



SEEDS OF HOPE

Top: Pope Leo XIV met with Bishop Silvio J. Báez, OCD, Auxiliary Bishop of Managua and member of the SVDP faculty, on August 23, 2025.

IN ILLO UNO UNUM

At left: Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, (AMS) celebrated the first episcopal ordination of Pope Leo XIV's pontificate on May 9, 2025, in St. Vincent Chapel. Our former Vice Rector, Bishop Gregg Caggianelli, is now Auxiliary Bishop for the AMS and remains in residence at SVDP.

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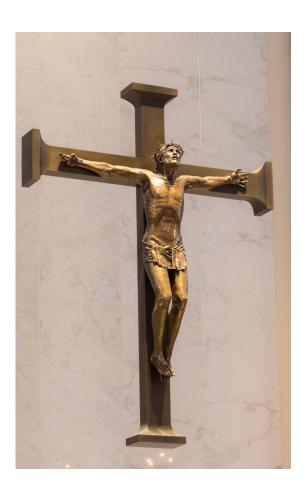
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Rector's Message

Dear Friends of SVDP,

Our last *Seeds of Hope* went to press during the *Sede Vacante*—the time when the See of Peter was vacant. We could not yet imagine that the first American Pope would soon appear on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica on May 8, 2025. Pope Leo XIV said that evening, "We are all in the hands of God. Therefore, without fear, united hand in hand with God and among ourselves, we move forward." Nine days later, at the Solemn Mass for the beginning of his Pontificate, he said, "I would like that our first great desire be for a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world."





At a time of much division in the world and even in the Church, here at SVDP, we have taken to heart this call to being a "sign of unity and communion." Pope Leo XIV's motto, which comes from the writings of St. Augustine, is our theme for the year: "In the one Christ we are one." Above our tabernacle are words of St. Augustine cited in the Pope's inaugural homily: *Signum Unitatis—Sign of Unity*, words that speak not only of the Eucharist but also of every Christian and of the whole Church.

I hope that in this edition of *Seeds of Hope* you will see an invitation to become a *Sign of Unity*, an invitation to which our seminarians are seeking to respond and in which we are called to take part. You can taste our call to share in the mission of Pope Leo XIV in some of the pictures on these pages. Bishop Silvio J. Báez, OCD, Auxiliary Bishop of Managua and Professor of Scripture, placed our last edition of *Seeds of Hope* in Pope Leo's hands. Also, Bishop Gregg M. Caggianelli's ordination as Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, took place in our chapel on May 9, 2025, the very first episcopal ordination in the whole world in the Pontificate of Pope Leo XIV.

Signs of Unity indeed!

Les Spull Heraily

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

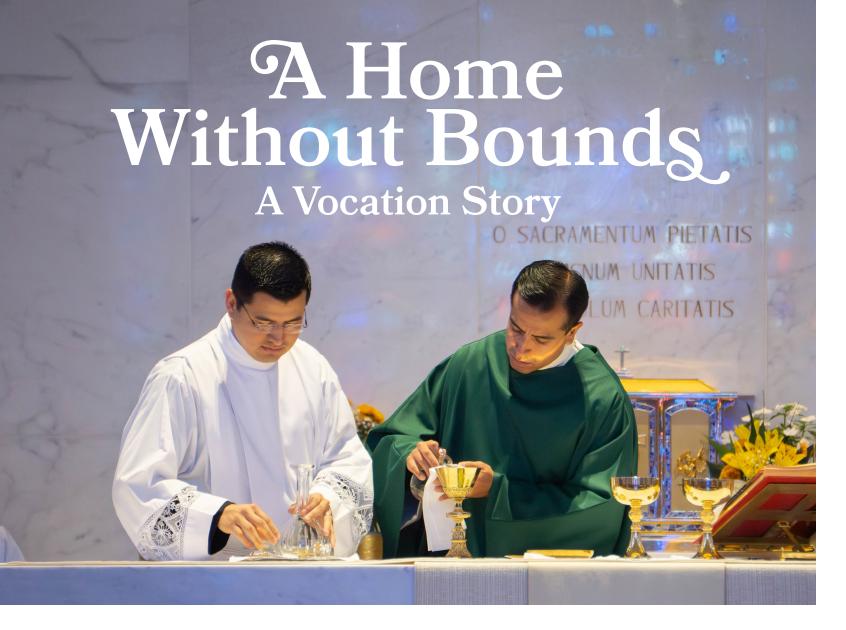


Over the summer, SVDP completed various infrastructure projects.

The Vincentian Gift Shop finds a new home, closer to the heart of campus.



Seminarians await the completion of the new soccer field, giving them a level and ant-free space to play.



t 38, the question "Where are you from?" remains a challenging one to answer. I never quite know whether people are asking about my ethnicity, nationality, hometown, or diocese. I was born in Mexico City and raised in the Catholic faith. When I was eight, my parents migrated to Topeka, Kansas, where I grew up and later attended Washburn University, earning a degree in Economics. I worked for a regional bank for nine years before joining Deutsche Bank in Jacksonville, Florida, in May 2014.



by Rev. Mr. Justino Moreno, Configuration IV, Diocese of St. Augustine

It was there that I truly encountered the living Christ through a retreat and the sacrament of reconciliation, my first confession in seven years. That moment began a journey of conversion that would eventually lead me to discern the priesthood. In 2020, four years after returning wholeheartedly to the faith and fifteen years into my banking career, I responded to the Lord's call to serve as a seminarian for the Diocese of St. Augustine.

The graces that have flowed since my diaconate ordination are too many to count. One of the greatest blessings has been the unwavering support of the People of God throughout my years in formation. Leaving behind my professional life and beginning anew at thirty-three was not without fear, but every surrender to God has been met with His abundant generosity. Through the prayers, friendship, and encouragement of so many faithful people, I have been sustained spiritually, emotionally, and even materially. Their witness continues to deepen my desire to serve them one day as a priest of Jesus Christ.

A particular grace for me has been Pope Leo's motto: "In the one Christ, we are one." Those words have been a source of deep consolation. Having lived between two cultures, I have often felt that I did not fully belong in either. To Americans, I am Mexican; to Mexicans, I am American. Yet, within the Catholic Church, I have found the home I was seeking. Wherever I attend Mass, whether in Mexico, Kansas, or Florida, I recognize the same altar, the same sacrifice, and the same communion of faith. The Church truly transcends every boundary, gathering us as one family in Christ.

The most profound grace of my diaconate has been the privilege to serve the Church in the person of Christ the Servant. This ministry has allowed me to encounter Christ in His people, regardless of their background, and to accompany them as they, too, discover a home in the Catholic faith. Indeed, it is within the Body of Christ that we find our truest belonging, for in Him, we are one.

As I continue growing into my diaconal identity, I pray that it may take deep root within me and bear fruit as I prepare for my priestly ordination. My greatest hope is to help others return "home", to the heart of the Church, where all are united in the love of Christ. As St. Augustine beautifully reminds us, "Although we Christians are many, in the one Christ we are one." :

Wherever I attend
Mass...I recognize
the same altar,
the same sacrifice,
and the same
communion of faith.



COMMON LIFE GROUNDS Kreitner Lounge



r. Jimmy Kreitner was the Dean of Men at St. Vincent's from 1980–1983. In his brief three-year tenure at the seminary, during which he was sick and dying for two of those years, Fr. Jimmy was known for being full of life, loving the poor, educating the youth, and enjoying music. His death from cancer at age 34 witnessed to a Christ-like suffering and joy that inspired the seminary community to see him as a profound image of who a priest is called to be. The gift of Fr. Kreitner's priestly example is still dearly remembered each time his chalice is used in St. Mary's chapel, and each time a seminarian stops to read his story in the Kreitner Lounge named in his honor.

In the 42 years since Fr. Jimmy's passing, seminarians have come and gone through the Kreitner Lounge to check their mail, play games, break up their class day, or sit down for brotherly heart-to-hearts in Emmaus groups. From ping pong tournaments to Christmas party dessert tables—the Kreitner Lounge has always been common ground for community life. Over the years, though, the lounge has gone through several iterations—from its days when it was called the Fishbowl, to its latest iteration where some seminarians call it the Kreitner Cafe.

Creating spaces for people to be human together is at the heart of community life. When our community came to me with suggestions to make the Kreitner Lounge more beautiful and useful, I was happy to offer support. Through an over two year creative process and two separate summer renovations, the renewed Kreitner Lounge is a beautiful crossroads for community life and culture. New chairs, couches, tables, lights, and a ping pong table adorn the room. The mailboxes and bulletin boards are gone. A large



by Rev. Dominic Buckley, Dean of Human Formation, Diocese of Orlando

3D wooden map of the world, made by a family in war-torn Ukraine, now proudly hangs in the lounge. The map is marked with national and state flag pins representing the homes of the seminarians, faculty, and staff, who collectively represent all continents of the world, except Australia. There is also new art, both visual and musical. Large print photographs of the four baldacchini of the Major Basilicas of Rome now frame a piano on one wall, while a record player with Bluetooth sits ready to spin vinyl on the opposite wall. The smell of freshground coffee from Guatemala, Brazil, Honduras, and Costa Rica offers seminarians and faculty a "pick me up" at the new coffee station, supplied by local coffee roaster Common Grounds. All this keeps with the timely theme of our year and the message of Fr. Jimmy's life, to live life to the full in the one Christ.

A San Damiano cross now hangs above the piano, received from our Poor Clares at Christ the King Monastery in Delray Beach, who daily interceded for us from 1963–2022. We hear Jesus say to us in the Kreitner Lounge, "don't you see that my house is falling into ruin? Go then and restore it for me." †





A Day in the Life

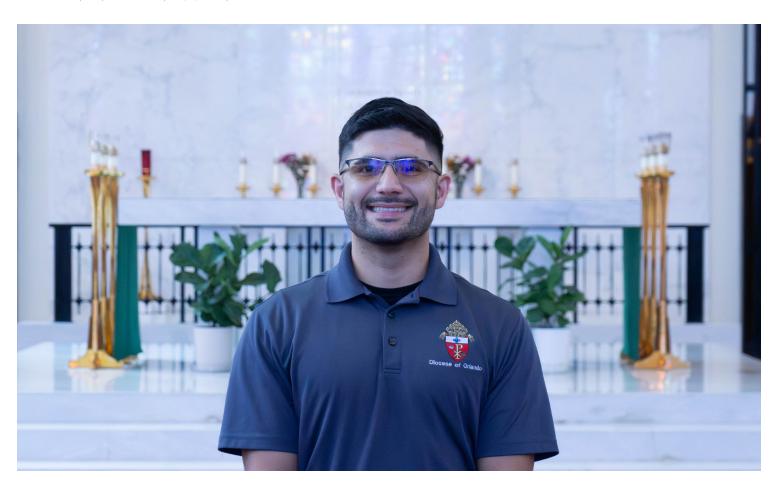
OF A SEMINARIAN

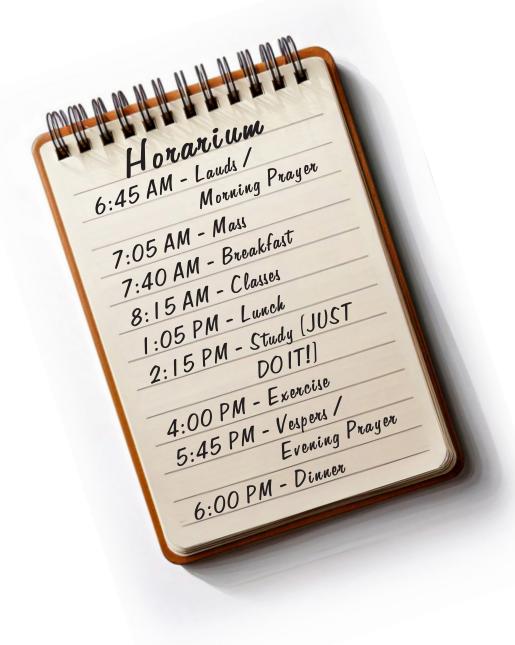
by Josue Reyes Diaz, Discipleship I, Diocese of Orlando

It shapes every moment of seminary life, opening one to communion with others.

As a second-year seminarian now in the First Discipleship class, my morning begins at 5:15AM. After getting ready for the day, I am in the chapel by 5:45AM to spend a Holy Hour with the Lord before Morning Prayer and Mass start at 6:45AM. Praying attentively so early can be challenging, but these first moments of communion with the Lord root my day and are my top priority.

After Mass, I make sure to grab some Greek yogurt and a breakfast sandwich before heading over to my first class at 8:15AM. Having just completed my propaedeutic year, I am taking my first philosophy classes such as Philosophical Anthropology and Logic. It is an experience that has been filled with grace. Before seminary, I had an unhealthy attachment to academic success. It defined my selfworth. The propaedeutic year brought healing in this area of my life and helped me order my relationship to studies. Now I approach academics with freedom and gratitude.





When classes finish, it is lunch time. Meals at the seminary are about more than physical nourishment. At the table, we share our lives and foster brotherhood. We concretely live out a unity rooted in Christ. After lunch, there are a few hours of unstructured time where variety enters my schedule. Depending on the day, I will usually take that time to exercise, do some homework, or attend meetings related to my formation. One particularly exciting aspect of our formation in the Discipleship stage includes tending to our seminary garden and beehives. Learning to care for God's creation has inspired my personal prayer.

As the sun begins to set over St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, the house reconvenes in the chapel for Evening Prayer followed by dinner. Like afternoons, evenings are typically unstructured, so I take this time for private devotional prayer. This is the time to unwind with brothers as the day draws to a close, whether that be through gatherings with diocesan brothers or basketball with the seminary team. Before laying my head down to rest, I make one final turn to the Lord. Night prayer closes my day the same way it began: by commending my spirit into His hands. †

"...the time spent preparing for ordained ministry is a privileged time of growth in self knowledge and deepening intimacy with Jesus Christ."

(PROGRAM OF PRIESTLY FORMATION, 6TH EDITION, PARA. 114)



Catechetical Corner: Priest, Prophet, King t our Baptism, we become joined to Christ's body and come to share in his offices of Priest, Prophet, and King. This word "office" comes from the Latin officium, which can also mean "duty." The three offices are inseparable from the Christian life, because it is from them that the mission of each Christian emerges. Indeed, all Christians are called to live out these offices according to their state of life. As priests, we offer to God ourselves and others through prayer; as prophets, we bring others to the truth of the faith we profess; and as kings, we administer charity in all of our temporal affairs. In this way, we conform ourselves to Christ and become lights for the world. The parish priest is called to live out these offices in a particular way. Participating in Christ's ministerial priesthood, he possesses the mission of helping others grow into these offices. Within his ministry, the priest encourages his people in the practice of prayer and sacrifice. He offers his community to God through his own prayer and the celebration of the Mass. He equips the faithful to give witness to the gospel through his preaching and instruction. Finally, he leads people helps them in their growth of virtue. By being faithful to his offices of Priest, Prophet, and King, the priest brings each of the faithful to the heart of Christ. Each of these offices orients us towards a sublime unity, since in exercising them, we bring others into the body of the Christ. To live out the baptismal offices of Priest, Prophet, and King is to recognize that "In the one Christ, we are one." * 14 SEEDS OF HOP

An Unforeseen Missionary Journey

by Mr. Samuel Terkura, Configuration II, Diocese of Savannah

s a child, I was captivated by the beauty and mystery of priesthood, especially the cassock. I remember attending Sunday Mass with my mother, watching the priest and altar servers process in and out of the Church. In my young mind, they were "angels" descended from heaven, only to return to heaven after Mass. I was fascinated and wanted to become an "angel," so I could wear the cassock.



When I was about eleven years old, I had an experience that guietly shaped my desire to become a priest. In our neighborhood, lived a woman who never smiled, and who was known for being harsh. One day, as I walked our parochial vicar to his car, she suddenly greeted him with a bright smile. I was shocked. It was the first time I had ever seen her that way. I asked the priest what he had done, and he gently said, "Samuel, I did nothing to her. I am here with you, right?" That moment touched me deeply, and I decided to become a priest so that the sad and weary might find a reason to smile again.

After eight years in seminary formation, I have come to realize that priesthood is far deeper than simply wearing a cassock or bringing smiles to people's faces. It is about making Christ truly present in the lives of others, especially those who are hurting, lonely, or forgotten.

As a seminarian, moving from Nigeria to the U.S. was an unforeseen missionary journey. Initially, adjusting to new food, a new language, and a new culture was challenging. However, each experience has become an opportunity for growth, learning, and humility.

The support I received on this journey was heartwarming. From the faithful who welcomed me with open arms, to the Rector and the entire SVDP family who guided me through the complexities of a new country, I have felt God's love through their kindness. They quickly made a foreign place feel like home.

My hope for the Church in the U.S. is for it to grow in genuine holiness, not merely through programs or events, but through the transformation of hearts. I pray that every priest may reflect Christ, the Good Shepherd, inspire the faithful to hunger for His Real Presence, and lead lives of service, gratitude, and unity. Above all, I long for a Church where everyone can feel the warmth of God's love, and I am grateful to be able to serve that Church. ‡

TO THE HEIGHTS

Following the Saints of Our Times

by Mr. Jack Skeean, Configuration II, Archdiocese of Atlanta

n a digital age marked by isolation and an obsession with appearances, God has given us L two saints to be our guides towards unity. The anticipation around the canonizations of Sts. Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati was remarkable, with young Catholics leading the rally behind their cause. In recent decades, numerous youth groups have looked to the beloved Frassati as their patron, and for many, knowing that Acutis had used the internet filled them with hope. On September 7, 2025, these young men were declared among the ranks of saints, shining Christ's light throughout His Church.

St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and St. Carlo Acutis appeared, in many ways, unremarkable. Neither of them performed miracles during their lifetimes, and neither of them came from particularly religious families. Both died at a young age; Frassati of polio at age twenty-four, and Acutis of leukemia when he was only fifteen. They never achieved any great feats that would merit a place in the history books. Yet, underneath the surface, both men burned with an extraordinary love for Jesus and a driving desire to make Him known and loved by others. This manifested through their deep devotion to the Eucharist, their love for their families and the poor, and their natural gift for evangelization.

St. Pier Giorgio Frassati was known to go to local bars and wager over games of pool. If he won, the loser would have to attend Mass with him. Frassati spent his days in Turin cultivating deep friendships, and unknown



By living ordinary lives oriented toward holiness, these young men became magnetic forces of unity.

to his parents, he spent his nights serving the poor, using funds he received from his family. On weekends, he would go mountaineering with friends, smoke pipes, and discuss theology. St. Carlo Acutis, on the other hand, became a catechist at his parish at just age twelve. He spent his free time learning how to code and created an early website cataloguing all of the approved Eucharistic miracles of the Church. His spreading of Eucharistic devotion through the internet earned him the nickname "God's influencer." By living ordinary lives oriented toward holiness, these young men became magnetic forces of unity. At Frassati's funeral, hundreds of Turin's poor came out to pay their respects; his parents were shocked. Moved by the example of her son, Acutis'own mother Antonia recommitted her life to Christ.

As an ordinary Catholic striving for holiness, these two saints give me great hope. Saints Frassati and Acutis are exemplary models for the everyday young Catholic, and proof that one is never too young to be all-in for Jesus. In his homily at their Canonization Mass, Pope Leo said, "Saints Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis are an invitation to all of us, especially young people, not to squander our lives, but to direct them upwards and make them masterpieces."

These canonizations proclaimed the message that true unity starts with finding God in our ordinary lives—in the relationships we cultivate, in the daily demands of work, in our devotion to Our Eucharistic Lord, and in our radiating joy. When we live with and in Christ, we can trust that God will raise us "to the heights" of love, drawing us into union with Him and with each other. *

> "Verso l'alto," meaning "to the heights," was Frassati's motto for his life.







TO SERVE THOSE WHO SERVE

nom the time I was in first grade, I felt a quiet tug on my heart toward the priesthood. Like many, I tried to follow my own plans first — college, work, relationships — but the Lord kept calling me back. When my grandmother passed away, her faithful example stayed with me and guided me back to Christ. That return eventually led me to seminary.

The call to military chaplaincy came after I became open to what God had to say. It began when I read Battlefield Chaplains by Donald F. Crosby, a book about Catholic priests who served in World War II. Their stories moved something within me. I saw a model of priesthood marked by courage, and it stirred in me a deep sense of mission: to be present where the need was greatest. These priests

did not just celebrate Mass; they walked through fire to bring hope to those on the front lines.

That is when I realized this was a call within a call, not just to serve the Church, but to serve those who serve. It was a calling to bring the Sacraments and Christ's presence to soldiers who may be far from home, far from comfort, and often, far from peace.

Being formed by the Diocese of Charleston and cosponsored by the Archdiocese for the Military Services reminds me that the Church is one body, united in Christ. My prayer is to bring that reality to soldiers far from home, showing them that no matter where they serve, the Church and Christ go with them. *

by Rev. Benedict Maria, O.S.B., Portsmouth Abbey

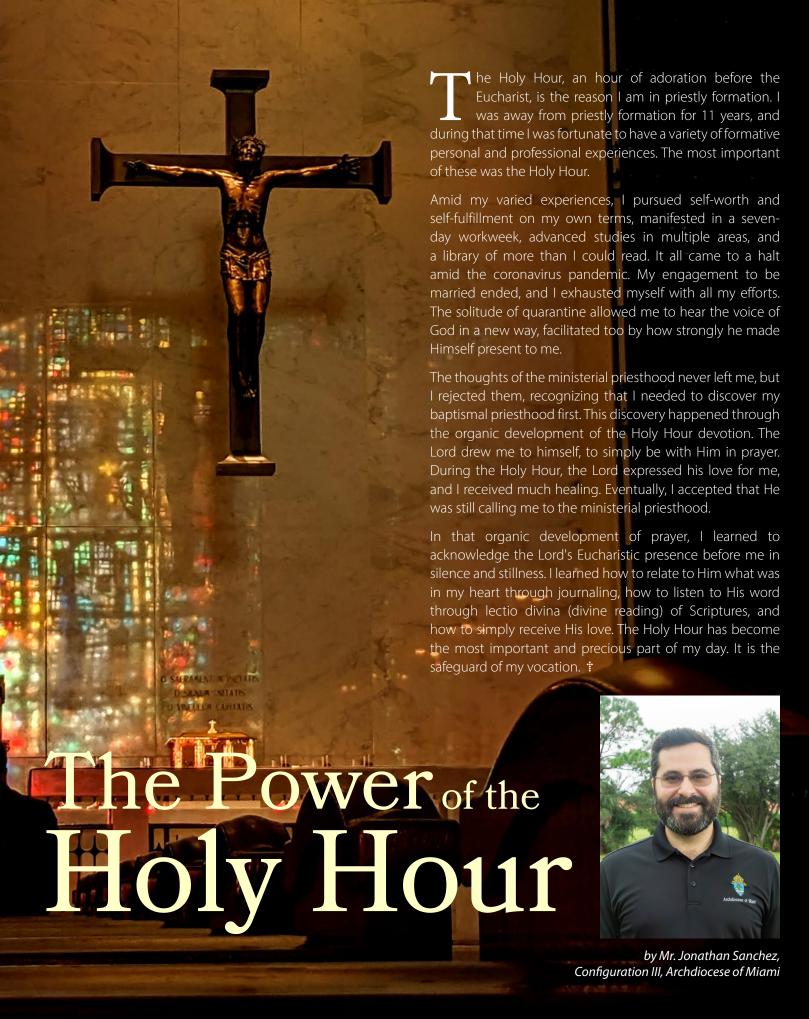
Christian praying in front of the icon of a saint engages a relationship. As we gaze upon the saint in the icon, the saint gazes back at us; the exchange is mutual.

The work of Christian iconography can be achieved with the help of mosaic art. It requires much prayer, reflection, and a heart full of love and devotion. Our new icon of Saint Joseph is the fruit of all of this. The making of this icon has been a celebration of friendship and spirituality.

This icon of St. Joseph the Worker and the Child involved friends and seminarians, particularly my priest brothers from the Class of 2025. The seminary provided us with the materials for the icon. For seven months, we gathered in a library storage room to cut glass and arrange the pieces into a work of art. In the times I worked by myself, I was grateful to be able to live my monastic vocation at the seminary. Yet, I am even more grateful for the times when I had a large number of brothers jamming into the workshop to help me. This was a time of friendship, joy, and giving 'heart and hands' to our prayers in the form of Christian iconography.

The icon represents a community: a self-giving love between a foster father and his son. It shows that in Christ we are all adopted as sons of the Father. Within Him, we are bonded in this unity of adoptive sonship, which is stronger than the bond of blood. In gazing upon St. Joseph and Jesus, a seminarian is reminded that he is not only called to serve Christ but also to be one with Him, who he hopes to represent in persona Christi by the grace of ordination. †





Warm Welcomes

WELCOME TO...

DR. RODNEY HOWSARE

Dr. Rodney Howsare received his Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Marquette University in 1998. He taught Fundamental and Systematic Theology at DeSales University from 1999 until 2025 when he joined the faculty here at St. Vincent de Paul in the area of Systematic Theology. His scholarship has focused on the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar about whom he has written two manuscripts—Hans Urs von Balthasar and Protestantism: The Ecumenical Implications of his Theological Style and Balthasar: A Guide for the Perplexed—



and edited another (with Larry Chapp), How Balthasar Changed My Mind. Dr. Howsare has also been closely associated with the American edition of Communio: International Catholic Review, for which he has served as both a Consulting Editor and, more recently, a member of the Editorial Board. He has published numerous articles in various theological journals including Communio, Pro Ecclesia, Josephinum, Nova et Vetera, and others, and has also written for more popular publications such as Catholic World Report and Our Sunday Visitor. Dr. Howsare is currently working on a book on G. K. Chesterton's Orthodoxy.

FR. ÁNGEL RIVERA-FALS, SJ

Fr. Ángel M. Rivera-Fals is a member of the Society of Jesus. He has been a Jesuit for 26 years and a priest for 15 years. He is from Caguas, Puerto Rico, and is a graduate of the University of Puerto, Río Piedras. Fr. Rivera-Fals studied Philosophy at Fordham University, received his bachelor's in Theology at the Pontificia Universidad de Comillas, and completed his licentiate in Theology at the Pontificio Ateneo Sant'Anselmo. He holds a



licentiate in Sacred Liturgy from the Pontifical Liturgical Institute at Sant'Anselmo. He was pastor of El Buen Pastor Parish in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, and was later assigned to Jesuit High School of Tampa, where he served as theology teacher, Assistant Director of Campus Ministry, Rector of the Jesuit Community, and member of the Board of Trustees. Fr. Rivera-Fals joined the faculty of St. Vincent de Paul this year and serves as the Director of Liturgy, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, and spiritual director.

Warm Welcomes cont'd.

FR. ART PROULX

Fr. Arthur Proulx is no stranger to St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary. Having served as Dean of Spiritual Formation from 2015 to 2018, he has now returned to this ministry that he holds close to his heart. A graduate of our seminary, Fr. Proulx was ordained to the priesthood in 1980 for the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Over the course of his priestly ministry, Fr. Proulx has gratefully served the Church in a variety of roles, including high school chaplain, vocation director, pastor, Cathedral rector, and Director of Ministry to priests. In each of these



assignments, he has brought a deep love for the Lord, a pastoral heart for his brother priests, and a joy for helping others grow in their spiritual lives. Fr. Proulx's familiarity with seminary life and his genuine affection for the men in formation make his return especially meaningful. He speaks of the seminary as "holy ground," where the Lord forms shepherds after His own heart. Now, as he resumes his role as Dean of Spiritual Formation, Fr. Proulx looks forward to accompanying seminarians on their journey of discernment and priestly growth. "I love the seminary," he says, "and I am truly delighted to return."

HUNTER ERNDE

Meet Mr. Hunter Ernde, Director of Development and Public Relations at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary. Before joining the staff in May of 2025, Hunter was a student at SVDP, completing his master's in Theology in 2019. After graduating, Hunter worked in various financial and educational settings, including banking in his hometown of Pensacola and teaching theology at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale. He later served at St. Ann Catholic Church in Gulf Breeze (Diocese of Pensacola-



Tallahassee) as the Director of Faith Formation and Evangelization. He met his wife Grace in Pensacola, and they were married in December 2024. Hunter is passionate about his Catholic faith and advancing the impact of the Church in the modern world. He sees his work at SVDP as an extension of this passion. Hunter loves being with people, listening to their stories, and witnessing God's work in their lives. He looks forward to advancing the mission of St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary through his role as Director of Development and Public Relations.

Please join us in welcoming these new members of our team to SVDP!

JOIN US IN SUPPORTING TOMORROW'S PRIESTS

Since our founding in 1963, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary has formed over **600 priests** now serving in parishes across the Southeast U.S., the Caribbean, and beyond. Every gift to the seminary is more than a donation — it's an investment in the future of the Church, your parish, and the next generation of faithful shepherds.

We invite you to become a Friend of the Seminary by making a regular gift and join our mission of forming **priests after the Heart of Jesus Christ** — men who will one day celebrate Mass in your parish, anoint your loved ones, and help future generations encounter Christ.

This year, over **130 seminarians** are preparing for the priesthood — nearly 100 of them living and studying on our campus. Your generosity allows them to focus fully on prayer, study, and pastoral formation so they can one day serve in your parish and diocese.

Your support touches every corner of seminary life — from classrooms and chapels to mission trips and the maintenance of our beautiful **72-acre campus**. Every dollar stays right here, helping us sustain the work of priestly formation.





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- Estate Gifts & Bequests: Leave a legacy of faith a planned gift costs nothing now but blesses the Church for generations to come.
- Endowment Gifts: A gift to our endowment strengthens the seminary for the future and continues to bear fruit in perpetuity.

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