

SEEDS OF HOPE

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

SPRING 2023, ISSUE XXIX

*“As you sent me into the world,
so I sent them into the world.”*

John 17:18



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
REGIONAL SEMINARY

*“We obtain from God as much
as we hope for from him.”*

St. John of the Cross



Seminary Photo Contest Winner - Spring 2023, Seeds of Hope

*Photo of Ziemowit Janaszek (currently on Pastoral Year) taken along the shore of the
Sea of Galilee during the seminary's pilgrimage to the Holy Land in January 2023.*

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Rector's Message

Dear Friends of SVDP,

"As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world." (John 17:18) So reads the Gospel proclaimed at our recent diaconate ordination on April 22nd, 2023. At St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary (SVDP), we have been focusing this year on the promise Jesus makes at the end of Matthew's Gospel, to be with His disciples "always, until the end of the age." (Matt 28:20) This promise reveals that he is truly accompanying our seminarians as they continue the work of formation and will accompany them as they go back to their dioceses to be ordained priests. Jesus sends them and promises to be with them.


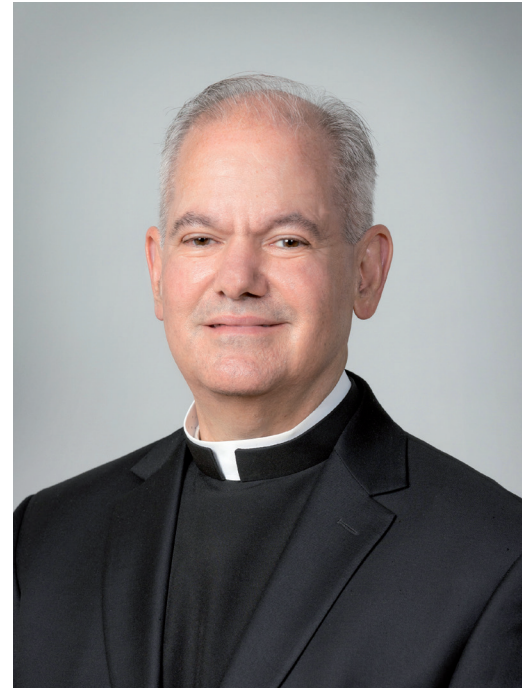
The articles in this edition of *Seeds of Hope* speak to the idea of being sent by Jesus. A seminarian completing the discipleship stage writes of Our Lady of Guadalupe and how she accompanies Christians in knowing and sharing Christ. Likewise, a seminarian finishing his first year of the configuration stage describes mission through the lens of friendship, and a monk in formation with us discusses the connection between art and the apostolate. Finally, one of our new deacons considers the relationship between the prison and diaconal ministry, and a new priest gives witness to the ways in which the recent seminary pilgrimage to the Holy Land helped to prepare him for ordination. As usual in this spring issue, you will also see pictures from the diaconate ordinations this April.

Returning to the first article mentioned, it is important for us all to remember that the Blessed Mother supports each one of us and supports the Church on mission. We have a beautiful statue of the Blessed Mother by our lake. She is "a little bit pregnant," and the plaque below reads, "You are also bearers of my Son." Our seminarians and our priests are sent by Jesus to bring Him into the world, and indeed every Catholic Christian needs to heed Mary's invitation to be bearers of her Son for the world.

This fall SVDP celebrates its 60th anniversary. Be on the lookout for ways in which we will invite our alumni and friends to join in our celebration of this milestone. For six decades we have been sharing in the "sending" of Jesus. Enjoy this issue, and may you know that you are sent by Christ and are accompanied by the Blessed Mother in your mission. ‡

In Christ the High Priest,

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



*“...every Catholic Christian
needs to heed Mary’s invitation
to be bearers of her Son for the world.”*



MARY, MEXICÓ, and MISSION

by Mr. Oswaldo Franco, Discipleship II,
Archdiocese of Atlanta

Growing up, I was immersed in devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe through big celebrations, public rosaries, and various community traditions. Later in high school, I began to earnestly pray the rosary as I was enduring much suffering. Our Lady was the one person I felt innately drawn to for intercession, and I have come to learn that she always gives her overflowing, maternal love to her children! What she once said to St. Juan Diego, she also says to all her children: “Am I not here, who am your Mother? Are you not under my protection?”

My first trip to visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico was in December of 2019. Being there and encountering the devotion of the pilgrims, the miraculous *tilma*, and the overwhelming love of our Blessed Mother, I was changed forever. It was a beautiful pilgrimage in which I was able to experience the

profound mystery of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I encourage anyone who is unaware of this miraculous apparition and *tilma* to learn about it!

Our Lady of Guadalupe, who is blessed among women, is the model of motherhood. She loves, nurtures, cares, and provides for her children, and through her, we receive God Himself. Since the time of her apparition in December of 1531, millions of Mexicans have been brought into the faith. She has bridged countless cultures, generations, hearts, and minds with her Son, Jesus. Even today, as Patroness of the Americas, Our Lady of Guadalupe implores each of us saying, “Go, my child. Go and bring souls to Christ for this is my delight – that God may be glorified.” As Christ was sent into the world, so also Mary accompanies us on mission as we go out to proclaim Christ’s love to all. †



THE **MISSION** OF **FRIENDSHIP**



My faith was not something I looked for, but something that found me. In the same way, I became a missionary. In 2013, I began my time at Florida State University with the full intent to practice my Catholic faith, but little did I know that I would be hit with many obstacles to my good and holy intention. Not a year later, I would leave my faith behind, and I would journey apart from Jesus for my early college years. Despite having left my faith behind, I was drawn into a spontaneous prayer on a summer day in 2015. Unexplainable to me, as I sat on a bench on FSU's campus, I felt the presence of Christ with such intensity that I was propelled back into my Catholic faith. I had made myself an enemy of God, and yet God forgave me and drew me back to Himself. My last years of college became a time of passion and fire for God because I had been given the truth. I knew how God desperately loves us and is desperate to communicate His love. He made this known by personally reaching out to me. I made it my mission to share this love in any way I could while I finished my time in college. Thus, mission was not something I ever looked for but something that found me. After graduation, I became a missionary at the University of Minnesota, serving college students full-time.

On the eve of His Passion, Christ said "as you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world." (Jn 17:18) Few words can more greatly capture my experience of mission. No servant is greater than their master, and so my mission was one which followed the example of Christ. It was thus a mission of real relationship. I needed a true prayer life to go on mission because Christ needed to be the center of my life. Moreover, I needed to live real relationships with people if I were ever going to share Christ with them. And real relationship

is friendship. Before I could minister to anyone, I first had to be their friend; not a friend for the sake of mission, but a friend for their own sake. Only from that place of real friendship could I love them, and only from that place of love could I share Christ, Love Himself. Over my two years on mission, I befriended about fifty college students, and I reached out to hundreds more. Christ didn't need me to make Himself known, but out of His sheer goodness, He allowed me to be a partaker with Him in the vineyard of mission.

If I had to give advice on how one can live mission in their everyday lives, I would say only one thing: you need real friendship. If you want to share Christ with others, then you need to love them for their own sake by being a real friend. This is a harsh kind of love because it means a lot of patience, not being scandalized by their sinfulness, and genuine interest in someone else with no promise of reward. This is possible only if one has a real relationship with Jesus in a life of prayer. Daily prayer is the single most important piece of being a missionary. If we're not going to Jesus daily to be loved by Him, then we'll never be able to share His love with others. He sends us as He was sent by the Father: to live in relationship with the one who loves us most. †



“If you want to share Christ with others,
then you need to love them
for their own sake by being a real friend.”

MOSAICS

and the **PRESENT MOMENT**

*by Brother Benedict Maria, O.S.B.,
Configuration II*



As part of my prayer life this semester, I have been reading the spiritual classic, *Abandonment to Divine Providence* by Father Jean-Pierre de Caussade. The book is all about appreciating and practicing the sacrament of the present moment. Doing so means dedicating the present moment totally and wholeheartedly to the will of God, trusting that good will come from the current situation. While this sounds wonderful on paper, it's certainly challenging, yet far from impossible. A story from this semester makes this point.

Each year, seminarians are assigned to serve somewhere in the local community. We call this weekly service our apostolate or pastoral assignment. It is often the best time to put into practice what we receive in class and in prayer. For my assignment, I worked on a small artistic endeavor with the local Jesus Youth community.¹ The project entailed teaching and working on religious mosaic art, and through this apostolate, I learned many lessons about the sacrament of the present moment and abandonment to Divine Providence.

First, I have learned that a single tile can never see the beauty of the finished work. Each tile can only appreciate its singular perspective. The tile can only stay on the board through the diligence of the artist, the quality of the mortar that holds it together, and the lifespan of the board which is its foundation. In an analogous way, we all partake in a beautiful, ongoing mosaic during this earthly life. Like the individual tiles, we too have an incomplete understanding of the finished product. But we can be assured that if God is the artist, the craftsmanship will be exceptional.

Second, sometimes in our work, even in the context of the Church, we only have the direction and not the complete picture. The missionary who wants the journey to be guided by him or herself will eventually come to ruin. However, the missionary who is guided by the will of God will always accomplish a great work for God, despite sometimes feeling confused, persecuted, incapable, useless, or foolish. As this semester began, I was full of hope and assurance from the



Holy Spirit, eager to express my skills as a mosaic artist. I assumed I knew where the project was going, but, before too long, I realized that God was in control. The One who inspired the work wanted to labor with me. I had to lend my hands and be united to his will. I had my share of internal struggle to trust God's work, but I slowly accepted it.

Looking back on the year now, I recognize God's beautiful work in the project. Initially, my task was to teach a particular age group how to make a mosaic and then donate it to the seminary community. Surprisingly, I ended up having the opportunity to work with many age groups for this project, and the work was done by many more hands than I originally envisioned. Ultimately, I can truly say that it is Christ who has been "all in all" from the first piece of tile to the finished work. †



¹ Jesus Youth is an international Catholic movement that fosters a personal, loving encounter with Jesus, particularly among young people today. The movement is approved by the Holy See and is present in 25 countries, including the United States and this local Church, the Diocese of Palm Beach. A member of Jesus Youth, Br. Benedict Maria, O.S.B. is a solemnly professed Benedictine monk of Portsmouth Abbey, RI, currently studying at the seminary for the priesthood.



MESSAGE AND MINISTRY IN PRISON

by Deacon Ross Williams,
Diocese of Raleigh, Configuration III

“He was preaching to me.”

This was a line that was shared many times between my seminarian brothers and I as we stepped away from the cells of solitary confinement. At first, it was a statement of surprise. After all, we were the soon-to-be-deacons, and we were the ones officially “doing prison ministry.” However, this line soon became typical to describe our conversations at the prison. We had first entered the prison with an unconsciously guarded perspective, enculturated by a society that often thinks little of people once they have been sentenced. What we found was a far more nuanced and spiritual environment. Although some people ignored us and others engaged simply to have someone to talk to, most had something they wanted to pray about: their family, their own safety, or an upcoming evaluation.

Among these men were those who had come to a real faith behind bars. Whether they had begun reading Scripture for the first time since imprisonment, were making concerted efforts to live virtuously, or simply wished to learn more about salvation history, these men were in search of something more.

From my own experience, two men in particular remain with me. The two had the air of kindly grandfathers, and both were primarily concerned with their fellow inmates. The first had been in confinement for an extended time, and he had used his limited social time to minister to those he saw as similar to his younger self. He could see their fear and anger, and he regularly tried to reach them, admittedly with limited success. The second man had left his gang upon finding Christ, and the remaining members did not take kindly to his attempts at sharing the faith. He was deeply torn



between wanting to share the faith with his former friends and fearing the harm they would do to him again if he did. With their perseverance and courage, both men provided a strong witness to me.

When I first entered the prison, I expected to have some conversations with people who were in desperate need of a friendly voice. I hoped to bring some peace, praying with those who had nobody else to pray with. What I failed to anticipate was finding men behind bars whose faith, courage in proclaiming the Gospel, and zeal for souls would be a lasting inspiration for my own future diaconal ministry. We are familiar with Jesus' words to God the Father: "As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world" (Jn. 17:18). With this ministerial experience, I know they resound most clearly in the hearts of believers persevering through trying circumstances. ‡

“With their perseverance and courage, both men provided a strong witness to me.”

In 2016, Dcn. Gregory Quinn (Director of Prison Ministry for the Diocese of Palm Beach) and Fr. Gregg Cagginelli (Vice Rector of SVDP) established the present program that allows seminarians in the third year of the configuration stage to serve in local prisons and juvenile detention centers. To date, seventy-five seminarians have participated in the program. The program's primary goal is to introduce seminarians to this vital corporal work of mercy prior to diaconal ordination. The photo included is of the current program cohort.

As you sent me



Spring Diaconate Ordination 2023

I have sent them

into the world,



into the world

Jn. 17:18

Spring 2023 13





“Think just how extraordinary this is...
to be called to have some
part in the work of God’s Kingdom.”

From the homily of Bishop Erik Pohlmeier of the
Diocese of St. Augustine at the 2023 Diaconate Ordination

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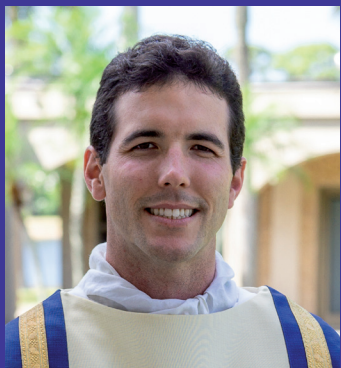
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Diocese of Venice

CLASS PHOTOS

*“Bless, sanctify, and consecrate
these chosen men...”*

~ Litany of Supplication



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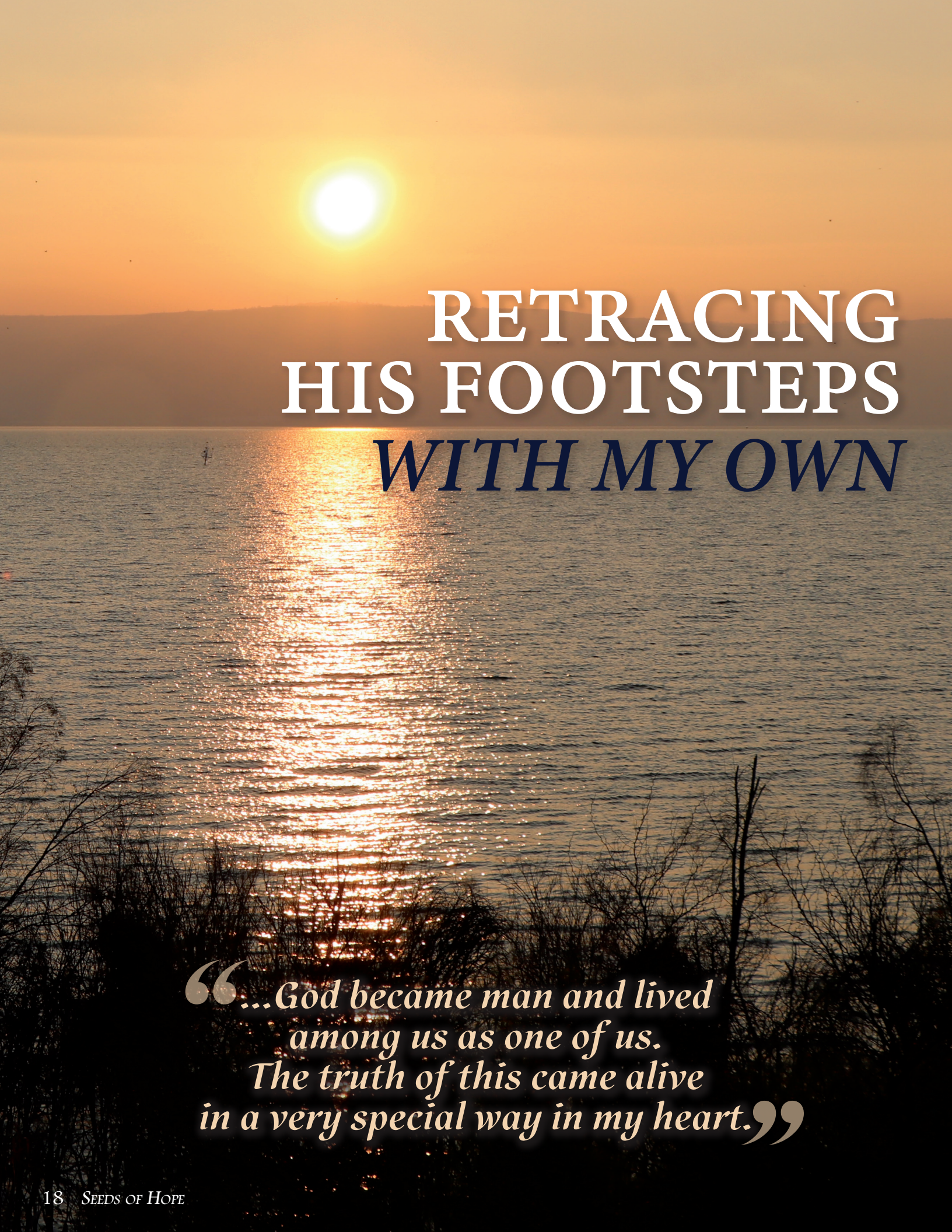


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Diocese of Venice





RETRACING HIS FOOTSTEPS *WITH MY OWN*

*“...God became man and lived
among us as one of us.
The truth of this came alive
in a very special way in my heart.”*

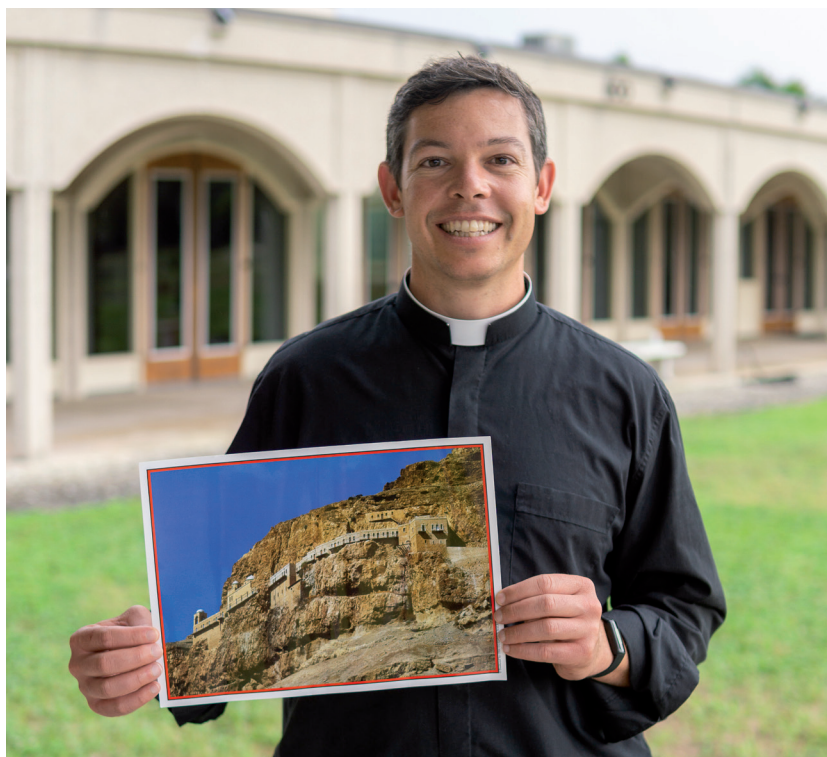
It was 5:00 a.m., and I couldn't sleep. Despite the exhaustion of having traveled across two continents and the stuffiness of a hot room, I was so excited. We were in the Holy Land. I put on my sweater and jacket and walked down to the Sea of Galilee, just a stone's throw from where we were staying. It was dark and peaceful. I followed an unstable, rocky path down to the water, and I sat on the ground by the sea. My senses took in everything. The smell of the water, the beauty of the sun coming up over the Sea of Galilee, the sound of the morning calm, the sting of the cold wind. I sat and prayed thinking about the first time the disciples saw Jesus on the seashore. Were they tired, cold, and weary? Did they really want to talk to Him?

Later, I went back to my room and took a hot shower with all of the comforts of the 21st century. I realized how different and yet how similar Jesus' earthly life was to my own. At times, He was tired. He was hungry. He was cold. He had to be careful not to trip on the rocks. We could call this the reality of the Incarnation: that God became man and lived among us as one of us. The truth of this came alive in a very special way in my heart. For the next few days, I would walk around Galilee, going to all the towns and villages that Jesus visited and reliving the Gospel stories. Our itinerary was jam packed with tours, explanations, and sightseeing. Every night, I would spend some time in prayer, taking it all in. The full days contrasted with these quiet times of prayer. But whether we were walking, traveling, eating, drinking, praying, or laughing, we were ultimately undertaking a journey. Though in a different time period, this way of living describes much of the life of Jesus. He grew up with Joseph and Mary, had friends, and survived troubled times. He healed people. He went from place to place, eating, drinking, and speaking with those around Him. Most importantly, Jesus did these things as fully man and fully God.

*by Rev. Fr. Marc Gustinelli,
Diocese of Palm Beach, Configuration IV*



In doing so, He made the mystery of our all-powerful God accessible and tangible. As I prepared for the priesthood, I knew that this is what my ministry would be about. It is the mystery of being called by God the Father to make present His love and His mercy to His people day to day. As God the Father sent His Son into the world to consecrate the ordinary into the extraordinary, so also Christ is sending me into the world through the vocation of the priesthood. I will journey, walk, eat, drink, laugh, and cry with God's people, and I will offer the sacraments which make visible that which is mysterious and invisible. And, just as Jesus taught, I will seek to glorify the Father in the ordinariness of my humanity. †



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