

VIANNNEY NEWS

SAINT JOHN VIANNEY COLLEGE SEMINARY
SPRING 2019



YEARS

Dear Friends of Saint John Vianney College Seminary,

Happy 50th anniversary! If you are holding this newsletter in your hands or reading it online, this special occasion is yours. In some way, big or small, you are a part of Saint John Vianney College Seminary. Perhaps you have prayed for our seminarians, you have attended an event, you have supported this institution financially, or you are just learning about us for the first time. No matter your connection, Saint John Vianney College Seminary (SJV) belongs to each of us. Today, it serves the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis and 20 dioceses across the United States. For 50 years, SJV has served you and me and our parishes, families and communities. Thanks be to God!

When SJV opened its doors in 1968, our founders and first seminarians took a risk. They were living in an age that is often described as chaotic, but they trusted that God had a plan and that it would bear great fruit. I thank God for SJV's founding rector, Father John Roach, and his team of priests for the courage to lead young men on a path of formation and discernment. The same can be said for the leadership that followed throughout the past five decades.

I give thanks for our friends and benefactors who have provided the necessary prayers and financial resources since 1968. They trusted that well-formed men of God, lay and ordained, would serve the Church into the future.

God continues to bless SJV in 2019. I see His presence every day in our seminarians and witness the hope and joy they bring to the campus community, parishes and dioceses. I work alongside a team of priest staff committed to the mission of providing essential formation today for tomorrow's Catholic priests. And, SJV benefits from generous benefactors across the country who believe in the power of human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral formation in our future leaders.

Together, let us honor the strong foundation established by those who came before us, celebrate a vibrant seminary community at work today, and be filled with hope for what God has planned for the future.

Happy anniversary!

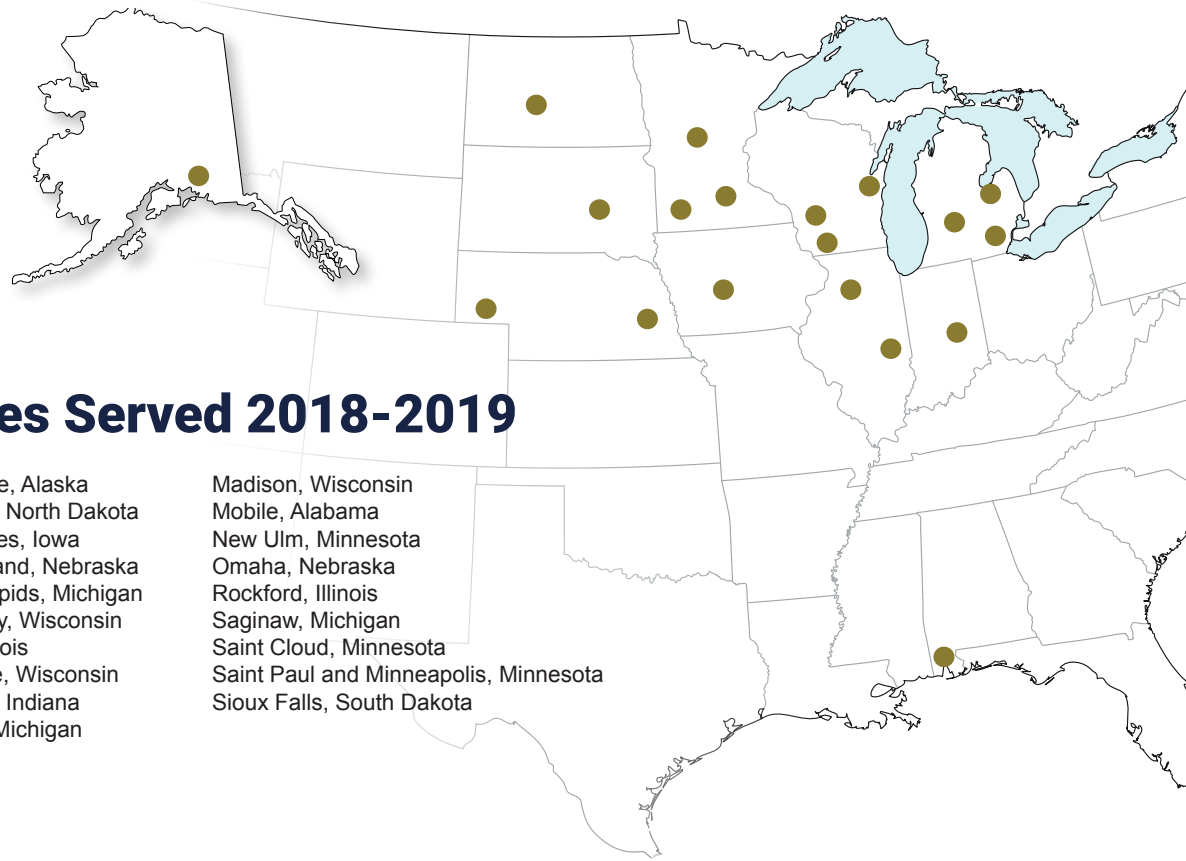
In Christ,

Rev. Michael C Becker Jr

Father Michael Becker
Rector



WHY SJV MATTERS



Dioceses Served 2018-2019

Anchorage, Alaska
Bismarck, North Dakota
Des Moines, Iowa
Grand Island, Nebraska
Grand Rapids, Michigan
Green Bay, Wisconsin
Joliet, Illinois
La Crosse, Wisconsin
Lafayette, Indiana
Lansing, Michigan

Madison, Wisconsin
Mobile, Alabama
New Ulm, Minnesota
Omaha, Nebraska
Rockford, Illinois
Saginaw, Michigan
Saint Cloud, Minnesota
Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Saint John Vianney College Seminary by the Numbers

16 alumni were ordained to the priesthood in 2018, serving dioceses throughout the United States.

98 men from 19 dioceses are in formation.

20 seminarians studied in Rome in 2018-2019

19 men received an SJV Rector's Scholarship for the 2018-2019 academic year.

More than **5,000** hours were spent in service to the campus and surrounding community during the year.

22 men participated in mission trips to India and the Dominican Republic.

Saint John Vianney College Seminary

RAISING UP AN ARMY FOR GOD

By Christina Capecchi



It's Thursday afternoon, and Joe Wappes is playing pool at Saint John Vianney College Seminary. He pauses from the game, leaning against the table and holding his pool stick, to reflect on his prospective vocation to priesthood.

"It's got me so pumped up," he says, his blue eyes sparkling. "It's a daunting call, a huge responsibility. But what would I rather give myself to? Salvation is on the line."

With that he resumes the game, sinking the No. 7 ball into a corner pocket.

"There we go!" he says.

He laughs with a fellow seminarian and considers his next shot. The fraternity Wappes has found among the 97 other young men now attending SJV has buoyed the 21-year-old, a junior from St. Charles Borromeo in St. Anthony.

"This is a place of great joy," he says. "To be built up by this intentional Christian community has been amazing."

The fraternity spurs the piety, he explains – beginning with 6:30 a.m. holy hour and expected throughout the course of a rigorous day. And so, Wappes breaks from billiards at 4:50 p.m. to meet up for Evening Prayer. He slips into the fourth row of the chapel, kneels and closes his eyes.

"God, come to my assistance," he prays alongside the other seminarians. "Lord, make haste to help me."

He gazes at the mosaic behind the altar depicting the miracle of the loaves and fishes, an image that has resonated with him recently.

"I've been thinking a lot about being like the boy who gives his all to Jesus," Wappes says after prayer. "Even though it's not much, it's all he has, yet he gives it. That takes a lot of trust and surrender."

Jesus does way more with it than what the boy had planned. And so, like the boy, I hope to be able to surrender my meager, humble gifts, trusting that Jesus can multiply them to reach thousands of people with his love."

A multiplication of epic proportions has unfolded here at Saint John Vianney over the past half a century, beginning in 1968 when 119 seminarians moved into Loras Hall on the south campus of the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul and Father John Roach, the future archbishop, became its first rector. It has since moved to the north campus and become one of the nation's largest college seminaries, drawing from 46 dioceses in total, ranging from Alaska to Alabama, and proving to be a magnet among Midwesterners.

Over the years some 1,525 men have attended SJV. More than 500 alumni are currently serving as ordained priests, including three bishops and a cardinal. Hundreds more, meanwhile, are faith-filled laymen building the kingdom of God as doctors, lawyers, teachers and mentors. SJV trained them all for fatherhood, as the late rector Father Bill Baer put it: some as spiritual fathers, some as actual dads.

In the words of Father Michael Becker, the current rector, SJV is "raising up an army for the Lord." As a college seminary, it guides men during the most pivotal juncture of their lives – a time at once thrilling and terrifying when they attempt to discern and then answer God's call, which can vary in clarity day to day.

For Archbishop Paul Etienne of Anchorage, the intensity of his SJV experience in the mid '80s remains vivid. "The invitation of Jesus to consider priesthood was disturbing," he said. "It was something He was asking of me that I had serious reservations about. I had another plan for my future. There was a lot at stake, so I went [to SJV] to very intentionally listen more, to really learn about who the Lord is and what was His call. It was attractive and yet frightening at the same time."

To see current seminarians face that fear and surrender to God is moving, said Archbishop Etienne, who encourages young men in his archdiocese to attend SJV, where one of his locals is now enrolled. "These guys are alive with faith. Their love for the Lord and His Church and their desire to serve the Lord is contagious. That leaves people, when they walk away from their experience, hopeful and inspired."



A regular liturgical schedule is integrated into a seminarian's daily life.

Most Reverend Paul Etienne,
Archbishop of Anchorage and SJV Alumnus





A winning combination

Nineteen outside dioceses currently have young men at SJV. A number of factors set it apart from other college seminaries, according to the sending bishops.

Bishop Richard Pates of Des Moines, a former SJV rector who currently has two local men at SJV, begins by identifying its presence at St. Thomas, where the seminarians are deeply immersed in campus life and are the recipients of a stellar education.

“It is a very well-rounded seminary with tremendous resources,” Bishop Pates said. “It’s well respected and highly valued. The bishops that I speak to are grateful for it.”

That gratitude is echoed by Dr. Julie Sullivan, president of the University of St. Thomas. “We really enjoy the enthusiasm and the presence that the young men bring to the campus,” she said. “Their passion for life and God also translates into their passion for this university. They have such a positive impact on our community.”

The impact may be most evident at “Last Chance Mass.” As the bell tolls 9 p.m. on Sunday, hundreds of students and alumni flock to the SJV chapel for what is considered the latest weekend Mass in the archdiocese, a service that is hosted by the seminarians and includes confession beforehand and refreshments afterwards.

SJV’s connection to the broader Church is amplified by being an integral part of The Seminaries of Saint Paul, a national center of formation for seminarians, diaconate candidates, lay ministers, theologians, Catholic school leaders and clergy.

As rector, Father Becker points to three traits that distinguish SJV. “Everything begins with Holy Hour and Mass and flows out of that encounter with God. Secondly, the strength of fraternity and the



Top: Joe Wappes shoots a free throw during the annual Priests v. Seminarians Basketball Tournament.

Middle: Archbishop Bernard Hebda and Dr. Julie Sullivan see the hope that the SJV seminarians bring to the Church and the university community.

Bottom: Last Chance Mass is celebrated in the SJV Chapel on Sunday nights.

accountability that comes with it. And third is the gift of our association with the Catholic Studies and philosophy departments [at St. Thomas] and the opportunity to study in Rome.”

Combined, those factors make for a unique SJV experience, forming young men who are grounded in faith and reason, who have experienced the universal Church and long to serve it.

The ritual of Liturgy of the Hour runs deep in alumni – especially, they say, the seminarians’ Sunday-night gathering, a touch point that marked the ending of one week and the beginning of another.

“It was the best way to start a new week with the brothers, to get back together,” said Father Spencer Howe, who graduated from SJV 10 years ago and now serves as parochial administrator for Holy Cross Catholic Church in northeast Minneapolis.

“Almost every seminarian I know from those days can still chant Sunday night prayer from memory,” Father Howe said. “I can still hear those voices coming together for the Cantic of Simeon: ‘Protect us, Lord, as we stay awake, watch over us as we sleep, that awake, we may keep watch with Christ, and asleep, rest in His peace.’ ”

The sound of night prayer at SJV has not faded for Archbishop Etienne either. “That’s where not only the habit but the love of the Liturgy of the Hours was instilled in me – knowing every time I pick up that breviary I’m praying with and in and for the Church,” he said. “That has remained with me all my days – and will until I draw my last breath.”

Mitch Milless, 33, an SJV alumnus who works as a financial planner and belongs to Holy Family Catholic Church in St. Louis Park, has fostered the tradition of Sunday night prayer with his three young sons. “They think it’s really cool,” he said.



Top: The SJV Schola sings in the St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel during Mass.

Middle: Then seminarian Spencer Howe stands near the arches on the University of St. Thomas campus.

Bottom: SJV alumnus Mitch Milless is pictured with his wife, Annmarie, and three sons.

The whole person

Along with the foundation of prayer, SJV staff focus on human formation: preparing future priests who are well-adjusted, well-rounded men.

“Bishops are concerned about human formation today in light of the state of the Church and priesthood,” Father Becker said. “Is a man socially gifted? Does he possess an integration of emotions, a peace and a certain self-possession with regard to sexuality and chastity? We know grace builds on nature, so it’s important to have a good nature. What I hear from [sending] bishops is that they’re happy our men come through with self-knowledge, discipline and a certain amount of affective maturity.”

Those virtues are developed at SJV, in part, through one-on-one spiritual direction, Father Becker said. “The duty of a rector is to create an atmosphere where charity imbues the house and trust is fostered among the men, where they can share their struggles and know they’re going to be loved and affirmed by spiritual fathers and brothers. We have that environment.”

Former Rector Bishop Pates reiterated that message. “How you relate to people opens the door to bring about the spiritual message,” he said. “That’s extraordinarily important.”

Indeed, Church leaders note, the SJV seminarians are well-integrated: a lively bunch of young men who, according to wholesome standards, work hard and play hard.

SJV seminarians are competitive athletes, excelling at intramural sports, and talented musicians, including a jazz band that plays on Sunday afternoons. They have a sense of humor, Dr. Sullivan said, performing skits and comedy sketches for campus variety and talent shows.

The seminarians come together once a week for dinner and “Tuesday Night Entertainment,” a tradition that nurtures their robust sense of fraternity.

“They have a lot of fun in the midst of their disciplined lives,” Father Becker said. “Joy is a fruition of love. Those who are in love possess joy, and the men here are definitely in love with God, and then they share that love with each other and those they encounter.”

Fraternity and joy run deep at SJV.





Father John Kelly, formator and spiritual director, keeps his eye on the ball during the spring wiffle ball tournament.

It prods the seminarians to become students of humanity, to listen better and, hence, evangelize more effectively. That love extends to the poor and marginalized in their midst and those they meet on mission trips.

It softens hearts when the seminarians take a public stance to defend Church teaching amid a controversy. For instance, as rector, Father Bill Baer once brought the seminarians to the University of Minnesota to peacefully protest its upcoming performance of an anti-Catholic play called “The Pope and the Witch.”

They prayed the rosary in front of a university theater, and, as it turned out, opening night was canceled due to a snowstorm. The play went on to have only one other performance, Father Howe recalled. “Father Baer showed us we have a business to be a presence in the world.”

The men have a can-do spirit, said Bishop Peter Christensen of Boise, who attended SJV in the late '70s and served as its rector from 1992-1999. Once, he recalled, the seminarians decided to perform a living Stations of the Cross with one-week lead time. “That was no problem,” he said. “They can do things. They don’t spend a lot of time in deliberation. As a priest, what a nice shot in the arm, to be getting doses of that from time to time.”

Father Howe fondly recalls how that can-do spirit fueled his class at SJV – whether they were serving in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina or embarking on a walking pilgrimage from Viterbo, Italy, to Rome. “We were on an adventure together, in pursuit of the Lord,” he said.



SJV friends and benefactors Tim and Ann Fleming, pictured with family at their son's wedding, are inspired by the spirit at SJV. "When you go there, the Holy Spirit is palpable."

'The Heart of a Lion'

The seminarians' spirit is energizing, calling forth the best from everyone who visits, say SJV donors.

"It's this hidden gem," said Ann Fleming, a grandmother who belongs to Holy Name of Jesus in Wayzata and participates in the seminary's Spiritual Mothers prayer group. "When you go to SJV, the Holy Spirit is palpable. You meet these young kids, and you feel such hope for the Church. I wish every doubting Catholic out there – and there are many – could see this."

Ann's husband, Tim, speaks to the seminarians as part of the Virtuous Business Leaders group, sharing wisdom gleaned from his work as CEO of the Upper Midwest Region of Marsh & McLennan Agency.

A visit to the seminary never ceases to impress him, Tim said. "It's an unbelievable treasure."

SJV compels the couple to be better Catholics, he said – to pray and study their faith and share it more passionately.

For Mitch Milless, his SJV formation prompts him to challenge his sons. "I try to encourage them: 'You can do this! I believe in you. You're called to do great things, you're called to be a saint.'"

He takes special care with his firstborn, a 7-year-old who is the smallest kid in his class. "I try to boost him up and tell him: 'You have the heart of a lion, but you serve people like a lamb.'"

The call to greatness is a hallmark of SJV, said Father Howe. Father Baer would quote Daniel Burnham, the architect who helped rebuild Chicago after the infamous 1871 fire: "Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir man's blood."

The boldness infused in him as an SJV seminarian informs his priesthood. "I hear it in my voice, that instinct to go beyond the conventional, the easy nugget. I hear it in the confessional and in my preaching. We never want to make the Gospel palatable but keep it radical and dangerous and alive."

For Archbishop Bernard Hebda, every visit to SJV inspires him to embrace his vocation. “It’s so reaffirming for me, when I realize that the Lord continues to call such fine young men to serve His Church,” he said. “It’s a concrete reminder of God’s love for this Church, even in a difficult time. It is the source of our renewal.”

The occasion of SJV’s 50th anniversary is cause for celebration, Archbishop Hebda said. “It’s an opportunity for us to give thanks for the many blessings that He’s brought to His Church through the work that goes on at SJV. At the same time, it’s an opportunity for us to recommit ourselves to continuing that work and being intentional about the work of formation.”

Father Becker has a similar view of the milestone. “I rejoice in all the successes of past community members and what they’re doing now,” he said. “At this juncture, I know the Church needs evangelists for the future. We can’t just rely on a base of Catholic culture to sustain us. We need to go out in fresh ways to the fringes, to invite others to the Church rather than expect them to just show up.”

Developing a bond among future priests is part of that equation, he added. “We need them to become stronger together, to have a certain strength together so they can build community fabric in their parishes, knowing what it’s like to live in community here. A community is a beacon.”



The Next Chapter

For all its storied history, SJV is oriented, by its very nature, on the future. It is a place where you can glimpse the Church of tomorrow.

“We get a front-row seat to the future of the Church, and the future looks bright,” said Tizoc Rosales, director of advancement for The Seminaries of Saint Paul.

After 50 remarkable years, in many ways, the best is yet to come.

“I feel like the stories are just being written,” Milless said. “It’s just hitting its stride.”

Ann and Tim Fleming also have high hopes.

“I can only imagine what the fruits of its incredible leadership will be,” he said.

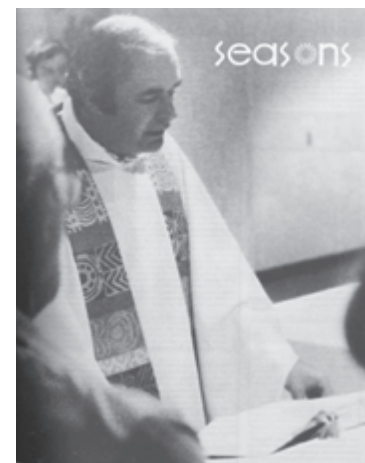
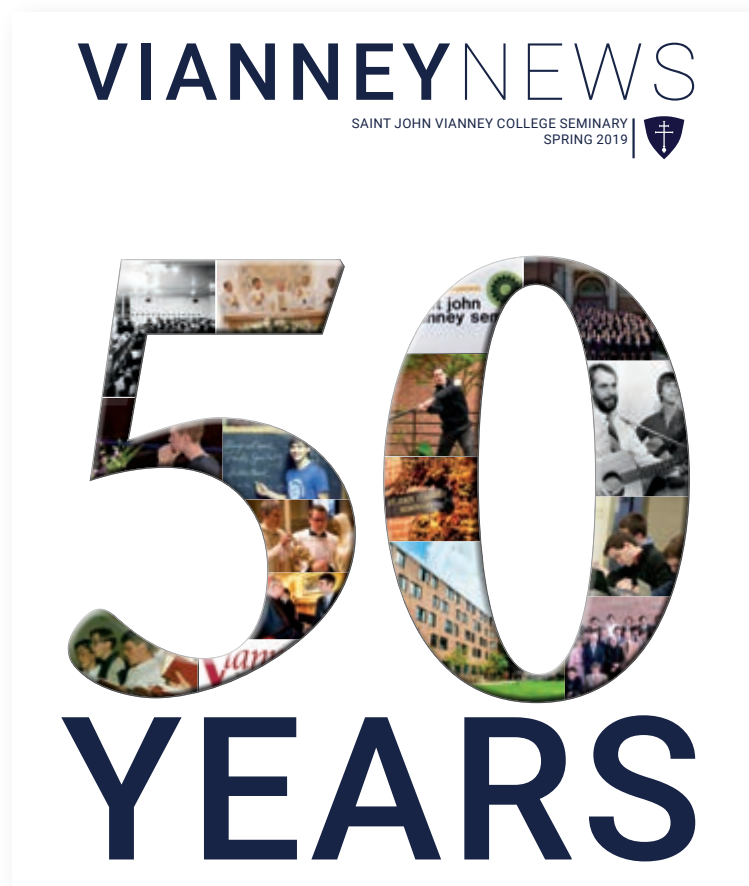
For his part, Joe Wappes will continue the work of a seminarian: to listen to God’s voice. Tuning out distractions has helped the bright-eyed junior. Since arriving at SJV, he cut back on his use of Facebook and stopped using the messaging app Snapchat.

“Once I got rid of it, I never wanted to go back,” he said. “It’s so freeing to live in the present moment. St. Therese of Lisieux – her simplicity, abandoning to the Lord’s mercy – has been a powerful theme for me.”

Reflecting on the seminary’s 50-year history fills him with awe and propels him forward, he said. “I think of the hundreds of priests who have walked these halls, and now they’re out there saving souls for the Church.”

Telling the SJV Story

Through the years, the SJV newsletter has kept our readers up to date on formation, events and growth. Once called "Seasons," then "Saint John Vianney Seminary Newsletter," and more recently "Vianney News," these publications have changed in name and content but not in purpose. This small sampling of covers now provides an historical perspective. There may be no better way to honor the past than to see and appreciate what it once looked like.





Fall 1984
SAINT JOHN VIANNEY SEMINARY NEWSLETTER

First Impressions
 by Jerry Hester

SJV's Theme 1984-85
 "One Body, One Spirit in Christ"

The newsletter contains several columns of text and small photographs.

SAINT JOHN VIANNEY SEMINARY

SJV Classes of 1996 - 97

A Week in the Life of a Seminarian

What's Inside: Letter from the Rector, Ministry of Ordination, Spiritual Exercises, Seminary Book Fair

SAINT JOHN VIANNEY SEMINARY

Father Peter Christensen Welcomes Father William Boer, Newly Appointed Rector.

Vianney news
 Saint John Vianney College Seminary
 St. Paul, Minnesota

Men in Christ. Men of the Church. Men for Others.

Are you willing to invest in the young men who are the future of the church?

What's Inside: Letter from the Rector, Ministry of Ordination, Spiritual Exercises, Seminary Book Fair

Vianney news
 Saint John Vianney College Seminary
 St. Paul, Minnesota

In the Spirituality

What's Inside: Letter from the Rector, Ministry of Ordination, Spiritual Exercises, Seminary Book Fair

Vianney news
 Saint John Vianney College Seminary
 St. Paul, Minnesota

MEN of the Church

2015-2016 Annual Report Enclosed

What's Inside: Letter from the Rector, Ministry of Ordination, Spiritual Exercises, Seminary Book Fair

Vianney news
 Saint John Vianney College Seminary
 St. Paul, Minnesota

Good Morning SJV!

2014-2015 Annual Report Enclosed

What's Inside: Letter from the Rector, Ministry of Ordination, Spiritual Exercises, Seminary Book Fair

Vianney news
 Saint John Vianney College Seminary
 St. Paul, Minnesota

All in the Family

Vianney news
 Saint John Vianney College Seminary
 St. Paul, Minnesota

INTRODUCING OUR NEW LOGO!
 See the Joyful Catholic Leaders insert enclosed.

Dear Friends



It is with great joy that we bring you this special issue of *Vianney News*! The occasion of Saint John Vianney's anniversary has allowed us to reflect on those who had the vision, courage, and grace to begin a college seminary in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. As we commemorate 50 years of essential formation for our Catholic priests and lay leaders, please join us as we honor the past, celebrate the present, and hope for the future.

In this issue, we have highlighted a few of the individuals who God tasked with beginning this great mission. I pray that those who sacrificed during SJV's early years are edified by what God has done with that foundation: Over 500 alumni are now serving as faith-filled priests and over a thousand more as lay leaders. Countless lives have been impacted by those who spent time at SJV, and for that, we thank you!

Today, SJV is as strong as ever. A talented, committed, and holy staff of priests lead the young men, direct their discernment, and call them to a life of virtue. These young men radiate joy, and their witness is an example to many. Regardless of what vocation God has in store, SJV is preparing young men to serve as joyful, Catholic leaders.

As we look to the future, we remain steadfast in this mission. Come what may, we must hold fast to the truth and be open to God's will as we walk with Jesus on a path towards heaven.

Who are the priests and lay leaders of tomorrow? Look at the little ones in your midst. Pray for them. Encourage them. Help ensure that there is a place like SJV when it is their time to discern the priesthood.

Thank you to those who have supported and prayed for SJV over the years, and we welcome those who are just learning about our seminary. Many have made SJV possible, many are stewarding this gift today, and many are needed to continue this work. May God bless each and every one of you.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tizoc Rosales".

Tizoc Rosales
Director of Advancement

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FOR
50
YEARS

Saint John Vianney College Seminary has been preparing men to live out their Catholic faith as lay and ordained sons of God. It doesn't matter what the title is behind their name or if they wear a collar or a necktie or steel-toed boots to work. SJV made a difference in their lives and they are making a difference in the lives of others. They bring the light of Christ to their dioceses, parishes, homes, families and communities.

doctors

FATHERS

PRIESTS

DEACONS

principals

brothers



builders

ADMINISTRATORS

MISSIONARIES

BANKERS

TRADESMEN

ATHLETES

A CARDINAL
business owners

teachers

FINANCIAL ADVISORS
ATTORNEYS

HUSBANDS

BISHOPS

THEOLOGIAN



JOYFUL
CATHOLIC
LEADERS



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50th Anniversary Prayer

Heavenly Father, giver of all that is good,
as Saint John Vianney College Seminary celebrates
50 years of priestly discernment and formation,
we thank you for the men who have heard and answered your call.

Grace our lay and ordained alumni with holiness of life.
Help our seminarians to persevere as they prepare for a lifetime of
service. By your Holy Spirit, empower all who enter these doors to
proclaim the Gospel of your Son, Jesus Christ, with fidelity and joy.

With great confidence, we entrust this mission to you and to our
Blessed Mother Mary.

St. John Vianney, pray for us.
St. Thomas Aquinas, pray for us.

AMEN.