology IV)



# The Family: A Seedbed of Hope and *the First Seminary*

On the World Day of Prayer for Vocations in 1993, Pope St. John Paul II declared that “the family is the natural ‘nursery’ of vocations... the first seminary...” The image is fitting given that the Latin word for ‘seminary’ is *seminarium* meaning seedbed or nursery. Having begun seminary this year after graduating from the University of Florida last spring, I must say that I agree. My family has been the seedbed of my vocation, a source of great hope.

Growing up in a large family of eleven (my parents plus eight siblings) is the single best thing that has happened to me. As a child, my parents emphasized three things: family, school, and Church. I remember watching other families in public school and realizing that, oftentimes, my family was different. Each morning began with a simple prayer on the car ride to school, “*Oh my Jesus, I offer you every thought, word, and action today. Please help us, Oh Lord, and make us good today.*” Every night would end in an *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, and “Pray for Dad, Pray for Mom, Pray for Eden...” which got longer every two years or so.

My parents first took care of their family. Whatever time and resources they had left, they gave to others. My parents showed us that our family was enough, and so I always felt I was enough. I could simply be myself. As such, my main interests were sports and nature; I continue to love both. They were not exterior interests but rather expressions of myself. I felt focused and in-tune when I was playing flag football at school or exploring the woods at home.

If I had to describe my favorite memory with my family, it would



Sam Gordon  
(Diocese of Orlando, Pre-Theology I)

not be of slugging to violin practice with my siblings. Nor would it be of receiving my family’s consolation when one of my pets died. Nor would it even be of the rush on Christmas mornings. The most precious memories took place after school, music, sports practices, and work when my whole family would sit down for dinner. On occasion beans and rice would taste like tears, other times I swallowed my milk real quick so that it wouldn’t burst through my nose—but most often dinner was ordinary, just ordinary feelings. They were all good when shared with my family.

In light of all of this, my family encouraged my vocation to the priesthood simply through their example and presence. There was a lot of simply being together. They encouraged me to be myself and grow into the young man God intended me to be. They showed me the value of

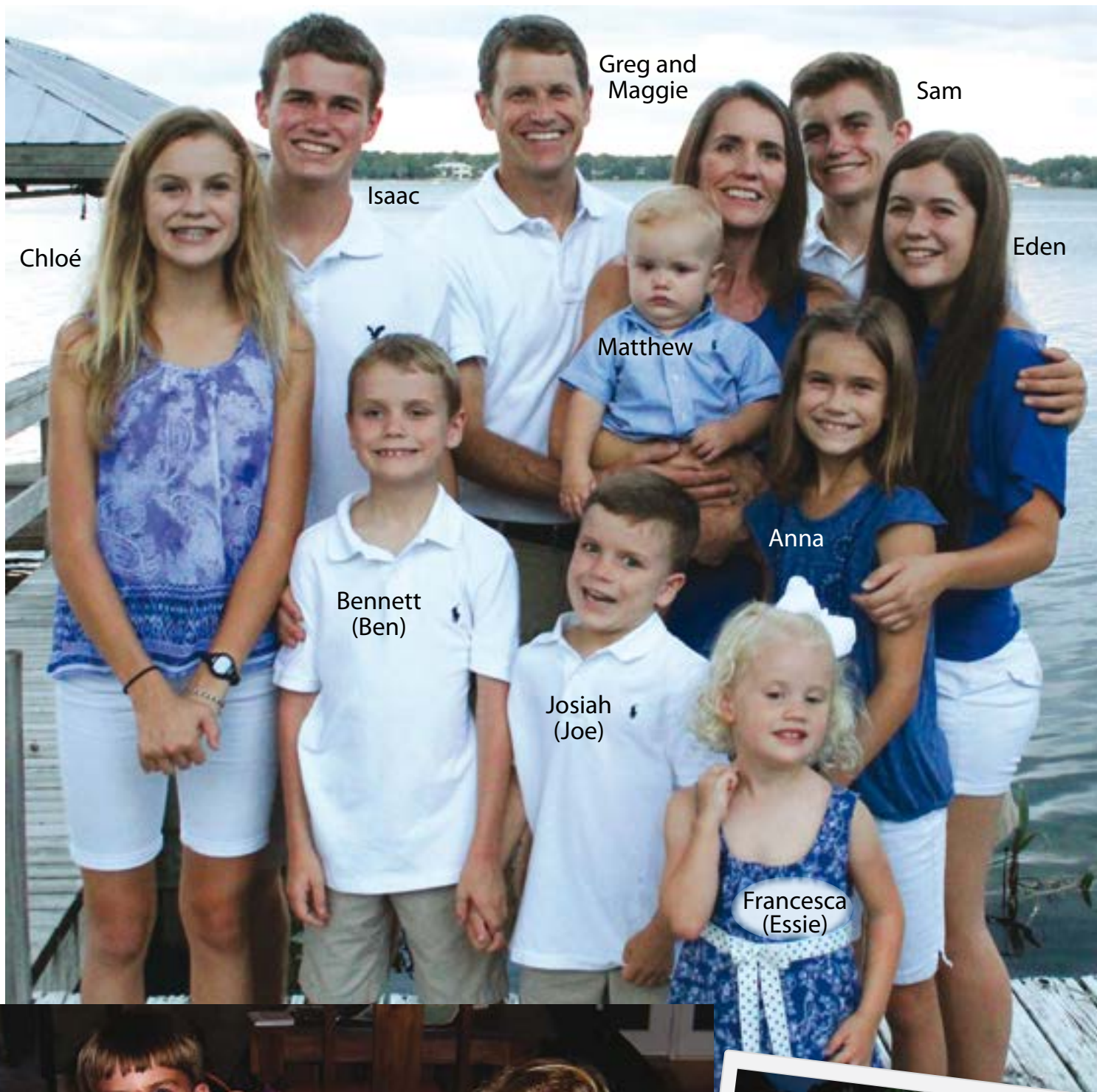
praying together, even and especially in simple but consistent ways. My parents especially prioritized us kids above all else. I carry these lessons from this first seminary now into the second, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary.

I understand that no family is perfect, mine included. It is my prayer that each of us imitate more closely the Holy Family at Nazareth. Although even the Holy Family had its difficulties - for example, Mary and Joseph lost Jesus for three days at one point - their time at home served as the seedbed (*seminarium*) and seminary for Jesus’ earthly ministry. May it be the same for each of us.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, pray for us!











# Bella:

## Lights, Camera, Action, Hope!

As a child, I was fascinated with the art of filmmaking, spending countless hours watching behind-the-scenes documentaries and poring over compilations of concept art from my favorite movies. This interest led me to pursue a Master of Arts in Film Production, graduating from the College of Motion Picture Arts at Florida State University in 2010. During my two years in the program, I worked on over forty short films, participating in all aspects of production from screenwriting, directing, and editing as well as the various jobs associated with the lighting, camera, and sound departments. That experience helped me to appreciate not only the intensely collaborative nature of making movies but also *the power of cinema to uplift an audience*. In many ways, the Catholic imagination is uniquely suited for conveying deep truths through art.

As such, it should come as no surprise that many influential filmmakers such as Frank Capra, Alfred Hitchcock, and Martin Scorsese were inspired by their Catholic upbringing.

Recently, my classmate and good friend, Drew Navarro, introduced me to the 2006 movie *Bella*, written and directed by Alejandro Monteverde, a Mexican director and faithful Catholic. The film tells the story of José, a former soccer star whose career ended following a tragic accident, and Nina, a woman who recently discovered that she is pregnant. After José's brother fires Nina from the restaurant where they both work, José rushes to accompany his distraught coworker, spending the

rest of the day traveling with her through the busy streets of New York and discussing the big questions of life.

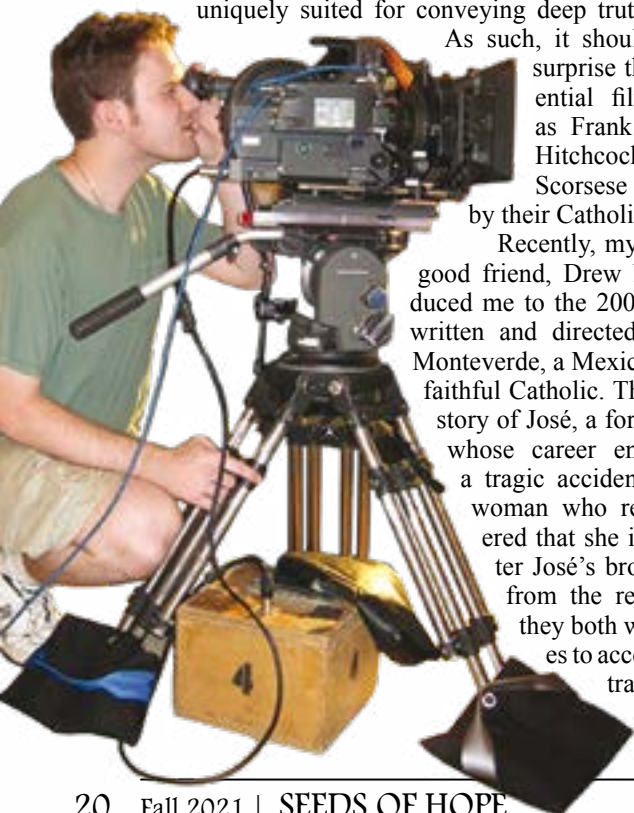
Although the plot of *Bella* is relatively simple, its message and characters are much deeper. In many ways, it is a story of discernment as José tries to discover how best to help the distraught Nina and her unborn child. Just as Saint Joseph was ready to take Mary into his home and later flee to Egypt at the prompting of an angel, José is likewise ready, at a moment's notice, to help a woman and child in need, not so much with his words but through his presence and actions. The pacing of the film, with its allowance for pauses and flashbacks, gives the audience an opportunity to linger on the interactions between the protagonists. Likewise, the secondary characters, especially the colorful members of José's family, help ground the film and make it feel even more fleshed-out.

The story, which includes several surprises throughout, contains a strongly pro-life message and explores into the themes of redemption, restoration, sacrifice, and family while displaying the beauty of bicultural interactions. *Bella* serves as a shining example of the way that cinema can inspire an audience, most especially through its genuine portrayal of Christian mercy and compassion as well as authentic manhood. Certainly, any media, including film, can be used for a variety of motives, many of which are less than savory. Nevertheless, it is my hope that Catholic artists throughout the world will always be ready to share the hope of the Good News through the singular art form that is filmmaking. If you are looking for a cinematic experience that increases hope in this way, please do consider *Bella*! You will be happy that you did!



Christopher E. Holcomb

(Diocese of  
Pensacola-Tallahassee, Theology I)







# DEVELOPEMENT *Update*



Deb Lindsay  
*(Director of Development & Public Relations)*

## Engraved Brick Program to support the Mission of the Seminary

Pope Francis has declared that this is the “Year of St. Joseph,” celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the naming of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. We will honor St. Joseph and support our mission by offering a personalized brick that will be placed around our St. Joseph statue on campus.

An engraved brick is a special way to honor someone in your life or memorialize your family and loved ones. The donation for each brick is \$500, and the process is simple; the order form and information is located at [www.svdp.edu/bricks](http://www.svdp.edu/bricks). You may also reach out to us at 561-732-4424.

The location of his treasured statue is particularly serene, and seminarians love to pray here. They ask St. Joseph, who cared for the Child Jesus, to watch over them as they prepare themselves to serve the Body of Christ, the Church. There is a limited quantity of bricks. Please consider the opportunity to support the seminary and honor your loved ones.



# Reasons for Our Hope, DAY to DAY



*"I hope because Christ promises us the joy of his resurrection."*

**Will Strassberger**

Diocese of St. Augustine / Theology I



*"This summer I was able to serve numerous weddings and baptisms: this is the feature of the Church. These are the reasons for my hope!"*

**Adam Cahill**

Archdiocese of Miami / Theology II



*"My hope is rooted in Christ who said, 'I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.'"*

**Edwin Wilson**

Diocese of Las Cruces / Pre-Theology II



*"My reason for hope is the so many seminarians I have met since being here, whose life, witness and testimony inspire me and bring so much hope to me."*

**Anthony Kunnumpurath**

St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Diocese of Chicago / Pre-Theology I







*"My reason for hope is that Christ makes all things new."*

**Joseph Hart**

Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee /  
Pre-Theology I



*"The reason of my hope is the joy of showing Christ to others."*

**Enzo Rosario**

Archdiocese of Miami / Theology IV



*"My hope is in spending eternity with my heavenly family."*

**Peter O'Steen**

Diocese of Charleston / Theology II



*"Estudiando la Palabra de Dios uno comprende mas de como dar razon de su esperanza."*

**Hector M. Felix**

Diocese of Charleston / Theology II



*"Me da esperanza el saber que algún día podre administrar los sacramentos, siendo así un puente que conecta a Cristo con las personas. A la vez, sabiendo que no soy yo el que estaré actuando sino Cristo en mí"*

**Angel J. Garcia**

Diocese of Orlando / Theology III



*"The reason for my hope is the continual presence of Christ in my life, accompanying and sustaining me on every step of the journey. "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)"*

**Christopher Holcomb**

Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee /  
Theology I



*"I have hope because I find in the Church, amongst the people of God, an incredible and unique spirit of companionship where I am looked at with all my limitations, and still helped to walk towards my destiny as a son of the Father."*

**Zachary Parker**

Diocese of Orlando / Theology III



*"I consider that one reason for our Christian Hope is that God first loved us, and that he who is perfect in Hope will help us sustain ourselves in this theological virtue, even when our circumstances do not want it".*

**Johan Salas Restrepo**

Diocese of Raleigh / Theology II



# 20 Questions, 20 Answers

## Frequently Asked Questions to a Seminarian

### How long does it take to get ordained?

Studies begin with at least two years of philosophy followed by four years of theology. Between these four years of theology, a pastoral year (a year at a parish) typically occurs. This path to ordination takes at least 7 years.

### Will you stay in Florida if you get ordained?

Upon ordination, each diocesan seminarian typically returns to his home diocese. Since I am from the Diocese of Charleston, I would return to South Carolina after ordination.

### Are your teachers priests?

Many teachers at the seminary are priests who live on campus. However, there are lay and religious professors as well.

### What are some popular hobbies?

Seminarrians enjoy many hobbies such as sports, going to the beach, playing chess, watching movies, reading, playing instruments, etc.

### What sports are popular?

The most popular sports are soccer, basketball, ping pong, ultimate frisbee, and tennis. Some seminarrians enjoy running, swimming, and biking too.

### What is the average age of a seminarian?

Most seminarrians are in their twenties and thirties. A few are in their forties and fifties.

### Where do seminarrians go to college?

It depends. Some seminarrians enter into a college seminary formation program right after high school or after a year or two of college elsewhere. Others enter into a pre-theology formation program, having graduated from another college first.

### Does your family support your vocation?

The answer to this question depends on each family. I am blessed to receive support from my family.

### What time do you get up?

On the weekdays, Morning Prayer (called Lauds in Latin) usually begins at 6:45 am. I typically wake up between 5:00-6:00 am.

### Is it common for guys to leave permanently?

Just as God may call a man into seminary to discern the priesthood, God may call a man to leave seminary to continue his vocational discernment outside of seminary formation.

### Do you have opportunities to serve the community?

Each year, we receive a different "pastoral assignment" which allows us to serve the community. These include prison ministry, hospital ministry, teaching opportunities, and ministering to the poor. We attend these assignments on a weekly basis.

### Is there a place at the seminary to socialize?

The most popular place is called "The Rathskeller". It has a bar, a pool table, a dart board, and other board games.

### What are your rooms like?

Our rooms are simple yet spacious. They have a bed, a dresser, a desk, a closet, and a personal bathroom.

### How many seminarrians live at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary?

This year we have about 90 residential seminarrians.

### Are you able to leave?

Besides normal breaks, like our Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter breaks, we are allowed three free weekends each semester.

### Can people visit?

Yes, as long as the guest is a friend or family member of someone at the seminary and is approved by the guest master.

### Is it difficult to give up marriage and family life?

Yes and no. It is difficult because we naturally want to become fathers, but God gives us the grace to embrace a celibate life dedicated to him. If the priesthood is our calling, it is where we will be truly most happy and at peace.

### How much do you pray?

There are many opportunities for community prayer and personal prayer. In addition to Liturgy of the Hours and Mass, we also have our personal devotionals and a daily holy hour.

### Will you pray for me?

Absolutely! That is one of our primary ministries.

### What should I do if I am thinking about joining the seminary?

First, pray! Then, reach out to your pastor or priest, talk to a spiritual director, or reach out to your local diocesan vocation director. Our regional vocation directors' contact information can be found on the back page of this magazine. Their job is to simply help men discern God's will for their lives. They are there to listen, guide, and pray for you.



Peter O'Steen  
(Diocese of Charleston,  
Theology II)



# EVANGELIZATION:

## BEING READY TO GIVE AN EXPLANATION

*Someone else will tell my friends about Jesus. You want me to pray with them? I am not a priest...* These were the thoughts that ran through my head when I was first asked to share Jesus Christ with my friends in college. What did I fear? A few things: rejection, loss of reputation, and the loss of my friends themselves. Looking back, these fears were understandable. I knew neither of my obligation to share my faith nor how to actually share it in the first place.

In the early Church, St. Peter exhorted Christians to “always be ready to give a reason for your hope...” (1 Peter 3:15). His words have been echoed ever since. On November 21, 1964, they rang particularly true. On that day, the Second Vatican Council promulgated a dogmatic constitution called *Lumen Gentium*. The document stated that “the laity...is given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth.” (*Lumen Gentium*, 33). In other words, we lay people are called to share the person of Jesus Christ in places where clergy cannot reach on a regular basis: the workplace, the home, the school, the neighborhood, and so on. The saving mission of Christ cannot be limited to the parish property. It must go out to all people! We are the ones to carry it forward.

Practically speaking, what does this look like? Drawing from my own experience as a FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) missionary on a college campus, there are a few things that I can share.

First, we cannot share what we do not possess. A daily encounter with Jesus Christ allows this light to come into our own being. Only then can we reflect his light to others to draw them in. All of our efforts in FOCUS began with prayer, the simple encounter with Jesus Christ. From there, our ministry flowed.



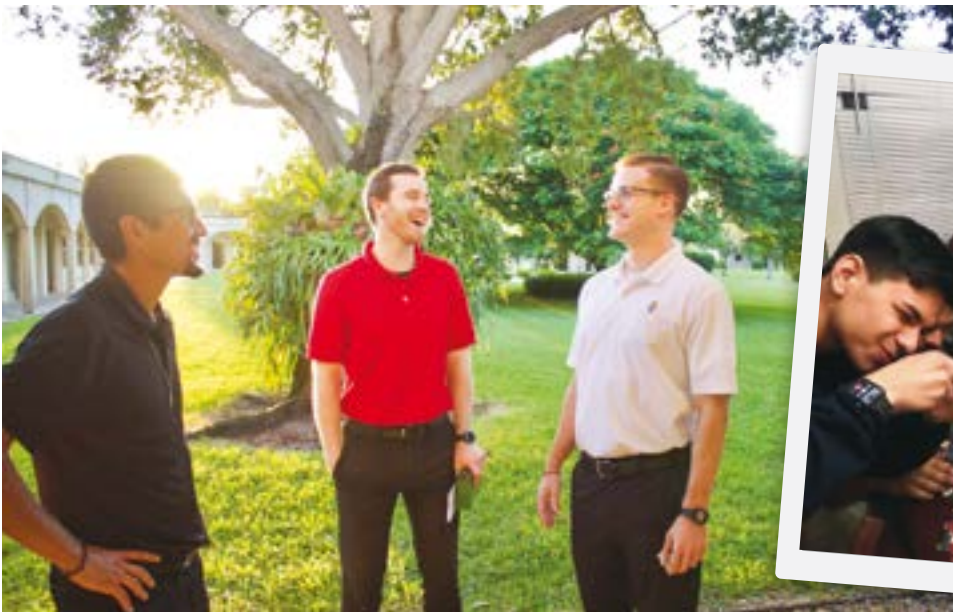
Bryan L. Roberts  
(Archdiocese of Atlanta, Pre-Theology II)

Second, we must remember that the saving mission of the Church is not our work but the work of the Holy Spirit. In the heart that loves God, the Holy Spirit bears certain fruits: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23) These fruits help us to share Jesus Christ with others in a genuine way. Imagine the saints, for instance. Their joy, peace, patience, kindness, and goodness were among the best tools of their evangelization. But, this work of sharing Jesus Christ was never their own.

Third, evangelization is most often found in the little things. I am reminded of St. Therese of Lisieux. She lived a life of humility, simplicity, and trust in God, largely unknown to the outside world. Today, however, she is recognized as the official patroness of missionaries throughout the world.

How did this happen? To put it simply, during her earthly life, St. Therese followed her “Little Way.” She resolved to say yes to even the most seemingly insignificant opportunities to show love. Because evangelization is an act of love, it works in the same way. In the humblest way possible, St. Therese was a true missionary, a true evangelist. During my time in FOCUS, my missionary teammates and I prayed daily for our students and supported them in their curricular or extracurricular activities (e.g. gathering a group of Catholic students together to attend the concerts of a fellow Catholic music major). These little acts of love truly warm hearts to receiving the Gospel.

St. Peter’s words from earlier may seem daunting at first. However, if we remember that evangelization 1) begins with the love of God, 2) is always His work, and 3) often consists of loving in little, ordinary ways, there is little to fear. Evangelization becomes something simple and ordinary. It becomes a matter of love. When we are in Love, how can we not share that love with others?





## *Farewell to Bishop Felipe Estévez*

# A LIVING TESTAMENT TO HOPE

All that we do in our spiritual life proceeds from what we have freely received from God. Our faith is, first and foremost, a response to God's initiative. This is perhaps welcome news as each of us sees the challenges before the Church. They are real and ever-present. But, we believe that God is moving and taking the initiative. We need only open up to Him, listen to His Word of love, and respond faithfully.

The local community of St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary - and the Church at large - has been blessed with a lived example of this truth. The life and ministry of Bishop Felipe Estévez thus far is a testament to the good that God may accomplish through a heart disposed to Him. In our difficult time, Bishop Estévez is a testament to this hope.

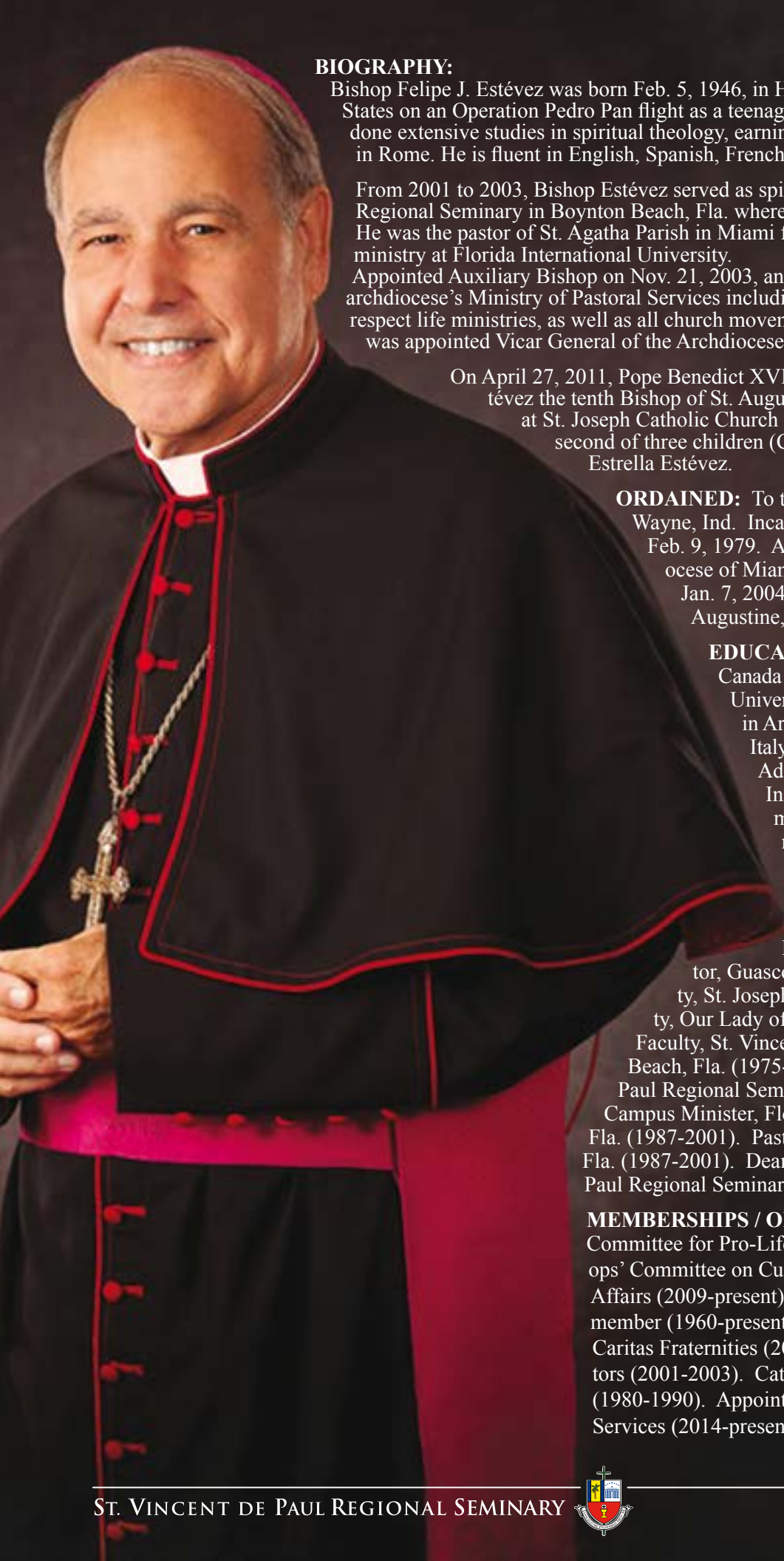
Bishop Estévez was born on February 5, 1946 in Havana, Cuba. As a teenager, he came to the United States through Operation Peter Pan (Pedro Pan), an undercover evacuation of nearly 14,000 unaccompanied children from Cuba. He was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood at the age of 24 and began his priestly ministry serving in various seminaries including St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary itself. He served as a faculty member from 1975-77 and Rector from 1980-86. Afterwards, he returned to parish life, serving as pastor of St. Agatha Catholic Church in Miami from 1987-2001. He returned to St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary as the Dean of Spiritual Formation for two years before being named and ordained an Auxiliary Bishop in early 2004. In 2011, he was installed as Bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine where he continues to serve today.

As the Bishop of St. Augustine, he led efforts for the renovation of the Cathedral-Basilica of the Sacred Heart, developed a diocesan strategic plan, and oversaw an increase in vocations to the priesthood within the diocese. These accomplishments are true marks of giving glory to God. In a particular way, Bishop Estévez has continually entrusted his flock - the people and families of the Diocese St. Augustine - to the care of the Blessed Mother. As Spanish settlers arrived to present-day St. Augustine in the early 1600s, they brought with them a devotion to Our Lady of La Leche y Buen Parto (translated literally as Our Lady of Milk and Good Delivery). The devotion has lasted nearly 400 hundred years and has deepened in the hearts and minds of many under Bishop Estévez. Just recently on October 11, 2021, the Diocese celebrated the Canonical Coronation of Our Lady of La Leche with the approval and recognition of Pope Francis. This constituted a formal crowning of Mary done by Pope Francis through one of his representatives in the United States. This once-in-a-lifetime coronation will surely have a lasting effect in the lives of the faithful throughout the Church.

Throughout his priestly and episcopal ministry, Bishop Estévez has served a range of peoples: seminarians, parishioners and their families, and nearly everyone in between as bishop. What is most noteworthy is his devotion to Our Lady of La Leche and seeing this devotion deepen in the hearts of his people. In our culture, which prioritizes immediate and 'practical' action, some may downplay the significance of the recent Canonical Coronation. However, with time and God's grace, this seed that Bishop Estévez has planted with his flock will bear great fruit. In conversations with those who attended the coronation, it seems that it already has! In any case, the same may be expected of Bishop Estévez's entire ministry. May each of us reap its fruits - increases in faith, *hope*, and love - for generations to come. Thank you, Bishop Estévez. All thanks be to God. May He watch over you as you prepare to retire. Nuestra Señora de La Leche y Buen Parto, ruega por nosotros.







## BIOGRAPHY:

Bishop Felipe J. Estévez was born Feb. 5, 1946, in Havana, Cuba and arrived in the United States on an Operation Pedro Pan flight as a teenager. He was ordained in 1970 and has done extensive studies in spiritual theology, earning a doctorate from Gregorian University in Rome. He is fluent in English, Spanish, French and Italian.

From 2001 to 2003, Bishop Estévez served as spiritual director of St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, Fla. where he served as rector from 1980 to 1986. He was the pastor of St. Agatha Parish in Miami for 14 years, while also directing campus ministry at Florida International University.

Appointed Auxiliary Bishop on Nov. 21, 2003, and ordained Jan. 7, 2004, he oversaw the archdiocese's Ministry of Pastoral Services including family life, youth, campus, prison and respect life ministries, as well as all church movements and new communities. In 2010, he was appointed Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Miami.

On April 27, 2011, Pope Benedict XVI named Auxiliary Bishop Felipe J. Estévez the tenth Bishop of St. Augustine. He was installed on June 2, 2011, at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Jacksonville. Bishop Estévez is the second of three children (Carlos and Marty) of the late Adriano and Estrella Estévez.

**ORDAINED:** To the priesthood, May 30, 1970, Fort Wayne, Ind. Incardinated into the Archdiocese of Miami, Feb. 9, 1979. Appointed Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Miami, Nov. 21, 2003. Episcopal Ordination Jan. 7, 2004 in Miami, Fla. Installed Bishop of St. Augustine, June 2, 2011, in Jacksonville, Fla.

**EDUCATION:** Montreal University, Montreal, Canada (1970), Licentiate in Theology Barry University, Miami Shores, Fla. (1977), Master's in Art Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy (1980), Doctorate in Sacred Theology. Additional courses at The Warren H. Deem Institute for Theological Education Management (1982); University of Creighton (seminar for spiritual directors, 2001); Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality, Chicago (2001); St. Luke Institute (psychosexual integration workshop, 2002)

**PRIESTLY MINISTRY:** Associate pastor, Guascoran Parish, Honduras (1970-71). Faculty, St. Joseph Seminary, Honduras (1971-72). Faculty, Our Lady of Suyapa Seminary, Honduras (1972-75). Faculty, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, Boynton Beach, Fla. (1975-77). President/Rector, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, Boynton Beach, Fla. (1980-86). Campus Minister, Florida International University, Miami, Fla. (1987-2001). Pastor, St. Agatha Catholic Church, Miami, Fla. (1987-2001). Dean of Spiritual Formation, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, Boynton Beach, Fla. (2001-03)

**MEMBERSHIPS / ORGANIZATIONS:** U.S. Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities (2012-present). U.S. Bishops' Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church – Hispanic Affairs (2009-present). Operation Pedro Pan, Inc., founding member (1960-present) National Responsible for USA Jesus Caritas Fraternities (2002-2004). Federation of Spiritual Directors (2001-2003). Catholic Theological Society of America (1980-1990). Appointed Board of Directors of Catholic Relief Services (2014-present)



# THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL BUT THE LABORERS ARE FEW!

*Can't stop thinking maybe you are being called to be a priest?  
Do you feel the Lord tugging at your heart to serve the people  
of God through the ministerial priesthood of Jesus Christ?*

St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary  
10701 S. Military Trail  
Boynton Beach, FL 33436

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
West Palm Beach, FL  
Permit No. 1057



## Archdiocese of Atlanta

Fr. Rey Pineda  
rpineda@archatl.com  
(404) 920-7460



## Diocese of Charleston

Msgr. Richard Harris  
vocations@  
charlestondiocese.org  
(843) 261-0532



## Diocese of Las Cruces

Fr. Ruben Romero  
aurenardc.org  
(575) 523-7577



## Archdiocese of Miami

Fr. Matthew Gomez  
vocations@theadom.org  
(305) 762-1136



## Diocese of Orlando

Fr. Joshua Swallows  
jswallows@  
orlandodiocese.org  
(407) 768-3113



## Diocese of Palm Beach

Fr. Daniel Daza-Jaller  
vocations@  
diocesepb.org  
(561) 775-9552



## Diocese of Pensacola- Tallahassee

Fr. Tim Holeda  
frtim@cocathedral.com  
(850) 222-9630



## Diocese of Raleigh

Fr. James Magee  
fr.james.magee@  
raldioc.org  
(984) 900-3403



## Diocese of Savannah

Fr. Pablo Migone  
vocations@diosav.org  
(912) 201-4113



## Diocese of St. Augustine

Fr. Steven Zehler  
vocations@dosafl.com  
(904) 262-3200  
ext. 101



## Diocese of St. Petersburg

Fr. Chuck Dornquist  
spvocation@dosp.org  
(727) 325-3452



## Diocese of Venice

Fr. Shawn Roser  
rosere@  
dioceseofvenice.org  
(941) 486-4720

## WANT TO KNOW WAYS THAT YOU MIGHT HELP SVDP?

**Consider a donation** that stays at the seminary and supports the critical mission of forming priests for the future of our parishes. Go to [www.svdp.edu](http://www.svdp.edu) and look at the top for the button with the heart that says Make a Donation.

- **Send a donation via check** made out to St. Vincent de Paul Seminary and send to SVDP Attn: Development at: 10701 S. Military Trail, Boynton Beach, FL 33436 or email us at [development@svdp.edu](mailto:development@svdp.edu)
- **Purchase an engraved brick** to be placed at the foot of our St. Joseph Statue on campus at [www.svdp.edu/bricks](http://www.svdp.edu/bricks)

**ALSO CONSIDER OUR GIVING SOCIETIES** [www.svdp.edu/giving-societies](http://www.svdp.edu/giving-societies)

- **Rector's Guild** members provide a source of spiritual and financial support on an annual basis for the unmet needs and future challenges of the seminary. They have committed to giving \$1,000 or more annually and attend our Rector's Guild Retreat
- **Legacy Society** members have expressed their commitment to St. Vincent's and extended their legacy of faith beyond their lifetime by including the seminary in their estate planning. A legacy gift is the perfect means to achieve personal, philanthropic objectives. There are many creative and flexible options. These gifts include a bequest in your will, naming St. Vincent's as a beneficiary for a retirement plan, life insurance or a gift annuity.



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL  
REGIONAL SEMINARY