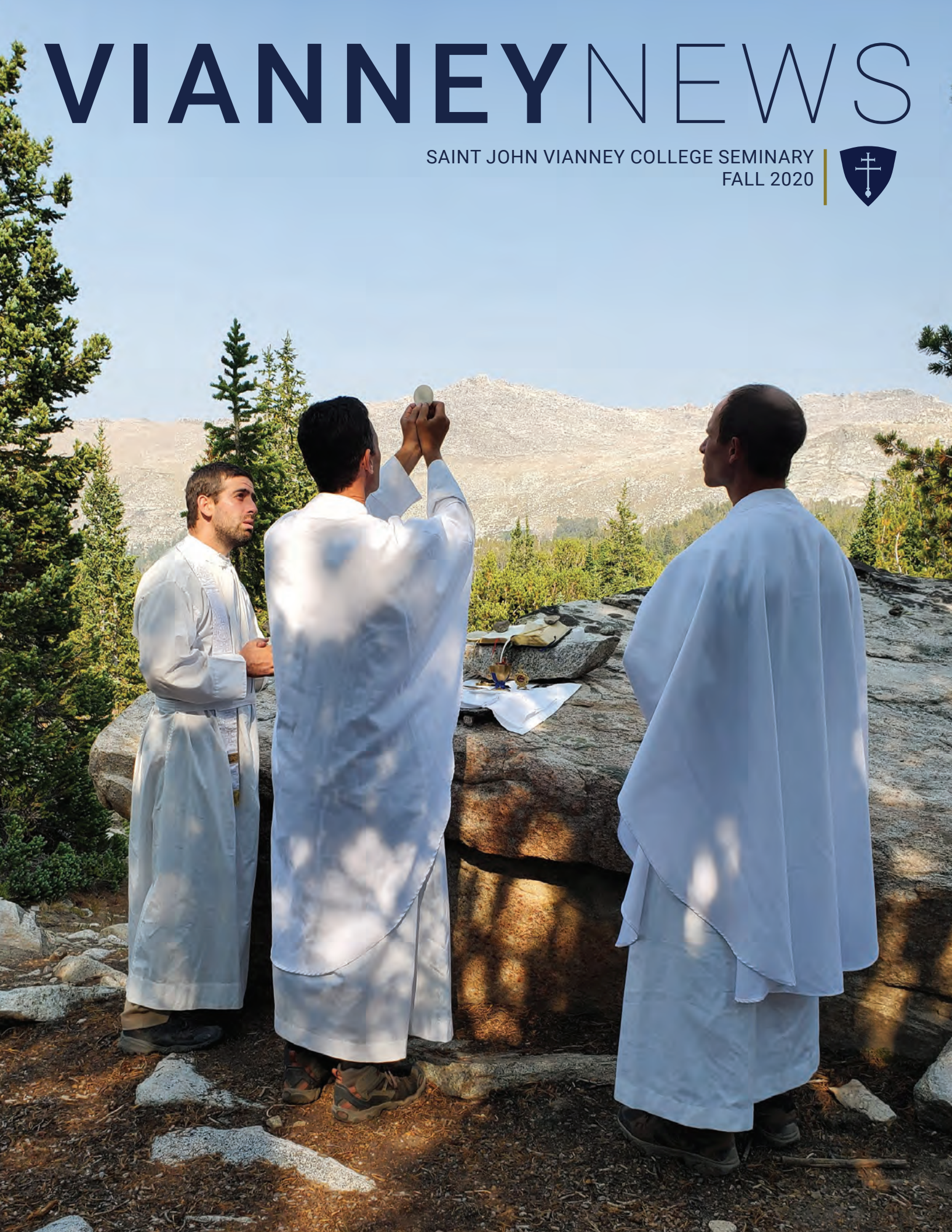


VIANNEYNEWS

SAINT JOHN VIANNEY COLLEGE SEMINARY
FALL 2020



Dear Friends,

In the spring 2020 issue of *Vianney News*, I made the following statement as we were coming to terms with the pandemic:

I am very proud of our seminarians and the maturity they have displayed as their college seminary experience significantly changed. They trust in God's plan for their lives, and they continue to discern under new circumstances.

With gratitude and humility, I can honestly say this remains true!

The SJV seminarians continue to display great maturity, not to mention generosity and perseverance, as the world changes around them. They trust that the Lord has a plan for their lives, and they are willing to prayerfully discover what that is, no matter the context in which they live.

Please take a moment to read this new issue of *Vianney News*. I hope you will be inspired to read about a group of seminarians who lived in cloister last spring (pp. 6-7), dove into the Gospel in small-group Bible studies (p. 5), and experienced God's creation in the mountains of Wyoming (pp. 10-11).

I also hope you will be delighted to read about some of our alumni: 17 were ordained for nine dioceses in 2020, one was named a bishop and another an abbot, and one received a prestigious award for his doctoral dissertation.

I do not share this with you to brag. I share it so you, too, can be very proud of the SJV seminarians and alumni who are *your* current and future priests and lay leaders. Your prayerful and financial support make a difference in their lives and the families, parishes, and communities they touch.


This fall, the SJV staff welcomed 105 men back to campus. They represent dioceses that touch the Canadian border to the north (Duluth), the Gulf of Mexico to the south (Mobile, Alabama), and 16 more in between. They returned to college seminary to seek the Lord. Yes, they have masks on and are social distancing, but their hunger to know and love God and the Church is as strong as ever. They inspire me in my own priestly ministry.

And you, dear friends of SJV, inspire me too. Thank you for your support, your witness, and your confidence in the next generation of priests and lay leaders. May it please God that our work will bring His kingdom to fulfillment.

Sincerely Yours In Christ,



Rev. Michael C. Becker, Jr.
Rector



On the Cover: Father Jon Kelly elevates the Eucharist during an outdoor Mass in the Wyoming mountains. Fathers Matthew Alexander (left) and Joseph Kuharski concelebrate. See story on pages 10-11.

MEETING THE FORMATION NEEDS

OF TODAY'S COLLEGE SEMINARIANS

Saint John Vianney College Seminary is not just a building. It is the place where seminarians become well-rounded men of faith and learn to make a sincere gift of themselves to others. The environment where they pray, study and build community is an important part of their discernment process.

The SJV building has served the seminarians and priests well since it was built in 1982. After nearly 40 years, though, it has reached an age where significant maintenance and updates are required. In addition, the formation and programming needs for today's college seminarians necessitate important changes to the physical structure and use of the building.

That is why, as part of a long-term strategic plan, the seminary has made a commitment to update and enhance the building that the seminarians call "home."



A commercial-grade kitchen was part of the summer updates at SJV.

Additional renovations to the existing building, including updates to seminarian rooms and shared lounges, will continue throughout 2021.

First Steps – 2020

Regular renovations and upgrades are often difficult to tackle when seminarians are onsite, but the building was suddenly vacant when they had to move off campus in March 2020 due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With an empty building, renovations could begin to address deferred maintenance and update many of the living spaces. These improvements included:

- Updated bathrooms, including the installation of new plumbing throughout the entire building.
- A commercial-grade kitchen, making it possible to host community meals and seminary events.
- Air conditioning throughout the lower level of the building.

Next Steps – 2022

Looking to the future, SJV plans to expand beyond its current physical space. God willing, new construction, which will connect to the existing building, is planned for 2022.

The increased square footage will create additional program space for seminarians and staff, fully utilizing the building to enhance the experience for all who live and work at the seminary. The project will also create sufficient space for all staff priests to live in-residence. This is currently not possible due to space limitations within the building.

Most importantly, the chapel—the heart of the seminary—will be expanded and transformed to provide a space that serves the daily liturgical and formation needs of the seminarians.

Watch for more details as plans are developed.

Vianney Cup 2020



Father Becker begins the Vianney Cup with announcements and a prayer.

On Monday, September 21, a record number of golfers participated in the 16th Annual Vianney Cup to support SJV's mission of providing essential formation today for tomorrow's Catholic priests. A modified format allowed for morning and afternoon rounds of golf, and event sponsors and participants helped raise much-needed funds before and during the event.

Participants were joined on the course by Father Michael Becker and celebrity golfers Matt Birk, Brooks Bollinger, Brian Bonin, and Wes Walz. An evening program included remarks by Archbishop Bernard Hebda, Bishop Andrew Cozzens, and two SJV seniors.

Nick Ahrens, a senior from the Diocese of Sioux Falls, underscored for the golfers the impact their generosity makes on SJV: "It is ultimately my desire that the words I have spoken to you all tonight communicate that SJV is a furnace of charity in which all men who pass through are equipped to become holy husbands or priests."

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 17TH ANNUAL VIANNEY CUP

Monday, September 20, 2021
Midland Hills Country Club

Golfers enjoy a day on the course while raising funds for seminarians discerning the priesthood.





Father Michael Kearney prepares seminarians to lead Bible studies on campus.

Unpacking the Gospel

When Father Michael Kearney joined the SJV staff two years ago, he brought with him deep experience in leading small Bible studies and an even deeper love of Sacred Scripture.

As a campus missionary and then as a newly ordained priest in his first parish assignment, Father Kearney led small groups through books of the Old Testament, the Gospels, and letters from St. Paul. At SJV, he used this background last spring to train seminarians to lead their own small groups on campus. He prepared them on Tuesdays, and they led their own studies on Wednesdays. The Gospel of Matthew was their focus.

Then COVID-19 hit. Father Kearney sheltered in place with his family in Lincoln, Nebraska, and most seminarians returned to their home dioceses. But, the desire for the Gospel was stronger than the pandemic. Father and his small group of seminarians completed their journey through Matthew via Zoom this summer.

Back at SJV, Father Kearney is leading another group of seminarians through the Gospel of John, and seminarian-led small groups have resumed on campus.



Spring semester was like no other for the SJV seminarians.

When the University of St. Thomas closed campus buildings and moved classes online in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, seminarians packed up their belongings, said goodbye to their seminarian brothers, and left for home.

Thirteen men from the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis and two priest staff members went “home” to Dunrovin Christian Brothers Retreat Center. For seven weeks, they lived in cloister and continued their formation in this beautiful setting near Stillwater, Minnesota.

Since 1999, Mary Meeds and her husband, Jerome, have lived at Dunrovin where they raised four children and support the ministry of the De la Salle Christian Brothers. Mary serves on staff and Jerome is the Executive Director.

Mary wrote the following reflection about their unique group of visitors. She generously shared this edited version for the fall issue of *Vianney News*.

Photos are courtesy of her son, Mario.

So the Seminarian, So the Priest

by Mary Meeds

We felt doomed. We fielded one phone call after another as groups cancelled their spring retreats at Dunrovin Retreat Center. Next, the summer cancellations began. Dunrovin sat empty with no prospects on the horizon.

Would Dunrovin be another coronavirus casualty? It could have been, but this is the rest of the story.

In mid-March, shortly after Minnesota was tipped upside down by the advancing COVID-19 contagion, the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis contacted my husband, Jerome, executive director, to inquire about the possibility of SJV seminarians staying at Dunrovin to continue their studies and, more importantly, to maintain their communal life. Jerome spoke with the Dunrovin staff about the feasibility of creating a clean, distanced space for the guys. Could we be flexible enough to meet their needs?

At first, we grappled with new tasks and a change in the way we do things. To be successful in offering the seminarians a “cloistered” life, the staff separated into those who were not allowed to enter the Retreat Center and those allowed to serve the seminarians by living in the cloister with them.

My family and the Dunrovin staff stayed true to this separation for the seminarians’ stay of almost 60 days. The seminarians were not allowed to come and go. The Meeds’ family made the same commitment.

When we welcomed 13 seminarians and two priests to Dunrovin for the official start of the cloister on March 26, Jerome prophesied, “This will be a special time for you. It will be extraordinary.”

How could it be anything but extraordinary when the men who came are themselves quite extraordinary? For nine graduating seniors, the time at Dunrovin would be their final college seminary days.

We witnessed their strength and vigor one week after they arrived when we heard a splash in the pond. We watched incredulously as two seminarians swam from end to end through the arctic water. Only a week prior, winter ice covered the pond. However, things much more incredulous than a spring plunge were brewing at Dunrovin.

continued on next page...

The Easter Vigil on April 11 began with a fire on the grounds of Dunrovin Retreat Center.



At first, I did not want to intrude on the seminarians. In particular, I felt shy about my presence in the chapel with these young men. At a time when our churches were closed, the seminarians celebrated the sacraments daily.

The guys and I grew accustomed to seeing each other around the Center. One morning I went to the chapel for adoration and took my seat in the back, according to the rules designed to keep the Retreat Center coronavirus-free. Soon afterward, I attended Mass. And so, my observational journey with the seminarians truly began. Something far more valuable than rental fees was happening at Dunrovin during these weeks. Our future priests were in training.

“It was a win-win,” said Jerome. “We went from cancelled weekends to God’s promise in the words ‘Trust Me.’ The seminarians were God’s provision for Dunrovin in a very bleak time.”

They came to the chapel in surplices. I was surprised. These pond-swimming, football-playing, bonfire starters scrubbed up quite well. They processed solemnly into the chapel, dressed in the white garments of seminarians. They were already taking on a sacred identity.

One day I noticed a small banner that had been tacked on the wall above a door: “So the seminarian, so the priest.” Hmmm? I wondered what these words meant.

How is a man formed as a Catholic priest? Bring him to the altar. There he prepares the altar for the celebrant. He serves, reads, sings, incenses, and learns. He is always watching the priest. I turned the phrase around: “So the priest, so the seminarian.”

It touched my heart to witness the seminarians as they practiced elements of the Mass. Vocal or quiet, studious or athletic, freshman or senior, all came to the altar sober and serious. Deep voices chanted in Latin, worshipping Jesus Christ.

While the world was fasting, we were feasting. I wondered, should I feel guilty?

It was a gift to be at Mass with the men and share their sacred space. The priests offered rich homilies, sharing their hearts as they shaped the seminarians. I contemplated: “So the seminarian, so the priest.” As these young men are formed now, so they act later as priests. It began to make sense.

My favorite memory of the seminarians occurred on the first Sunday of May. As I waited for Mass to begin, Spiritual Director Father Jon Kelly asked if I would crown Mary after the homily. In 59 years, I have never been asked to crown Mary. Of course, I would!

The guys brought inside a statue of Mary and placed her near the altar. I giggled when I noticed how dirty the statue looked. Then a maternal love welled up in my heart for these eager, sincere men. I offered them all to our Blessed Mother at that moment. Finally, one of the seminarians handed me a tiny, hand-woven wreath of greenery, crafted an hour earlier from fresh spring grass.



Frisbee was a popular outlet for the seminarians living in cloister.



Seminarians and priests wave palm branches during a Palm Sunday procession.

A seminarian nearby whispered, “It is upside down.”

Turning the delicate wreath over, I gasped to see dainty violets woven through the greenery. So sweet, these young men loving our Mother Mary. She loves her sons. I wiped away a few tears.

A juxtaposition exists within these men. The quiet of adoration and the activity of serving unite to form the priest. I wonder about their futures. I wonder if memories of these weeks at Dunrovin will fuel them for sacrifice.

During the pandemic, our archdiocesan priests offered drive-thru confessions, parking lot Communion services, and consolation

for bereaved family members unable to celebrate funerals. What will God ask of these seminarians?

Quietly waiting on the Lord, I watch as these men seek His plan for their lives. So, we return to the altar to listen for the voice of Jesus. The altar – a place set apart. A place of sacrifice where God’s love is made manifest. A place to gather and celebrate.

Formation in the Wilderness

Trekking through rivers, thickets, and steep mountain trails, 11 SJV seminarians backpacked through the rugged wilderness of Wyoming for five days in August. They were joined by Fathers Matthew Alexander, Jon Kelly, and Joseph Kuharski. Together, they experienced intense spiritual and physical formation within the spectacular setting of the Wind River Valley.

The adventure was organized by Father Alexander, who joined the SJV staff in 2019 as a Spiritual Formator. It was his desire that the seminarians experience how God's creation emulates His love for us and reveals our dependence on Him.

"It is only in man's smallness that he is able to enter into deep friendship with God, who is so great," Father Alexander said.

The journey was facilitated by Wyoming Catholic College (WCC), a private school in Lander, Wyoming, that seeks to immerse students "in the Western tradition, in the beauty of the wilderness, and in the treasures of our Catholic spiritual heritage."

With three wilderness experts from WCC, the team drove hours into the wilderness. Michael Barber, a senior and native of the Diocese of Mobile, Alabama, said the trust he put in the guides was similar to his experience entering seminary.

"Like with the guides, I had to trust that I would be taken care of and led by the SJV priests and the formation they provide," he said.

After arriving in what seemed like the middle of nowhere, the guides shared their knowledge with the men, including: what to do in a thunderstorm, how to respond when encountering a Grizzly bear, and how to identify where they were on a map.



SJV seniors (left to right) Michael Barber, Ryan Noorae, and Andre Klaes enjoy the view at the summit.

Every day looked a little different. Some were frustrating, as they trekked through bushes all day just to reach an opening to camp for the night. Others miraculous, like the day they reached the peak of an 11,000-foot mountain and looked out over the valleys. But all were consistent: each day included prayer, Mass, and a nightly bonfire where the seminarians and priests reflected on their experiences.

Father Alexander is grateful for the experience and was moved by the seriousness with which the seminarians took the challenge that, at times, was painstaking.

“When a father sees his sons face adversity with great courage, it is beautiful,” he said.

Without the comforts of everyday life, the trip helped Barber understand the importance of virtue: “You have to be virtuous in the wilderness in order to complete the journey. Courage and charity were necessary.” He recalled several times when he or his brother seminarians took on leadership roles to encourage others along.

Barber, who plans to enter major seminary next year, said the bonds of friendship grew among his brothers. He was often reminded of the great gift the last four years of formation have been in his life, saying, “These men have become my best friends.”



Left: Father Jon Kelly displays an SJV flag at the top of the mountain.

Below: Seminarians and their trail guides stop for a group photo before hitting the trail.

Photos: Courtesy of Alexander Marquette, a senior from the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.



Congratulations

to the

SJV Ordination Class of 2020



Father Austin Barnes
Saint Paul and Minneapolis



Father Michael Block
Lafayette-in-Indiana



Father Clayton Forner
Saint Paul and Minneapolis



Father Michael Groth
Joliet



Father James Guarascio
Joliet



Father Nathan Hastings
Saint Paul and Minneapolis



Father John Hayes
New Ulm



Father Paul Hedman
Saint Paul and Minneapolis



Father Tony Klein
Sioux Falls

| SJV class years are in the lower right of each photo.

Father Samuel McCarty
La Crosse

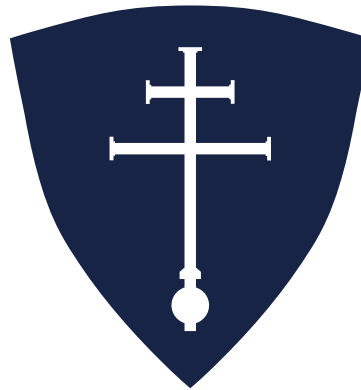
Father Matthew Miller
Duluth

Father Shawn Pohlman
New Ulm



Father Jack Reichardt
Rockford

Father Levi Schmitt
La Crosse



Father Ramon Sida
Joliet

Father John Vinton
Lansing

Father Daniel Williams
La Crosse



Alumni News



Johnny Sundby Photography

Bishop Peter Muhich – Class of 1983

On July 9, SJV alumnus Rev. Peter Muhich was installed Bishop of Rapid City. Muhich was ordained in 1989 for the Diocese of Duluth.

Prior to his installation, Bishop Muhich served as parochial vicar and pastor of parishes throughout the Diocese of Duluth. Most recently, he was the Rector at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Rosary. He served several diocesan administrative boards as well, including the Presbyteral Council, College of Consultors, Clergy Personnel Board, Priest Personnel Board, Diocesan Finance Officer, Spiritual Director of the Catholic Medical Association, and Vicar Forane of the Duluth Deanery.

Bishop Muhich is one of nine SJV alumni to be appointed a bishop.



Abbott Marion Nguyen – Class of 1999

On July 6, SJV alumnus Marion Qui-Thac Nguyen was elected ninth Abbott of Saint Martin's Abbey in Lacey, Washington. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Seattle in 2004 and succeeds Retired Abbot Neal Roth, O.S.B., who served the Abbey for 27 years. **Most Reverend Paul Etienne, Archbishop of Seattle and SJV alumnus (Class of 1986)**, presided at his installation Mass on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption.

Saint Martin's Abbey was founded in the 1890s by a group of monks sent from Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota. Twenty monks, currently vowed to Saint Martin's, teach and work at Saint Martin's University and assist at parishes and hospitals in the Pacific Northwest.



Rev. Kevin Zilverberg – Class of 2003

Rev. Kevin Zilverberg, assistant professor of Sacred Scripture at The Saint Paul Seminary, was awarded the Dr. Marc and Mrs. Rachelle Bibeau Award for the best doctorate at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome during the 2019-2020 academic year. The eight doctoral candidates who defended dissertations at the Institute during the past school year were considered for the award. The Pontifical Biblical Institute grants these awards for three levels of students, with its largest prize reserved for the best doctoral dissertation and defense. Father Zilverberg earned a score of 9.98 out of 10, for which he received the doctoral-level Bibeau Award in absentia on Oct. 8, 2020, during the inaugural ceremonies of the 2020-2021 school year.

IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Jeffrey Baerwald
Class of 1979

Rev. Jerome Nordick
Class of 1979

Correction: In the spring 2020 issue of *Vianney News*, we incorrectly state that SJV alumnus Joseph Nguyen attended Mundelein Seminary. Nguyen attended St. John Vianney Theological Seminary in Denver. We apologize for the error.

Dear Friends



Thank you for all that you do for the seminarians at SJV! Your prayerful and financial support of this important mission to provide essential formation today for tomorrow's Catholic priests and lay leaders is greatly appreciated and will make a huge impact on our Church and our world.

Reflecting on the times we live in, I know many letters you receive these days start with: "In these unprecedented and challenging times." And, they are correct. These are unprecedented and challenging times. One need not look very far to be reminded. Yet, we know from history, more importantly Church history, that there have been many times like these: unprecedented and challenging.

While we enjoy many creature comforts in our day and age, there is a constant struggle that wages on in the spiritual life. Sometimes, especially during times such as these, global events seem to compound with our ongoing spiritual battle, making the "unprecedented and challenging times" even more burdensome.

Whatever challenges exist, we do know that each of us - you, me, the seminarians being formed at SJV - are all made for this time. God does not make mistakes, and He commissioned us to be and to serve one another in these times. Therefore, it is with great confidence, that we can say that these seminarians were meant to serve in times like these.

They are being formed to bring hope to a world leaning toward despair. They are being trained how to pray and lead others in prayer when fervent prayer is desperately needed. They are being shaped in the imitation of Christ to love in a world often deprived of charity. They are being called to live saintly lives, and they inspire all of us to do the same when modern-day saints are needed more than ever. I wish you could see the zeal, desire, and love in the seminarians' eyes as they prepare for whatever vocation God has in store for them.

As always, there are many good and exciting things going on at SJV that help form young men to serve in times like these. As you read about some of these efforts in this issue of *Vianney News*, know that we are forming young men to be Men of Christ, Men of the Church, and Men for Others. And please know of our prayers for you, your families, and all who walk with us in these times.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Tizoc Rosales". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Tizoc Rosales
Director of Advancement

SJV ALUMNI, WE LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Please send us news from your diocese, parish, home, workplace, or family.

Tizoc Rosales, Director of Advancement – tizoc.rosales@stthomas.edu or (651) 358-3345



SAINT JOHN VIANNEY COLLEGE SEMINARY

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Enrollment 2020-2021 | 105 men are in formation at SJV

