

# SEEDS OF HOPE

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

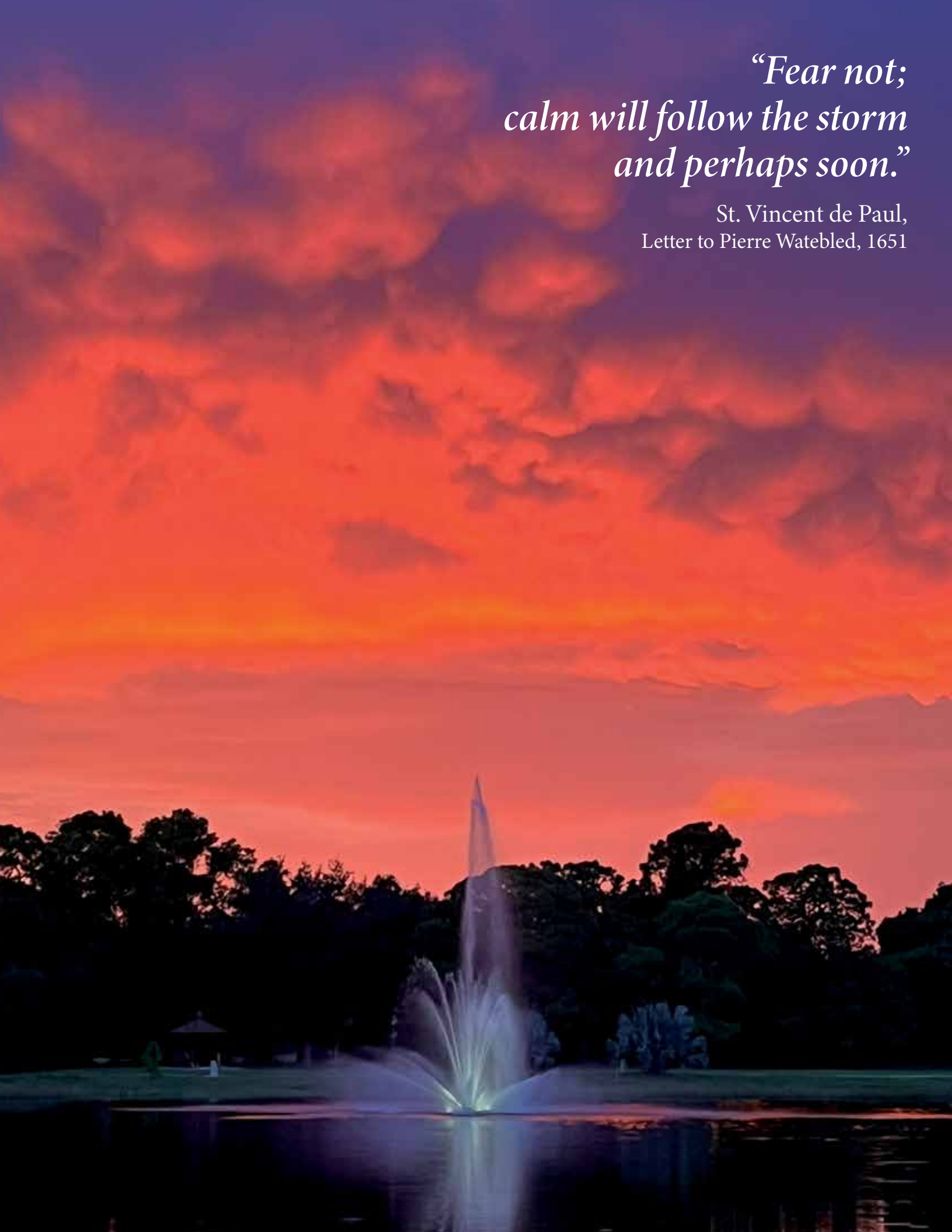
FALL 2023, ISSUE XXX

*Behold,  
I make all things new.”*

*Rev. 21:5*



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL  
REGIONAL SEMINARY



“Fear not;  
calm will follow the storm  
and perhaps soon.”

St. Vincent de Paul,  
Letter to Pierre Watebled, 1651

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# Rector's Message

Dear Friends of SVDP,

“Behold, I make all things new.” (Rev. 21:5). As we thank God for all the good He has done in the 60 years of history of St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, these words of Jesus help us to focus on the new things He is doing in our calling, and calling us to do. The articles in this issue of *Seeds of Hope* address the many things Jesus is constantly making new in our midst.

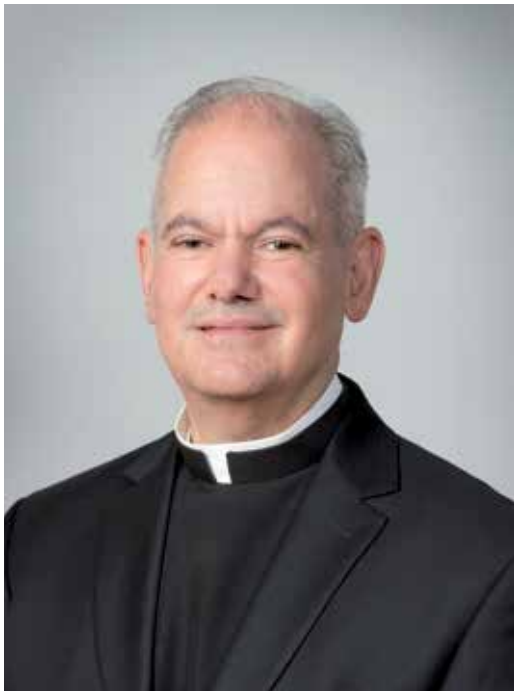
Thus, you can read about a new program, the propaedeutic stage for men just beginning seminary formation, in a collaborative article written by Fr. Kevin and the Propaedeutic Year seminarians. Additionally, Fr. Art Proulx of the Diocese of St. Petersburg looks at our 60th anniversary from the perspective of various past roles: seminarian, alumnus, vocation director, and faculty member. On the same theme, Deacon Phillip Mills of Orlando offers his reflection on the Mass for our seminary's Diamond Jubilee. Several seminarians write about ways they have seen Jesus make all things new: Max Medina of Beaumont at World Youth Day in Lisbon, Jacob Gwynn of Venice in relief efforts after Hurricane Ian in 2022, Thomas Ageeb of Palm Beach at the seminarian basketball tournament at St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee, and Chrystian Bis of Atlanta at the Institute for Priestly Formation. Two articles look forward and outwards to ways we can experience Jesus making all things new: Jacob Crowell of St. Augustine considering the wonder of outer space, and Deacon Pete O'Steen of the Diocese of Charleston reflecting on the wonders of the Eucharist as the US Church continues on a journey of Eucharistic Revival.

We hope you enjoy this issue. May God continue to bless you in the New Year as Jesus makes all things new for you.

In Christ the High Priest,



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



“May God  
continue to bless you  
in the New Year  
as Jesus makes  
all things new for you.”

# Warm Welcomes *and* Grateful Goodbyes

## WELCOME TO...

### FR. JOSE LOPEZ

Fr. Jose Enrique Lopez was born on August 1, 1990, in Habana, Cuba, the only child of José López and Lissette Alvarez. He graduated from St. John Vianney College Seminary with a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, and St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary with a Master of Divinity. Upon ordination in 2019, he was configured into a faithful priest of Jesus Christ to serve in the Archdiocese of Miami. His first assignment was at Saint Gregory the Great in Plantation, FL. He studied at the University of Navarra, and is currently working to complete his licentiate in Systematic and Historical Theology at the Catholic University of America. Fr. Lopez is excited to now serve at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary as a formator and assistant professor of Systematic Theology.



### DR. JOHN DENNIS

Dr. John Dennis is a native of Florida, however, he has lived most of the last 25 years outside the US. He is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (MDiv), Boston University (STM), and the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium (MA/STL & PhD/STD). For

the last 17 years, Dr. Dennis has taught in Protestant Evangelical institutions. However, now that he and his wife Julia have been received into the Catholic Church (Nov. 2022 in London), he is thrilled to be able to serve the Catholic Church, and specifically the students of SVDP. Dr. Dennis' primary academic and teaching focus is Sacred Scripture. Dr. Dennis is honored to have the opportunity to delve deeply into the Church's canon for and with the SVDP students, and ultimately, to equip them to love and be formed by Christ.

## FAREWELL TO...



### FR. CHRISTIAN SÁENZ, SJ

SVDP bids a fond farewell this past December to Fr. Christian Sáenz, SJ, adjunct professor of Church History and Latin since 2019. An alumnus of Syracuse

University, Fordham University, and the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (where he earned three degrees, culminating in a Doctorate in Church History), Fr. Sáenz has consistently been one of our seminarians' favorite teachers. As he prepares to make his final vows as a member of the Society of Jesus, he has been called to return to Rome to teach Church History at the Gregorian, the Jesuits' flagship school of theology, founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola in 1551. He will be greatly missed at SVDP, but we offer him our prayerful best wishes as he moves onto this next stage of ministry.

### KEITH PARKER

When Msgr. Steven Bosso hired Keith Parker as Plant Manager in 2004, the then-aging 41-year-old seminary campus looked much different than the one he leaves in 2023. For 19 years, Keith has predominantly served St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary as Campus Administrator/Treasurer. In this capacity, Keith has touched every corner of the seminary campus, contributed to its strategic vision, and prepared the seminary to embrace many more years of priestly formation in the years ahead.



Before joining the seminary team, Keith gained a variety of experiences and skills that provided him with the unique expertise to lead the various projects that have made the seminary campus and facilities what they are today. Initiated by Msgr. Keith Brennan and later directed by Bishop David Toups, Keith was the driving force behind the \$15 million project to build two new residence halls, renovate the existing living spaces, enhance the natural beauty of the campus, and transform an aging seminary into the modern living and learning space we enjoy today. Meanwhile, he worked diligently to ensure the seminary's financial stability.

As we say goodbye to Keith and pray that he and Karen enjoy RVing across America, our community is forever touched by his love, efforts, and contributions that will long serve those preparing for priesthood for decades to come.

# “Behold, I make all things new.” *Rev. 21:5*



**SVDP Aerial View**  
1963



**St. Vincent's Chapel**  
1964



**SVDP Aerial View**  
1965



**Class of 1968**



**Library**  
1980



**SVDP**  
in  
**2023**



**Library**  
1980



**Admin Building**  
1995



**St. Mary's Chapel**  
1997



# THE NEW PROPAEDEUTIC STAGE

*With Christ, we learn to become more open to each new moment, and we learn to receive these moments from Him who “makes all things new”. (Rev. 21:5)*

by Fr. Kevin McQuone and the SVDP Propaedeutic Seminarists:  
Anthony Cabrera – Diocese of Venice in Florida, Marc D’Angelo – Diocese of Charleston,  
Tony Franco– Archdiocese of Atlanta, Loc Huynh – Diocese of St. Augustine,  
Anthony Pham– Diocese of Raleigh, Garrett Peters – Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

The 2023 academic year at SVDP has a fresh start. However, we’re not just referring to a great new cohort of seminarists. We’re referring to a new stage of formation that precedes the study of philosophy and theology. This is the ‘propaedeutic’ (prōpē dōōdik) stage, a time for new seminarists to focus on that which is specifically *foundational* to priestly formation. The new Program for Priestly Formation (PPF6) has directed seminarists to launch a propaedeutic stage, normally a year long, creating a space to focus on human and spiritual formation before further studies.

With its emphasis on human and spiritual formation, the propaedeutic stage offers unique opportunities for more profound growth in coming to know oneself, and in coming to know God. Throughout the propaedeutic stage at SVDP, seminarists limit their use of electronic devices and take a few, basic courses on subjects such as prayer and scripture. They practice silence through various retreats and develop profound friendships through shared experiences—all of which are ordered towards having a deeper relationship with God.

This year, the propaedeutic stage at SVDP, has offered much excitement through formative trips and off-campus activities. These activities have included backpacking in the wilderness of Wyoming, attending a private mini-course from the Theology of the Body Institute, touring St. Augustine to learn about the history of the Church in Florida, and participating in the Mass which closed the local phase of the cause of canonization for the Martyrs of La Florida. The propaedeutic seminarists also regularly minister to the homeless communities of Palm Beach. Finally, for three weeks in January 2024, the propaedeutic seminarists will live among those suffering in poverty during a poverty immersion experience.

However, these unique and remarkable events do not describe what indeed underlies the greatness of the propaedeutic experience: the unplanned present moment. From surprise birthday parties, to personal conversations among friends, to all the seemingly ordinary and ‘little’ moments of life, in these ways we encounter life in its full stature, with all its highs and lows. But what makes this period special is that in the midst of newness and change, there is a real sense of purpose and meaning. This disposition and direction transforms the difficulties into blessings. We have especially found hope before our Lord in prayer. With Christ, we learn to become more open to each new moment, and we learn to receive these moments from Him who “makes all things new.” (Rev 21:5)

God calls all people to the adventure of sainthood. For men now starting seminary formation, God is drawing us more deeply into this adventure through the propaedeutic experience. And for any man wondering if he may be called to the priesthood—don’t be afraid to try. God could be calling you. †



At top: Fr. Kevin McQuone, Director of Propaedeutic Formation. At bottom: State Capitol building in Tallahassee, FL. Facing page: Backpacking in Bridger-Teton National Forest, WY.



# Celebrating 60 Years OF SEMINARY FORMATION

by Fr. Arthur Proulx, SVDP Class of 1979,  
Diocese of St. Petersburg

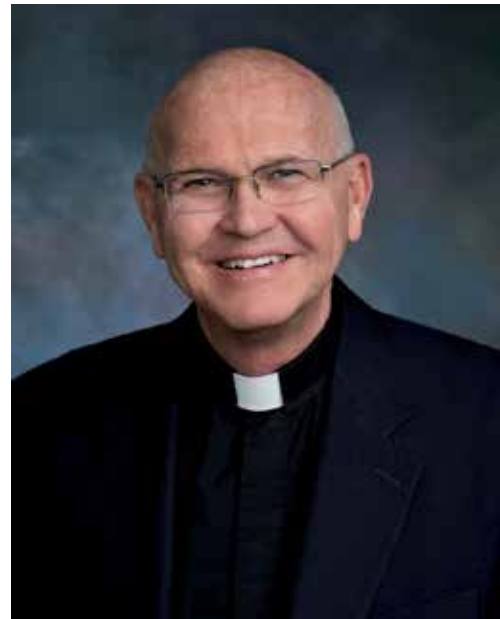
Last September, I was delighted to receive an invitation from Msgr. Stephen Bosso to join his table for the Friends of the Seminary Dinner and to attend the 60th Anniversary Mass for St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary.

Having spent six years as a student and three years as Dean of Spiritual Formation at SVDP, I have a special love for the seminary. After my time on faculty, I continued my close association with SVDP by serving as the Diocesan Director of Vocations in St. Petersburg for six years, and later becoming a member of the Board of Trustees.

Concelebrating the 60th Anniversary Mass was a true joy. In my memory, I was brought back to December 8, 1971, when I first attended Mass in St. Vincent's Chapel. I was a student at St John Vianney Seminary, and we traveled to SVDP for the annual "Major-Minor Day." I have a vivid memory of seminarian Jim Kreitner singing a solo rendition of the Beatles' recently released song, "Let It Be." After his ordination, Jim Kreitner served on the seminary faculty.

Following his untimely death, a recreation room was dedicated to his memory, now known as the "Kreitner Lounge." Among the other seminarians of my day was Thomas Wenski, now the Archbishop of Miami, who was the principal celebrant of the 60th Anniversary Mass.

Moreover, witnessing Bishop Toups receive the St. Vincent de Paul Award added to my personal joy and nostalgia. I first met the Bishop of Beaumont when he and his family moved to Clearwater during his junior year



of high school. I was the vocation director and in residence at his parish, St Cecilia. Of course, I took note of his sparkling personality and religious devotion. I prayed for him and was delighted when, after one year at Florida Southern College, he called me about applying to the seminary. His nine-year tenure as rector propelled the seminary to its present status as one of the finest seminaries in the country.

Additionally, the Friends of the Seminary Dinner was remarkable. Msgr Bosso, the chair of the event, deserves high praise for his long service to St. Vincent de Paul. I have deep personal admiration for him. Over the years, I have witnessed his absolute dedication to the Church and to SVDP. Several times, he had to put aside his desires and plans to do what was best for the seminary and for the Church. In addition to serving as an outstanding rector and scripture scholar, he is also a notable musician and fine entertainer.

The presence of the Missionaries of Charity and their acceptance of the St. Vincent de Paul Award reminds me of our motto, "He Sent Me to Preach Good News to the Poor." Beginning with the early years of the seminary, there has always been a desire among the seminary community to reach out to the poor and suffering. This desire has been made manifest through the seminary's various mission trips to Latin America, and weekly apostolic visits to prisons, detention centers, migrant camps, hospitals, etc. Proverbs 14 says, "Blessed is the one who is kind to the needy." Perhaps this is why, for 60 years, our seminary has not only survived but flourished. Ad multos annos! †



May 17, 1980 - Ordination day with mother of Fr. Proulx -  
Cathedral of St. Jude, St. Petersburg



“Ad  
multos  
annos!”



# 60 YEARS OF FORMING PRIESTLY HEARTS

In 2015, I toured St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary for the very first time. On the tour, which included a visit to the auditorium, we saw photos of every seminarian that had graduated from SVDP. It was an inspiring moment to realize that I was joining an incredible legacy of priestly service and zeal. This year, SVDP had the opportunity to celebrate and give thanks to God for the gift of this legacy that now stretches 60 years!

Our celebration truly encompassed what our community is most grateful for in our history: the grace to serve the Church with loving and devoted priests. Our gathering on the feast day of St. Vincent de Paul (Sept. 27) brought this precious gift to the forefront as we had priests gather from

all over Florida and the southeastern United States to celebrate Mass. While some priests were ordained this last year, others have served the Church for more than 50 years. It was an inspiring moment for myself and the seminarians to speak and pray with so many priests who were formed by this institution.

When we see the fruit of our seminary's work, the words of our theme for the year become visible: "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5) We all can testify to being made new through the ministry of priests, and for many of us, specifically priests from SVDP. Our seminary has been blessed to participate in Christ's work of renewal in so many hearts, and we have great hope for this renewal to continue in years to come. †

*by Dcn. Phillip Mills, Configuration IV,  
Diocese of Orlando*



*by Jacob Crowell, Configuration I,  
Diocese of St. Augustine*

## BEHOLDING THE *Mystery* OF SPACE

As I grew up less than 15 minutes away from the Kennedy Space Center with two parents working there, it was only a matter of time before I fell in love with space. I grew up watching Star Wars and Star Trek films, and I became enamored by the mystery that lies physically beyond this earth. At the same time, going to Mass and Catholic school as a child encouraged me to be ravenously curious about all the great mysteries of the faith. Entering college, I was still searching for the unknown, and I wanted to know more. I studied Physics and Astronomy at the University of Florida, and I joined the Catholic Gators. Over time, in pursuing the mystery of God, the Lord helped me to appreciate and wonder at the mysteries of the universe...and I became enthralled.

Galileo once said, "Mathematics is the language with which God has written the universe." Indeed, as I continued to study, I found more and more how great logic resides in the foundation of the universe. It was as if God signed His name on everything. The more I studied the world, the more I fell in love with Him. It is true what Louis Pasteur once said, "A bit of science distances one from God, but much science nears one to Him." With each step of my studies, I felt God calling me closer to Him. Space may be the final frontier, but it is a frontier that leads us back to Him who makes all things new. †

*“To look out at this kind of creation  
out here and not believe  
in God is to me impossible.”*

*-John Glenn during the 2nd flight of the Discovery Space Shuttle.*

# WORLD YOUTH DAY 2023



by Max Medina, Configuration II,  
Diocese of Beaumont

It was an incredible blessing to attend World Youth Day (WYD) 2023 in Lisbon, Portugal. In short, it was eye-opening, taxing, transformative, hope-filled, and energetic. The experience was certainly more of a pilgrimage than a vacation, between walking many miles, traveling many hours, sitting in many lines, and camping overnight in a jam-packed field. Still, there was beauty amid the challenging moments as I was accompanied by so many young Catholics from around the world undergoing the same sacrifices for the sake of coming together to celebrate our Catholic faith. I also got to learn about different cultures and the state of the Church in various countries by interacting with other pilgrims. Moreover, the trip was a spiritual experience, as I had the opportunity to pray in Fatima, in the presence of the Holy Father, and alongside a massive representation of the universal Church.

The experience was ultimately one of encountering God. It struck me while at Mass with over one million pilgrims that I was in the presence of something well beyond myself, something transcendent. Seeing so many young people, all unique and unrepeatable, gathered by the Holy Spirit, left me speechless. Before my eyes was the very fulfillment of St. Paul's words to the Corinthians that although we are composed of many parts, we are still one body. (1 Cor 12:12) I also witnessed the culmination of Christ's final commission to "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19) as all but one nation throughout the world was represented at WYD 2023.

WYD showed me that the transformative effects of Jesus' salvation, carried out by the Holy Spirit, is still alive and active in the world. Jesus, who "makes all things new" (Rev 21:5), has brought and continues to bring a fresh wave of young life into the Church. My whole demeanor was made new as I was humbled by my littleness in the midst of so many rejuvenated young Catholic people. I realized that God continues to radically change lives and raise up saints in our current era.

After my WYD experience, one thing can be certain - there is hope in and for the universal Church and the world. For those able, I strongly recommend and encourage you to either go to the next WYD in Seoul, South Korea, or help send a young family member or friend. Whoever goes will be signing up for an unforgettable endeavor that will strengthen their faith, vocation, sense of wonder, and appreciation for the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church." †



*"I was in  
the presence of  
something well  
beyond myself."*



by Jacob Gwynn, Configuration III,  
Diocese of Venice in Florida

Returning to Venice Island after Hurricane Ian was a sobering experience. The once serene landscape had now seen nature's force. Trees laid torn across roads, roofs, and on top of abandoned cars. The grass, once verdant, now turned into mud as the hurricane mingled sand and debris. The city's theater, formally a prominent landmark when crossing the bridge onto the island, had been rendered unrecognizable. The hurricane had stripped the theater down to its skeletal structure. As I laid eyes on the cathedral property, I noticed that the cathedral itself had escaped significant damage. On the other hand, the cathedral school bore the brunt of the storm.

These were the sites of the aftermath of Hurricane Ian in 2022, a deadly and highly destructive category-five Atlantic hurricane...and Venice Island had not even seen the worst of it. Lee County reported

the most damage, including the barrier islands like Sanibel and Pine Island – where my father had lost his home. As images of these areas made national news, many asked, "What now?"

We asked ourselves, "What comes next?" and "How do we move forward?" Yet this is not the first time, especially in Florida, we've experienced natural disasters such as hurricanes. Many people after devastating events ask similar questions. Reflecting on my pastoral year experience, it becomes evident that finding resolutions to these questions is often a prolonged and, at times, an endless process. While we can build back and build stronger, we quickly realize our hope does not come from temporal goods.

The Old Testament's ancient wisdom provides hope, reminding us that we are not alone in facing trials. The many examples found in



*“While we can build back and build stronger, we quickly realize our hope does not come from temporal goods.”*

the Old Testament reveal a pattern: after destruction comes a new creation. Take for example one of the most iconic stories –Noah's flood. Amidst the chaos and destruction, a new beginning emerged as the waters receded, revealing God's promise of renewal.

Just as the people in history have faced their trials, we too confront our storms. In the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, a remarkable display of spirit emerged as dedicated volunteers rushed to clear debris. Over the next few days, the office phones were constantly ringing, with parishioners eager to lend a hand to both the church and the surrounding community. With broom and shovel in hand, the volunteers' efforts not only cleared the wreckage, but also embodied the promise of renewal found in the book of Revelation, "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev 21:5)

In my experience in dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, it was witnessing the community's dedication in lending a hand to their neighbors that made God's promise of recreation come to life. In the face of storms, we find strength and hope in the enduring wisdom of the Scriptures. We are not alone in the trials that we face, for the ancient stories remind us that after destruction, there awaits a new creation. With this in mind, we can navigate the storms of life with faith, knowing that ultimately, God shall make all things new. †

# THE Aftermath OF Hurricane Ian





# GIVING Glory to God ON THE COURT

by Thomas Ageeb, Discipleship II,  
Diocese of Palm Beach

Since the time I was four, basketball has played a major role in my life. Growing up, my parents encouraged me to use my gifts and talents through sports, which also allowed me to make friends and learn important life skills like teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. Through these skills, I not only became a better athlete, but I also became equipped to overcome the challenges of life.

In high school, my dream was to coach basketball at the collegiate level. Thus, when the opportunity arose to coach the SVDP basketball team for the 2023 St. Francis de Sales Basketball Tournament, I was filled with complete joy. In my nine years of

coaching basketball, never have I had a more exciting and fulfilling time than when working with the seminary brothers to resurrect the basketball program! Although this was the first time SVDP played in a tournament since January 2020, we grew together as brothers and glorified God through our performance on the court.

Moreover, while in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for the interseminary tournament, we not only grew in brotherhood as a team, but also with the men from other seminaries around the United States. Through the gift of basketball, God renewed a spirit of youthfulness and joy in each of our lives, and ultimately allowed us to give glory to God through our play and prayer. As our team heads back to Milwaukee on February 9-11, 2024, please pray that this continues to be an experience of grace. Maybe we might even win the tournament! ‡

# The “Givenness” of Mission

In my life as a missionary with the poor and homeless in New York, I came to experience in profound ways the reality of what St. John Paul II liked to call “givenness.” By this, he referred to the beautiful mode by which the Lord entrusts others to our care, the way in which others become gifts to us.

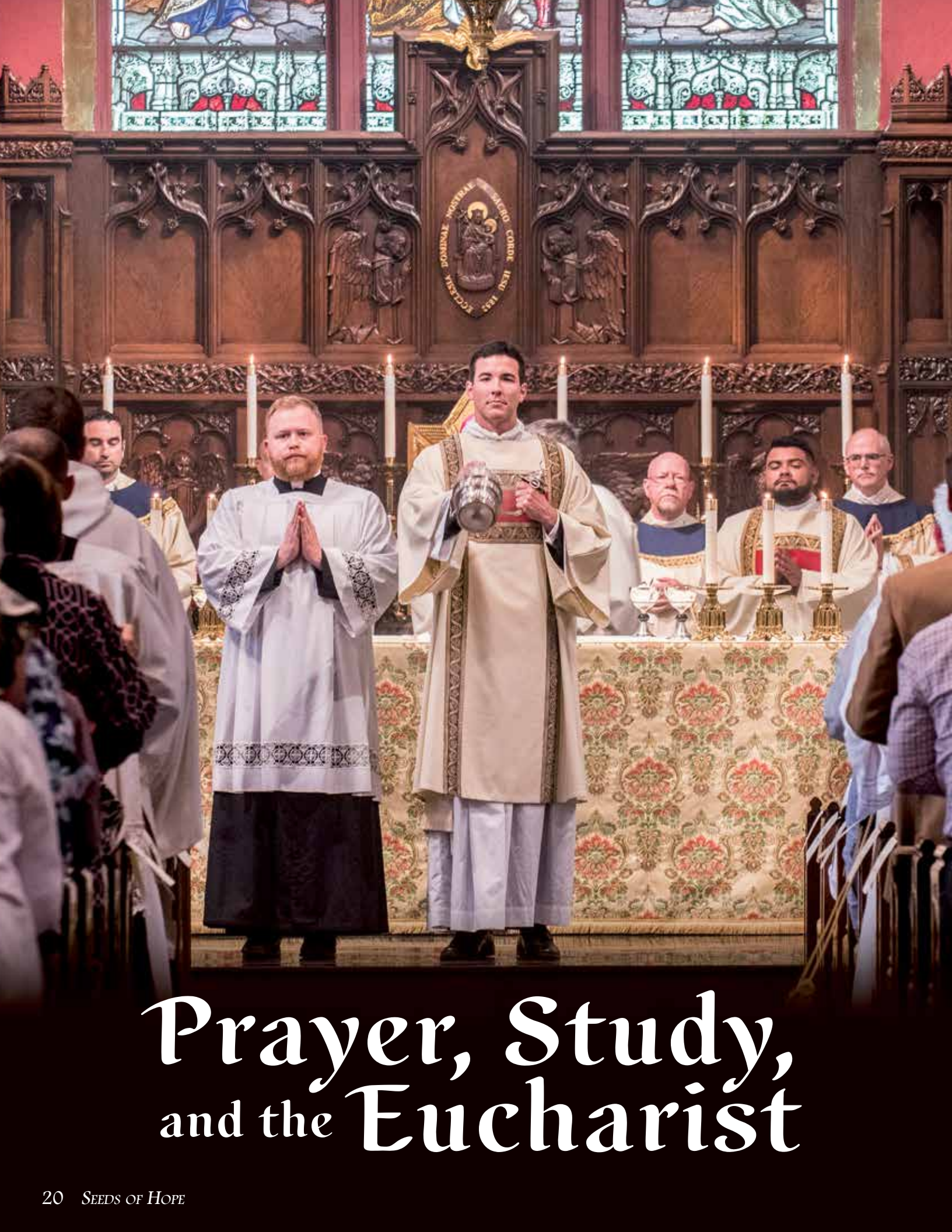
In reflecting on “givenness,” I am drawn back to a memory in a poor, South Bronx neighborhood. Another missionary and I saw a distressed woman wandering aimlessly on the sidewalk before stepping out onto a busy road. She looked out at the oncoming cars as if she were begging them to run her over. As she mercifully and miraculously arrived on the other side, the other missionary and I ran over to see if she was alright. In a daze, she asked what we were doing and who we were. We very simply and calmly spoke to her about our mission, and we asked for her name and how she was doing. Over the course of the conversation, as she opened up, we spoke to her gently about the hope and renewal that exists in Jesus. Her demeanor changed and she began to smile. We hugged her, and she said softly, “Thank you. You guys changed my mind about what I was going to do.” In this encounter, this poor woman, and indeed the other missionary and I, were renewed by the “givenness” of encountering Jesus in the other. Behind the truth of givenness, that every person and encounter is a gift, all the baptized can confidently point to the hope that exists within every human experience and relationship, “Behold, I make all things new.” (Rev. 21:5) ‡



by Matthew Fulton, Discipleship I,  
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Matthew Fulton served as a full time missionary for LAMP (Lay Apostolic Ministries with the Poor) in the Archdiocese of New York from 2021-2023. For more information about LAMP, check out the QR code or visit: <https://lampcatholicministries.org/>.





# Prayer, Study, and the Eucharist

by Dcn. Pete O'Steen, Configuration IV,  
Diocese of Charleston

Most of us are familiar with the staggering statistics regarding US Catholics' lack of belief in Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist. The United States bishops are no strangers to this issue. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) centered their 2022-2024 strategic plan on the theme "Created Anew by the Body and Blood of Christ, Source of our Healing and Hope." The Catholic Church in the US is currently in the third year of this strategic plan which calls for a Eucharistic Revival at the parish level. In addition to Mass, Adoration, and Reconciliation, the bishops have encouraged pastors to engage parishioners in events that focus on catechetical instruction to help the faithful enter into the mystery of the Eucharist. The Eucharistic Revival will culminate at the 10th National Eucharistic Congress in July 2024 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

In seminary, we are reminded of the connection between our studies and prayer. One of our professors at SVDP reminds us that "theology is best done on one's knees," while another professor says that "Jesus came to take away our sins, not our brains!" Our classes begin in prayer, which grounds our studies in the context of Christ, who sustains our very lives. Moreover, I can honestly say that my greatest learning experiences at the seminary have occurred in the chapel after great discussions in the classroom! Nonetheless, there still exists the temptation to separate study and prayer.

A typical danger in the Christian life is to over intellectualize the mysteries of the faith. When taken to the extreme, this danger can drain and suffocate the mystery and depth of our faith. For example, the Trinity can slowly be warped from the revelation of God's



*“The mystery of the Eucharist is infinitely deep, and its true depths can only be learned on one's knees.”*

innermost being to a confusing diagram of processions. The Eucharist can become no longer the most radical revelation of God's love, but a debate over the meaning of transubstantiation. On the other extreme, there is a danger of entering into these mysteries without structure or direction. This can lead to dangerously fundamental "black and white" ways of thinking, or can simply lead to error! The point is, an integration of study and prayer is essential.

The USCCB recognizes this truth. In the midst of this three-year plan, the bishops have encouraged the faithful to dive deeper into their relationship with Christ in the Eucharist by engaging in both catechetical instruction and personal and public prayer (i.e. the Sacraments). Of course, we want to understand and hold firm to the doctrinal teachings of the Eucharist, but we also don't want to be stagnant in our relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist. We want to avoid thinking: "I am one of the 30% of Catholics who believe in the Eucharist. I'm good to go!" No! The mystery of the Eucharist is infinitely deep, and its true depths can only be learned on one's knees. Ultimately, only in integrating the intellectual and the spiritual dimensions of the Eucharist may we truly be created anew, by the body and blood of Christ, who is the source of our healing and hope. †



# Configured Into a NEW CREATION at IPF

Restoration is a beautiful thing. Seeing an old car be sprung back to life with new parts and paint can give one a certain kind of joy. However, to “make all things new” in one’s spiritual life is not always so straightforward. I spent the summer of 2023 at the Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF) in Omaha, Nebraska participating in their summer program for diocesan seminarians. The program’s greatest quality is its discontent with surface cleaning. It seeks to help each seminarian encounter the depths of their heart. Through one’s freedom, prayer at IPF allows the soul’s deepest recesses to slowly rise to the top. It gives one the time and space to pull up many things that are stowed away, forgotten, and never given to the Lord. I learned that as painful, shameful, and challenging as it may be, the Lord will purify everything that is surrendered to Him. This allows authentic renewal to take place in one’s heart and soul. I, along with seminarians from SVDP and other seminaries, got to experience this renewal through learning the 14 Rules for the Discernment of Spirits by St. Ignatius of Loyola at IPF. These rules became a vital tool as we worked deeper into our souls where Christ was always found. Through the guidance given to us by our spiritual directors, and the vulnerability we had amongst each other, God entered into us and made us new this summer.



by Chrystian Bis, Configuration II,  
Archdiocese of Atlanta

For information about the Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF), check out the QR Code or visit <https://priestlyformation.org/>.



“Behold, I make all things new.”

- Rev. 21:5

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