

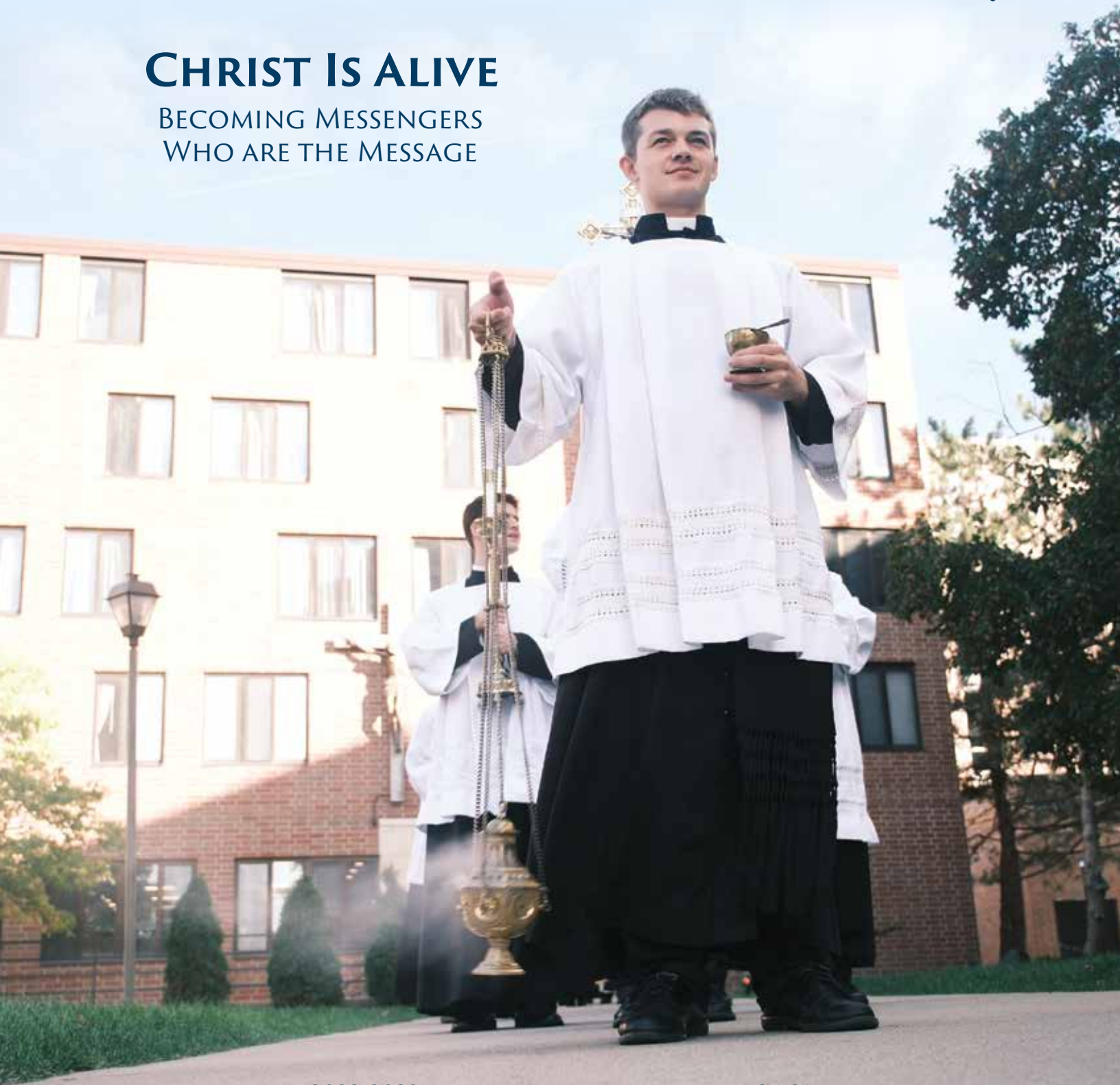
VIANNEYNEWS

SAINT JOHN VIANNEY COLLEGE SEMINARY
SPRING 2024



CHRIST IS ALIVE

BECOMING MESSENGERS
WHO ARE THE MESSAGE



LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

How else will they know?



This question has echoed in my heart and mind since Professor Helen Alvaré (from George Mason University) spoke at the University of St. Thomas a few weeks ago. Attending her talk, along with our seminary community, I quickly realized we were in the presence of someone special. Her insightful articulation of complicated and nuanced issues was only the content, but the messenger was in fact the message. Her personal witness showed us that “God is not just some fabulous historical memory but a living presence in the world.”

Summarizing her favorite point from Alessandro Manzoni’s literary masterpiece *The Betrothed*, Professor Alvaré asked us: “How will anyone know Christ is alive unless you’re too good to be true?” She went on to paraphrase a favorite theologian of hers, Fr. Luigi Giussani: “Here is this man, Jesus, who could command nature by waving his hand, who was brilliant but not arrogant, powerful but kind in the most extreme and delicate manner, who is so unlike anyone else. Who is He? He must be God!”

Encountering Jesus and called to be His disciples, love so magnanimous that it speaks of the divine is the only adequate response, the only sign by which we reveal the truth that He *is* alive.

This is the aspirational model of any Catholic institution...and ours at SJV.

We exist to facilitate the encounter of young men with Jesus who has said to them, “Come, follow me” and who are growing into messengers who are also the message, such that everyone they encounter knows Jesus is alive.

I am inspired to watch this witness unfold each day at SJV and humbled to share a few stories of our seminarians and alumni with you in the following pages so that you too can be inspired and see the impact of your support for our mission.

As Professor Alvaré reminded us, God does not speak directly to most people. So how else will they know...unless they see Christ alive in you and in me...unless we become the message?

Coraggio,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Fr. Jonathan Kelly" in a cursive script.

Fr. Jonathan Kelly

COVER: Elias Budke '24 (Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis) leads a Marian procession through the University of St. Thomas during Family Weekend.

CLASSROOM DEDICATED TO PATRON'S PRIEST HERO

Fr. Charles Balley was born on September 30, 1751 in Lyon, France and ordained a priest of the Canons of St. Genevieve. Like his Carthusian brother who was guillotined, Fr. Balley remained faithful to the Church through the tumults of the French Revolution. Named pastor of the Ecully parish in 1803, Fr. Balley founded a small school to train men for the priesthood. After multiple interviews with a young John Vianney, petitioning for admittance, Fr. Balley accepted him, saying: "Do not worry, my friend; if need be, I will sacrifice myself for your sake."

As Vianney famously struggled through his studies, Fr. Balley always encouraged him to remain steadfast in work, faithful to prayer, and joyful amidst trials. Fr. Balley prayed daily for him when, for 16 months, Vianney's schooling was interrupted by a summons to serve in Napoleon's army. Consoling Vianney's mother during this time, Fr. Balley said: "Do not worry about your son. He is neither dead nor sick. He will never be a soldier, for **he is destined to be a priest.**"

Vianney returned to continue his studies with Fr. Balley, but because of his poor Latin grades, he was dismissed from the seminary. Refusing to let this decide the fate of his pupil, Fr. Balley continued tutoring him in Latin in preparation for the ecclesiastical exams. After failing his first exam, Fr. Balley rushed to the Vicar General to beg another attempt for his beloved student. Trusting in the advocacy of Fr. Balley, the Vicar General relented and subsequently called him to receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders on August 12, 1815.

Fr. Vianney's first assignment was alongside Fr. Balley in Ecully. During their three years together, **Fr. Balley taught him what it meant to live as a priest.** Months after his ordination, Fr. Balley told Fr. Vianney he had been given the faculties to hear confessions and immediately knelt down to confess his sins to his former student.

Fr. Balley fell ill in early 1817 and gave Fr. Vianney all his instruments of penance, fearing people would not pray for him if they knew how he suffered for them. After Fr. Vianney heard his last confession and offered the Anointing and Viaticum, Fr. Balley passed away December 17.

On the 206th anniversary of his "heavenly birthday," our lower-level classroom was named in honor of Fr. Balley. **May the priest hero who inspired our patron continue inspiring us today!**



"Pardon et Paix" by Nicholas Markell for the Saint John Vianney College Seminary Chapel, 2023.

NEWS BITES



Bishop Felton Offers Morning of Reflection

Bishop Daniel Felton (Diocese of Duluth) generously offered a day of reflection in December to help our seminarians prepare their hearts for Advent. The men were moved by his encouragement to **live their life through the Monstrance** and reflect upon the Nativity scene in this time of Eucharistic Revival.



New St. Joseph Workshop

Our St. Joseph Workshop opened on March 19, the Solemnity of St. Joseph. "I think **every seminarian should know what sawdust smells like**, and I am so grateful they will have a creative space to build things," Fr. Kelly said. **Michael Fitzpatrick '26 (Diocese of Duluth)** agreed, "We hope the workshop becomes a creative space for innovation and growth where students can explore their passions and cultivate their talents."



Sincere gratitude to Bill Boeser for generously donating a dust collector to the St. Joseph Workshop.

SJV Online Store Opens

The new online store for customized SJV apparel and gear launched in late November. Current seminarians and alumni can now represent SJV everywhere they go!



Visit bit.ly/SJV-Sideline-Store to shop our wide assortment of styles and options.

Full House for Fall & Spring Vianney Visits

We had to cap both fall and spring Vianney Visits at 110! We remain grateful and hopeful as the Lord continues sending laborers into His harvest.

Staff Updates

SJV appointed Fr. Jim Olofson, S.T.L., to the position of Vice-Rector in December. “I am grateful to Fr. Kelly for this new appointment,” Fr. Olofson (Diocese of Joliet) said. “I was a bit surprised when he told me (as SJV has not had a vice-rector in 25 years), but I take great comfort in the fact that while I was surprised, Jesus was not surprised! I love this seminary, and I look forward to continuing to serve the community here in this new role.”



Sarah Carter joined the SJV team in January as **Executive Assistant** to the Rector. She holds a master's degree in Theology from The Saint Paul Seminary and undergraduate degrees in Economics and Catholic Studies from the University of St. Thomas. Her previous work experience includes policy research and program management at the USCCB and Minnesota Catholic Conference as well as teaching high school theology at Hill-Murray School. Sarah lives in South St. Paul with her husband and two children and enjoys cooking, reading, and writing.



In Loving Memory

With deepest gratitude for the devoted service of these two faithful servants. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May your good deeds go before you, Mr. Daniewicz and Mrs. Thurmes!

John Daniewicz (April 1, 1955 – December 7, 2023):

A 1977 graduate of SJV, John was particularly touched by two experiences on mission during his seminary years, including a summer serving in a small, rural parish in Appalachia and a trip to the San Lucas Toliman Mission in Guatemala. After several years of part-time service to his alma mater, John returned to SJV as Director of Academic Formation. From 1989-2019, he was our academic advisor and taught classes in pastoral ministry and religious education.



Theresa Thurmes (April 30, 1931 – December 4, 2023):

After earning her BA in psychology and pastoral ministry at the University of St. Thomas, Theresa directed SJV's Apostolic Life program and supported the seminarians with her insight into pastoral care from 1986-2003. In the words of Bishop Richard Pates, “Theresa recognized and faithfully lived the reality that each of our fellow humans is made in the image and likeness of God. She conveyed to each seminarian his value, his dignity, his worthiness from which foundation he was to engage in service.”





A meeting with the Holy Father © Vatican Media.



A moment of holy leisure while serving alongside Christ in the City.



Juniors on retreat in Mundelein, IL.



J-term Seminarians studying abroad in Rome send greetings from Assisi



New men touring Mobile's Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception with Archbishop Thomas Rodi.

J-TERM: EXPERIENCES

The University of St. Thomas' January Term schedule allows our men to enjoy restful time at home before returning to SJV for a month of robust, non-academic experiences. Each class dives more deeply into human, spiritual, and pastoral formation within the context of mission trips, retreats, and other opportunities. Here's how our seminarians spent the month of January:

New Men

First-year men participated in a **preached silent retreat** with Fr. Matthew Alexander before Christopher Lafitte from the John Paul II Healing Center presented a conference at SJV. Traveling with Fr. Jonathan Kelly and Fr. Mark Pavlak by bus to Alabama, they **helped build houses with Habitat for Humanity**, toured the Mobile Cathedral with Archbishop Thomas Rodi, visited the USS Alabama and Gulf of Mexico, and celebrated **Holy Mass at Ven. Fulton Sheen's tomb** in Peoria.

Second-Year Men

Twenty-seven second-year seminarians, accompanied by Fr. Mark Pavlak and Fr. Colin Jones, traveled to Denver to serve the **homeless** alongside Christ in the City, **creating a culture of encounter** where each person is seen, known, and loved, over the course of their week-long poverty immersion experience. They returned for a three-day conference at SJV with Msgr. Steven Rohlfis before their **8-day directed silent retreat** at Broom Tree Retreat Center (a hallmark in vocational discernment which alumni have claimed as their "turning point" for nearly twenty years).

Third and Fourth-Year Men

Juniors went to Joseph and Mary Retreat House (Mundelein, IL) with Fr. Colin Jones, and seniors went to the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration's Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament (Hanceville, AL) with Fr. Jim Olofson for a **week-long silent retreat**.

Mission Trip to Kolkata

Seven upperclassmen seminarians, accompanied by Fr. Jeff Norfolk, traveled to Kolkata, India and **walked in the footsteps of St. Mother Teresa**. They spent two weeks serving with the MC sisters at a leper colony and home for the destitute and dying, caring for mentally and physically handicapped children, engaging in rural parish ministry, and visiting Kolkata's seminary. Praying at the tomb of Mother Teresa remains a highlight of this tenured mission trip.



MEET THE MEN: SENIOR EDITION

We asked our graduating seniors the most important thing they've learned at SJV. Here are the life-changing lessons they've picked up along the way:



Mason Abbott | Lansing

Being honest about how one feels, what one's thoughts and desires are, and bringing this to the Lord has helped me learn how personable the Lord is and how much He wants to be part of all aspects of my life.



Elias Budke | St. Paul & Mpls.

To trust God as my Good Father and to surrender my discernment completely to Him.



Derek Damasco | Chicago

I have been drawn from a disposition of fear and cowardliness of heart to a radical confidence in God's love for me. He loved me first, and I cannot express the deep peace, joy, and freedom He has given birth to in my heart.



Peter Davis | Joliet

I can't do everything. I frequently had to say "no" to certain opportunities at SJV in order to say "yes" to other good things the Lord was leading me towards.



Jeffrey Davlin | Grand Rapids

I am a beloved son of the Father Most High. The Father is well-pleased with me, not because of anything I have done or not done, but because I am irrevocably His beloved son.



Matthew Giorgio | Sioux Falls

God loves me as I am, and I won't grow any closer to Him by trying to pretend I'm something I'm not. I can be honest with Him about my sins, joys, desires, and fears and trust that He will help me grow in whatever ways I need to.



Christian Howlett | St. Paul & Mpls.

Difficult times and suffering are an invitation to draw closer to Jesus who offers us special graces during those moments.



Brian Johnson | Omaha

Jesus has become enough for me, all I want and all I need. I am free from so many fears and worries, and because He has given me such compelling desires to live for Heaven, I feel an exhilarating freedom to truly live for Love.

Interviews continued on next page...



Joseph (Seppe) Kelly | Lansing
Docility and humility. Our vocation is not about us, it's about giving the greatest glory to God the Father. Once we realize **our lives are not about us**, we can begin to be formed into the men God wants us to be.



Brady Martinez | Sioux Falls
After three years of immersion in this school of God's Love and conquering Mercy, I feel empowered to embrace the reality of suffering humanity - both within myself and others - with great **confidence in God's power to make all things new** and to heal us.



Jack Massmann | St. Cloud
Prayer needs to be central in and for everything I do. SJV has helped me to begin cultivating the foundation needed for a priestly life: **commitment to prayer**, fraternal charity, intellectual wonder, and a desire to labor for the salvation of souls.



David Rabaey | New Ulm
To let my relationship with God—not my personal qualities—be the source of my internal security. That identity is always tested most when I'm feeling down on myself, but now I've learned to **go to the chapel with whatever's troubling me** and suffer the pain before God.



Kyle Rohan | Green Bay
During my two years at SJV, I have been blessed to be a friend, a mentor, a big brother, a teacher, a facilitator for encountering Christ. I believe that all these things are working together to form in me a heart that looks more and more like **the heart of a spiritual father**.



Dominic Schoenle | Lansing
Less and less, I need to rely on myself, and more and more, I need to **rely on Him to provide me the strength**. He knows what I need because He's made me for a specific call, and I will be happiest if I do that.

MEET THE MEN: SENIOR EDITION



Matthew Sell | St. Paul & Mpls.

To interact with others in a more meaningful way. I have been able to have good conversations with friends and family that **go beyond surface** level and actually allow for human connection



Alexander Thiel | Chicago

Growth in self-possession and a **confidence in who I am** and who I desire to be. Here, I have been given a space to make a clear, thorough discernment and primed to respond with a generous heart.



Jack Tyrrell | St. Cloud

Whatever happens to me, whether pleasant or difficult, **helps me grow towards God** and is aimed at my happiness. Because of seminary, I have a better attitude of acceptance and peace about life.



William Ulmer | Lansing

I have fallen in love with God at SJV. No other gift could prepare me better for the next steps in my life.



Kyle Wozniak | Omaha

SJV has prepared me for my next chapter by showing me **the heart of the Father**, giving me a model for my own future fatherhood.

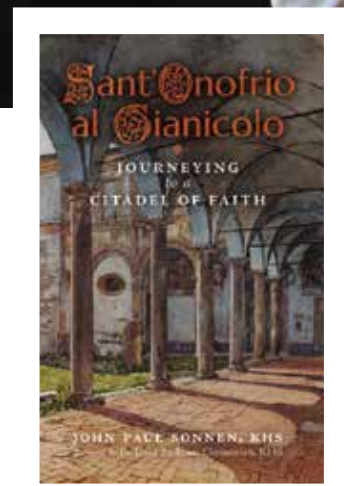


Peter Zabinski | St. Cloud

1) What it looks like practically to live close to Jesus every day.
2) How to **shift from a mindset of boyhood to fatherhood**: how to stop thinking merely about myself and start thinking for others.



YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES: JOHN PAUL SONNEN '01



SJV caught up with John Paul Sonnen '01 (Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis) to learn what inspired his book, *Sant'Onofrio al Gianicolo: Journeying to a Citadel of Faith*.

In his first year at SJV, Sonnen traveled to Rome with his brother and a few other seminarians to attend the episcopal consecration of the personal secretary of Pope John Paul II, Msgr. Stanisław Jan Dziwisz.

While staying as guests at the Pontifical North American College, they were “providentially” introduced to the nearby church of Sant’Onofrio, an off-the-beaten-path gem on Rome’s Janiculum Hill.

This untouched Renaissance church has been described by some as one of Rome’s best kept secrets. From his first encounter, Sonnen sought to share the story of this diamond-in-the-rough church with others.

His affinity for Sant’Onofrio grew after moving to Italy while completing graduate degrees at Rome’s Angelicum. Content for his book was provided by bits of papers and notes Sonnen kept during his time as a graduate student, history docent, and tour operator in Rome and the Vatican.

An ideal study abroad text for expat students studying or traveling to the Eternal City, Sonnen’s book was published by Arouca Press in 2021. He encourages everyone to visit Sant’Onofrio as pilgrims on their next trip to Rome, perhaps in conjunction with a leisurely stroll atop the beautiful Janiculum Hill.

Q: Who made the greatest impact on your time at SJV?

A: Msgr. R.J. Schuler, a local pastor who taught for many years at Nazareth Hall and [what was previously known as] the College of St. Thomas. He understood well the psychology of education, and his teaching pedagogy was years ahead of his time. He had an open door for seminarians and strongly encouraged us to visit Rome as pilgrims and to be inspired by the aesthetical, historical, and literary foundations of the city. He had a great devotion to St. Philip Neri, whom an entire chapter is dedicated to in my book.

Q: How did SJV prepare you?

A: Through a solid education in Catholic Studies, I was able to study diverse subjects including art, poetry, beauty, music, architecture, the papacy, Renaissance culture, history, the lives of the saints, institutions such as monasticism, the subject of pilgrimage, and so much more. This intense immersion in the study of Catholic culture prepared me to grow into Catholic manhood, keep the Faith, and dedicate my life to sharing this gift with others, even as a layman.

Q: Any wisdom for a young man considering SJV?

A: **Fatherhood is not something perfect men do, but something that perfects the man.** Many are called, but few are chosen (cf. Matthew 22:14). Each person must decide how they will respond. Will they accept or reject the invitation to be a father? Embrace the Cross and follow Christ to greatness.

Q: Why give back to SJV?

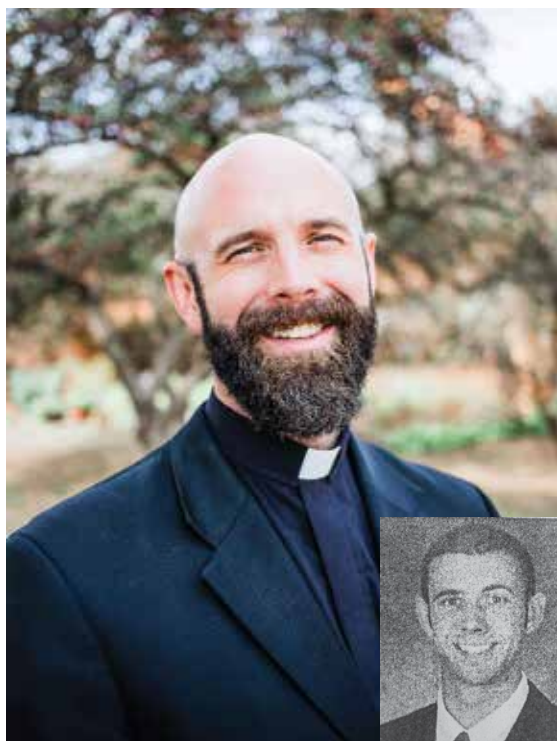
A: There are three general phases of Christian culture: the ancient, medieval, and modern (patristic, scholastic, and humanistic). Although we are today living in a difficult new chapter in postmodern society, **God is still calling men to the priesthood and to Christian fatherhood.** We look to the past for inspiration. Truth exists, we can know it, and we have a duty to share it with others. For this reason, I am fully committed to supporting the continued mission and mandate of SJV: to form men in Christ, men of the Church, and men for others.



Sonnen and his wife Natalie are members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES: CLERGY ALUMNI BUILDING BEAUTY IN PARISH LIFE

SJV sat down with three ordained alumni to hear the stories of how they are bringing beauty to and elevating the role of sacred art in their parishes.



Father Nathan LaLiberte '07
Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis
Nativity of Mary (Bloomington, MN)

How did you approach your parish community?

We took both a secular and a sacred approach. You will not find a restaurant that doesn't update its facilities at least every ten years to make it look new. If you can tell me a restaurant that hasn't updated in ten years, I'll say we don't need to touch our 25-year-old church. It's not about novelty; it's about understanding how humanity works. In elevating the sacred, we were very clear in explaining the symbolism—why six candles on the altar (for the wings of the seraphim) and why two pictures of Mary in the sanctuary (to show the beginning of her life on earth and end of her life in heaven, showing the two parts of our own journey). . . People got really excited realizing it wasn't just "Fr. Nathan's preferences" but part of the 2,000-year tradition and making this accessible to the next generation.

What did you learn at SJV?

My senior year of high school, I went through a substantial conversion. When applying for colleges, I wanted to go to a Catholic college to grow in my newly-developing faith. I didn't know what confession was or how to pray the Rosary. I didn't know the saints. I didn't know virtues. I can honestly say the seminary gave me my 101 for Catholicism. The daily Holy Hour, Rosary, Liturgy of the Hours—all these things



Photos by Kelly Schumacher.

were foundationally impressed in me at seminary and haven't waned. Fr. Baer was my rector and, as an architect, he spoke a lot about the power of architecture and the Church. He taught that how a building is composed teaches something. He is the one who introduced me to the Dostoyevsky quote John Paul II made famous in Catholic circles: **"Beauty will save the world."**

Why does beauty matter?

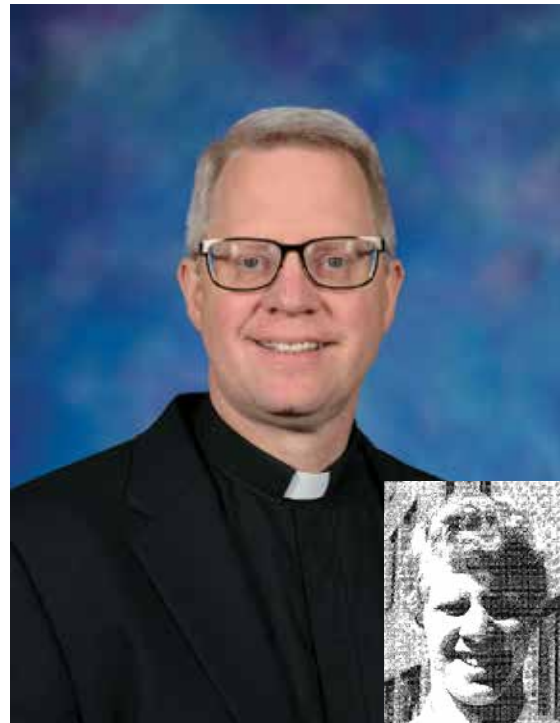
If we're feeling out of touch with God, beauty is a way to get back in touch because it expands. When you see a sunrise or sunset, your hands fall to your sides, your mouth opens wide, and you're just like "This is beautiful." It creates vulnerability. You're just struck dumb because you didn't realize how much "more" things were. And that's what beauty does. **It opens us up to the more.** In *The Last Battle*, C. S. Lewis depicts beauty as it is meant to be: an infinite series of openings, higher in, higher up.

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Father Tom Milota '88
Diocese of Joliet
St. Petronille (Glen Ellyn, IL)

Why is beauty important?

We've very much come out of the Balthasarian understanding that **the truth of the Faith is conveyed through beauty** in every aspect of our worship: the type of music, the preaching, the homily. We're not just conveying truths but preaching something that is true, good, and beautiful. We believe that the church is a sacramental, an outward sign treated by Christ to give grace. The



building is not simply a meeting hall where a bunch of nice people gather to pray together. The church itself focuses our attention on the Eucharistic celebration and Jesus Christ who is truly present on the altar.

Are architectural styles one-size-fits-all for Catholic churches?

You always want to look back at what the original architect intended to be in accord with the original design. I'm not going to take a Gothic design and try to shove it into a Palladian form. It clashes with everything around it and just doesn't fit.

Why invest in beauty?

Why are we going to make God live in a shed when we're living in a house of stone like King David? **I think God should have a house that looks nicer than ours.** When everything is very

continued on next page...

clean, beautiful, and of fine quality, it tells us there's something special going on here: we're worshipping Almighty God.

How did SJV prepare you for this?

I still use what I learned from the philosophy department every day. When I put together homilies, make decisions in the parish, how to speak to others, I go back to my philosophy training and the people I encountered there, especially Dr. Richard Connell, Dr. Thomas Sullivan, Fr. James Stromberg, Msgr. Henri Du Lac, and Fr. James Reidy. I've been a priest for 31 years. The spiritual life fostered there, personal time of prayer, devotion to the Eucharist, group of us that prayed Evening Prayer and a Rosary together every evening, all of these things were invaluable.

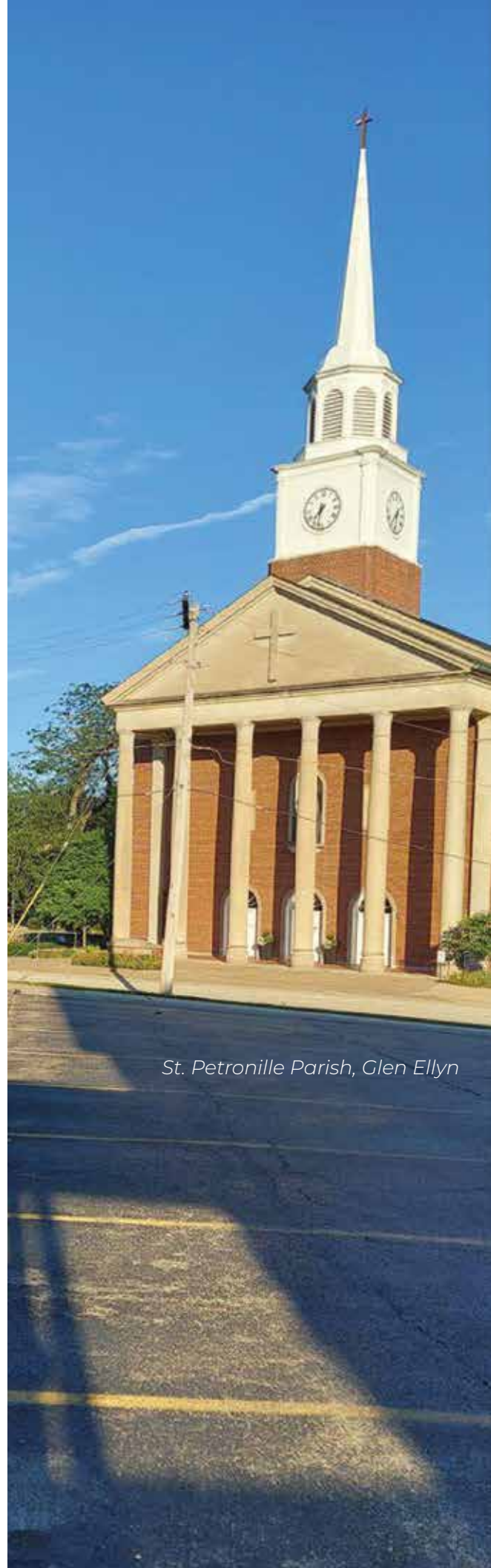


Before



After

Photos by Conrad Schmitt + Sound Planning.



St. Petronille Parish, Glen Ellyn

Father Mike Schmitz '99
Diocese of Duluth
UMD Newman Center (Duluth, MN)

What brought you to SJV?

I went to St. John's University for an undergraduate degree in theology. After graduation, I was a missionary on the border between Belize and Guatemala teaching at a Catholic high school and had a big conversion there. That's why I discerned coming to the seminary. I had one year of pre-theology at St. John Vianney. Bishop Peter Christensen, my rector, was the faculty resident on my floor. It was a great gift to have him there! SJV introduced me to seminary life and all the ways I would be called to be a man of Christ, man of the Church, and man for others.

Tell us about the Newman Center in Duluth.

I was assigned to UMD in 2005, two years after I was ordained, and we're based out of this little house. I thought, "We're going to focus on three things: retreats, sacraments as often as possible, and small groups." It started out with maybe 6-10 people at daily Mass and now it's 60-90. It's just incredible! But they're crammed into a two-car garage that we converted to a chapel. Students will show up for daily Mass, and there's literally no place to sit. We want to have a beautiful space where **every one of those students has a place.**

Does the project have a namesake or patron?

Right now, the working name of the chapel is Our Lady of Victory because of her historical role in the Battle of Lepanto. We recognize that our modern world is not one where we're surrounded by a friendly culture. In fact, it's a lot like the culture where Christianity began.

We want to address the ignorance of the Church's teaching by bringing truth and beauty and goodness to the world. To address indifference by bringing meaning to the world. To address antagonism by speaking the truth in



Scan here to donate

Initial project concepts; subject to change.

love and inviting people into a beautiful space to share God's Word and the teachings of the Church with them.

We're also going to have at least a side chapel for Our Lady of Sorrows. **No matter how much victory the Lord grants us** or how many blessings the Lord bestows upon us, **our lives will always be marked by the Cross.** Sorrow will always be a part of life. But it's not empty sorrow. It's sorrow with Our Lord and sorrow with His Mother who has been given to us.

How can we help?

If you'd like to support the ministry and expansion of the UMD Newman Center, please visit: bulldogCatholic.org/donate or reach out to Lauren Hopke at: lauren.hopke@bulldogcatholic.org.

SEMINARIAN RELATED TO BUERONESE ART SCHOOL FOUNDER

Ethan Menning '26 (Archdiocese of Omaha) was a high school student, praying his Holy Hour at Mount Michael Abbey near his Nebraska home, when he felt a tap on his shoulder. A burly and bearded Benedictine priest asked if his last name was Lenz. Ethan's mother had been a Lenz prior to marriage, and the priest—Fr. Daniel Lenz—had become aware of their shared lineage. After tracing back their ancestry, **another Benedictine priest was discovered in the family tree:** Fr. Desiderius Lenz (1832-1928).

Fast forward to May 2, 2023. Menning was at the tail end of his first year in college seminary at SJV. Renowned local iconographer Nicholas Markell joined the seminarians for their Tuesday night community meal to share insights behind the Beuronese imagery he created for SJV's new chapel. The style maintains classic form and proportion but is made more naturalistic to be accessible for prayer. Markell mentioned the Beuron school of art founded in Germany to carry out Pope Pius IX's desire to maintain artistic history and tradition in a time of progressivism. To Menning's surprise, **the school's founder was none other than Fr. Desiderius Lenz.**

With newfound zeal, Menning began a deeper dive into appreciation for the arts with an especial fondness for the pieces in SJV's chapel. "It was gradual," he explained. "Last year, I went over to the Minneapolis Institute of Art and thought 'I guess the family likes this, so I'm going to try it out.' And I loved it. Before, I could care less about these images, but now I



can appreciate the richness. Almost like I'm getting some of the care Fr. Desiderius had for these things."

The Catholic Vision course Menning took last semester taught him how to interpret scripture, music, art, and poetry through a Catholic lens. A class assignment led him to a deeper study of the two pieces outside SJV's confessionals featuring Christ and St. Peter on the shores of Galilee and St. John Vianney hearing the confession of a seminarian.

"Each image in the chapel is now a source of prayer for me," Menning explained. "It's so much homier because it's like a token of my family. **The Lord doesn't just love us generally, He loves us personally.** Almost as though the Lord prepared this and placed me at SJV two hundred years later, saying, 'I'm making these for Ethan.' And that's mind-blowing."



CORNERSTONES: A CLOSER LOOK AT SJV'S ORGAN, A PIPELINE TO HEAVEN

Our chapel is scaling new heights in beauty since its recent pipe organ installation. Lewtak Pipe Organ Builders, Inc. finished the project in November, marking the official completion of the chapel (which was dedicated by Archbishop Bernard Hebda in April 2023).

Dr. Jacob Benda (Director of Music, Liturgy, & Sacred Arts at the University of St. Thomas) was instrumental in connecting SJV with Tom Lewtak and his team. Benda visited Lewtak's state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Mocksville, North Carolina after playing several of his instruments on the east coast in 2020. "By the end of the visit, I came to admire not only the sound of Tom's instruments but also the care and craftsmanship invested into each pipe organ he built," Benda said. "Each Lewtak organ has its own distinct sound and personality. His fresh and innovative approach to organ design sets him apart in his field."

Two Years of Planning

After Benda recommended him for the project at SJV, **one of Lewtak's smallest organ builds** commenced. "There is no cookie cutter because every one of our instruments goes to a unique space with unique acoustics and a unique congregation," Lewtak said. "The planning part is just tremendous. It's **980 pipes exactly, from the size of a pencil to eight-feet long**, in a small space with many mechanical elements. The reality doesn't match how beautiful it looks on the computer, so you tweak it as you build it. This is what wakes me up in the morning. I'm one of those people who doesn't like boring stuff," he laughed. "I'm definitely in the right business."

Lewtak also described the nuances of accomplishing his mission around the renovation project at SJV. "The building didn't exist when we

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started two years ago,” he said. “It was a bunch of plans on the ground which told about the dimensions, height, and width, but nothing about acoustics.” Lewtak came for two site visits, one just weeks before installation. “I have to be in the building, otherwise I don’t know how to voice this organ,” he explained. Despite his team’s progress on the seminary organ, Lewtak decided to alter design details on the façade to fit his observations from the site visit. “The voicing is really the heart of everything. This is what makes it or breaks it,” he said. “I’m the professional, and the credit of trust has to be issued to me.”

Built to Last

An organ performance student with a minor in organ building from the Music Academy of Poland, Lewtak studied his craft throughout Europe before immigrating to New York with his wife and son in 2000. He maintains connections with fellow vendors throughout the world when building his organs today, including pipe makers in the Czech Republic and Holland. A lack of skilled labor and post-pandemic manufacturing delays have added challenges to his industry, but Lewtak sees divine orchestration behind the installation timeline at SJV. “We were supposed to be here in May, but then the seminarians wouldn’t have been able to witness all of this,” Lewtak explained. “It’s a **once-in-a-lifetime** thing since the projected lifespan of this organ is 100-150 years. **What a fantastic learning experience for these future priests.**”

Seminarians from the Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis echoed their gratitude for this opportunity. “I learned so much about the intricacies of the mechanics that go into making beautiful music which has made me appreciate it more,” **said Gregory Maloney ‘27.**



Seminarians take a break from helping unload the freight truck delivering the chapel’s new pipe organ.

“When people ask me about SJV’s new organ, I often have to check myself because I am bursting with so many stories about the intricacies and function,” [Andrew Lehnen ‘26](#) shared. “Our organ is not only an amazing instrument and network of engineering and design but also a beautiful work of art that will be passed down for generations at the seminary.”

“It’s a true engineering marvel,” [Aiden Nicholas ‘27](#) agreed. “It was super cool to be able to help assemble or fix certain parts. Whenever I hear the organ being played, I think ‘I helped build this!’ It was an awesome experience I will never forget.”

Unseen but Heard

Veiled by a railing featuring nine choirs of angels, less than a third of the organ case can be visible from the main level of the chapel. Lewtak thinks the visual elegance of the instrument would surprise people the most. “Even though the fine stuff, gold trim, Baltic amber on draw knobs have nothing to do with sound, people hear with their eyes.” Benda acknowledged how well SJV’s organ complements the aesthetic principles of the chapel where it resides. “Visually-speaking, Lewtak’s organ is a gem,” he said. “The crowning achievement of this instrument is that while each stop—14 in total—has its own personality, the various voices of the instrument blend so extremely well together. This is not easy to do! Several of my organ students at St. Thomas are SJV seminarians, and I look forward to [experiencing the beauty of this pipe organ alongside them for years to come.](#)”



DEAR FRIENDS OF SJV,

My Queen, my Mother, I give myself entirely to you, and to show my devotion to you, I consecrate to you this day my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart, my entire self without reserve. As I am your own, my good Mother, guard me and defend me as your property and possession.

This beloved prayer is part of our daily life in the Roeser home. As a convert to the Catholic faith and member of the Schoenstatt family, Mary has a central place in my life. A profound love for her is at the heart of every good endeavor, including those we undertake at SJV.

When you receive this edition of *Vianney News*, we will be just weeks away from a cherished tradition here at SJV: the Crowning of Mary and Spring Mass. We gather to present flowers to the Mother of Jesus, the Eternal High Priest, who is our mother too. **SJV cannot form holy priests and fathers without the help of the Blessed Mother.** As mother of every vocation, Mary's intercession for our mission at SJV (and the mission of every baptized Christian) is indispensable.



"Mary is the safest, easiest, shortest, and most perfect way of approaching Jesus," St. Louis de Montfort tells us. The young men discerning priesthood at SJV engage in more than academic pursuits at the University of St. Thomas. Participating in campus life as it aligns with our mission, SJV seminarians are engaging their peers with confidence to become missionary disciples. This life-changing experience of formation is only made possible through Mary.

We find ample opportunities to grow in Marian devotion throughout the year, from feast day processions to recitation of her Rosary before daily Mass. We owe every success and victory to Our Lady who wants each of her children to become a saint, making her son Jesus known and loved in whatever state of life He calls them to.

The Crowning of Mary is not just our foremost annual celebration of the Blessed Mother; **this critical event ensures SJV can continue its mission of forming future fathers.** Visit give.sjvseminary.org/MayCrowning2024 to attend or prayerfully consider sponsoring this beautiful celebration. We look forward to seeing you on Sunday, May 5!

To Jesus through Mary,



Phil Roeser
Director of Development



Please scan here
to register.

DEVELOPMENT CORNER



What's New?

Have you or a seminarian brother from SJV recently:

- Professed vows or been ordained?
- Received a new appointment?
- Entered the vocation of Holy Matrimony or become a father?
- Celebrated ministry, career, or apostolate achievements?
- Changed addresses?

Please send a note to:

kanderson@vianney.net so that SJV can stay in touch and celebrate with you!

Stay in Touch

Missing magazines or emails from SJV?

To update your information,
please scan the QR code
or contact:

Joe Recznik
Development Services Specialist
jrecznik@vianney.net
651-358-3351



With Gratitude

With gratitude for gifts given to SJV in honor of:

Ted & Eileen Bidrowski Family, Judy Rougier, Fr. Jon Kelly, Reverend Zachary Greenwell, I Nam Nelson, Laurie Gold, Tom & Mary Lou Engel.

With gratitude for gifts given to SJV in memory of:

+Charles Anthony Untz.

Dear Friends,

When God has a plan, there's nothing we can do that holds it back. The last year at Saint John Vianney College Seminary has reminded us of this truth time and again.

For fifty-five years, men have responded to the Lord's invitation to the adventure of discernment and discipleship at SJV. This year saw us recognize a dream of building a chapel where men might open their hearts to God, who has loved them, called them, and has a plan for each one of them.

We build a building, and then it begins to form us. Our chapel needed to communicate the invisible realities reminding us **we don't just live for this world alone**. Heaven is both our origin and destination.

This is a chapel that speaks about a generous response. It's not adequate: it's spectacular. It's a way in which we're able to demonstrate to the seminarians that we think what they're doing is incredibly important. It's also a way in which we're able to communicate the centrality of Christ in the Eucharist in the life of every disciple.

Thank you for being part of this generous response. The prayers and support of our benefactors leave ripples in time and eternity. For ages to come, we look forward to forming Men in Christ, Men of the Church, and Men for Others.

Why does this work matter? **Because God still calls** men to follow Him as His disciples. To be stewards of these sacred mysteries and laborers in the Vineyard. To bring all men and women into His family, the Church.

May this be a place where the voice of Christ is always heard. May it be a place where young men are able to generously respond to whatever it is that Jesus might want. May this be a place where we're able to renew our commitment to whichever walk of life the Lord has chosen for us, our relationship with Jesus, and our desire to serve Him in all eternity.

May God reward you.



+Bernard A. Hebda

Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda
Board of Trustees, President and Chair



Fr. Jonathan Kelly

Reverend Jonathan Kelly
Board of Trustees, Rector and Vice President

SAINT JOHN VIANNEY COLLEGE SEMINARY

By the Numbers 2022-2023

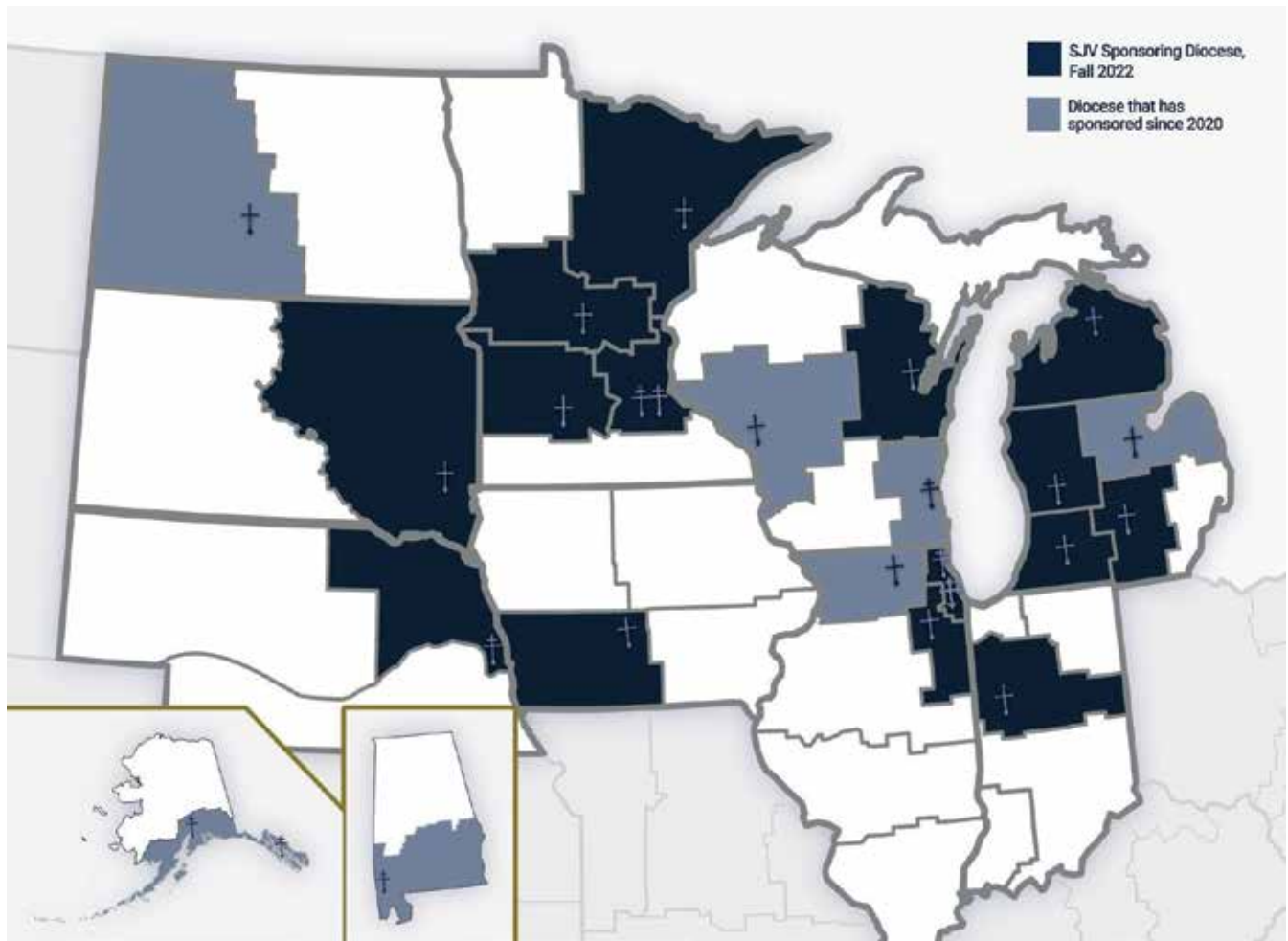


18 SJV Alumni ordained to the priesthood in 2022.



92 Men Enrolled
16 Dioceses Represented





**Anchorage-Juneau
Bismarck
Chicago
Des Moines
Duluth
Gaylord**

**Grand Rapids
Green Bay
Joliet-in-Illinois
Kalamazoo
La Crosse
Lafayette-in-Indiana**

**Lansing
Milwaukee
Mobile
New Ulm
Omaha
Rockford**

**Saginaw
Saint Cloud
Saint Paul & Minneapolis
Sioux Falls
Syro-Malabar Saint Thomas
Diocese of Chicago**





MEET ELIAS BUDKE

Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis
4th-Year Seminarian



Monsignor Aloysius Callaghan served as Budke's priest formator during his Rome semester and encouraged his discernment while serving at St. Timothy in Maple Lake.

*The further I have progressed through seminary, the more clearly I can see how **God has been guiding me from the beginning** of my life. I was blessed to grow up in a faithful Catholic family, the oldest son of three girls and four boys, near Maple Lake, Minnesota, a small town of 2,000 people. From an early age, my parents impressed upon me the importance of the Faith. I remember attending daily Mass and studying the Baltimore Catechism as a child. Having attended so many Masses and witnessed the priesthood of my uncle, **I wanted to be a priest as early as the age of six**. I was often bored at Mass, but the priest always interested me. When I was finally able to start altar serving in fourth grade, God began to foster a deep love for the Mass and liturgy in my heart.*

Though I knew God had a specific calling for me, my desire to become a priest slowly lessened in middle school and high school. I enjoyed working with my hands on a farm, mowing grass, and other odd jobs; the thought of studying Latin and philosophy at seminary was not at all attractive! I began to consider other careers wanting to be a police officer like my dad, farmer like my uncle and employer, soldier, or carpenter. Despite this indecision, I remained open to the thought of priesthood and still had a great desire to respond to God's will. Realizing I needed to start applying

*to colleges, I asked my pastor for advice. He counseled me to **discern God's will for the rest of the year, not the rest of my life**. Considering me a candidate for seminary, he put me in contact with the director of vocations who met with my family and I. It took me a month to complete the application he left for me. I knew that I would not have peace if I did not at least try to enter seminary and told God He would have to open the door for me if it was His will.*

Looking back, I am confident in God's plan for me to be at seminary since things quickly fell into place and the desire to go to seminary began to grow. I found great peace, joy, and fraternity entering Saint John Vianney College Seminary in fall 2020. It has not always been easy, but I have grown in so many ways during my time at SJV. I was still uncertain about my vocation until spring 2023 during my semester in Rome. While studying in the heart of the Church, I realized I was not completely surrendering my discernment to the Lord. I was demanding 100 percent certainty that He was calling me to be a priest before I would begin to aim for that. Not surprisingly, when I surrendered my want for 100% certainty He was calling me to be a priest, I began to desire the priesthood. This has left me with a sense of peace and great excitement to enter the priesthood of Christ and be a father to His people, God-willing!

How did your upbringing prepare you for SJV?

My family, especially my parents, instilled in me a desire to pray and taught me there is something more important than living the “good life” here on Earth. The many things I was forced to do as a kid (like praying daily as a family, going to daily Mass, serving and visiting the elderly, and learning the *Catechism*) helped me to enter seminary even though I could be unenthusiastic in the process. The presence of holy, young priests at my parish who celebrated reverent liturgies and the witness of seminarians from the parish also prepared me for entering SJV.

Favorite part about being a seminarian here?

The liturgy: SJV elevates the beauty in the Mass through music and liturgical action which the Church has given to help us worship God. The second-best part of being a seminarian at SJV is **daily encountering seven different priestly witnesses** through our formators. My experience of formation meetings with the priest tasked to help me grow in holiness has left me forever grateful. SJV’s priests are firm yet gentle and genuinely want God’s will for us, whatever that may be.

Best SJV memory?

During the first substantial snowfall of my freshman year, the temperature was perfect for making snowballs. As that evening’s Mass was ending, the celebrating priest announced that **another priest and his floor challenged the entire house to a snowball fight** after study hours. Everyone else thought this floor had been audacious enough to challenge the other 75 men to a snowball fight, but the challenge was accepted. The ensuing snowball fight lasted over an hour with more than 100 participants! The fraternity SJV fosters is unforgettable.

How has SJV prepared you for whatever comes next?

I am at peace and excited at the prospect of becoming a priest, God-willing. **SJV has prepared me to be a father, whether I become a priest or husband.** The spiritual and human formation I have received at SJV will be invaluable. With major seminary on the horizon, I will be building on the foundation SJV has helped lay of spiritual and intellectual content, virtue and discipline, and a pastoral, servant heart. The culture, liturgies, and fatherliness of the priests will also have a lasting impact upon my future formation and priesthood or fatherhood.

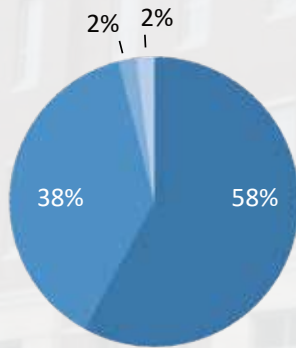
Advice for a young man considering seminary?

First, **pray every day** to desire God’s will for your life and participate in the sacraments regularly, especially Holy Mass which makes Christ’s sacrifice present. Second, visit the seminary and **talk with seminarians.** You will find clarity by meeting the men who are living in the seminary environment and enjoying its great blessings. Third, **make Acts of Faith!** In a class during my Rome semester, papal theologian Fr. Giertych O.P. told us God pours grace into our souls whenever we make Acts of Faith. We may not feel anything since faith is a supernatural gift, but God will give us grace if we make an Act of Faith. Profess your faith in God to heal you, take away your sins, and reveal His will. Have faith in God’s goodness, and know He will bless your discernment through your Act of Faith.



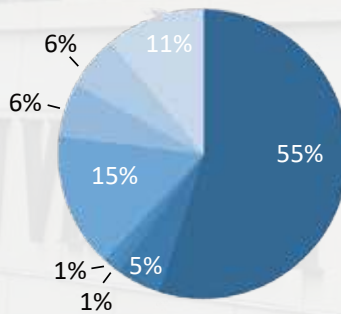
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023



Operating Revenue

Room, Formation, Retreat Fees (38%)	\$823,950
Contributions for Operations (58%)	1,263,864
Draw on Endowments and Restricted Funds (2%)	58,853
Interest and Other (2%)	39,462
Total	\$2,179,817



Operating Expenses

Compensation and Benefits (55%)	\$1,184,226
Scholarships (5%)	115,233
Other General Expenses (1%)	23,884
Line of Credit Interest & Fees (1%)	20,220
Travel/Food/Mission Trips/Retreats (15%)	330,628
Professional Services (6%)	139,718
Supplies, Postage, Phone (6%)	133,781
Physical Facilities and Insurance (11%)	231,746
Total	\$2,179,436

Non-Operating Revenue & Expenses

Change in Net Assets - Operating	\$381
Investment Earnings, Net	192,959
Endowment Distributed to Operations	37,740
Contributions for Building and Endowment	2,855,563
Estate Unrestricted Contributions Designated to	
Cash Flow Construction	549,674
Contributions for Other Restricted Funds	315,199
Forgiven Liabilities	148,547
Depreciation Expense	(650,594)
Capital Campaign Expenses	(7,651)
Change in Net Assets	\$3,366,339

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As of June 30, 2023

Assets	2023	2022
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$836,895	\$8,575,264
Contributions Receivable and Other	1,249,816	810,440
Investments and Beneficial Interest in Trust	1,897,134	2,393,148
Property and Equipment, Net of Depreciation	18,120,124	7,304,920
Total Assets	\$22,103,969	\$19,083,772
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable and Other Liabilities	\$731,116	\$2,210,086
Line of Credit to Finance Capital Pledges	1,132,828	
Total Liabilities	\$1,863,944	\$2,210,086
Net Assets		
Without Donor Restrictions	\$16,407,738	\$12,321,734
With Donor Restrictions	3,832,287	4,551,952
Total Net Assets	\$20,240,025	\$16,873,686
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$22,103,969	\$19,083,772

ENDOWMENT BALANCE

As of June 30, 2023

	2023	2022
Beginning Balance	\$1,606,233	\$1,724,482
Reclassification of Past Earnings	51,266	-
Contributions	25,000	25,000
Investment Gains (Losses)	170,028	(143,249)
Distributed to Operations & Scholarships	(37,740)	-
Ending Balance	\$1,814,788	\$1,606,233

Saint John Vianney College Seminary was audited by CliftonLarsonAllen as of June 30, 2023 and by Baker Tilly as of June 30, 2022. The financial information contained on this page is derived from the audited financial statements.

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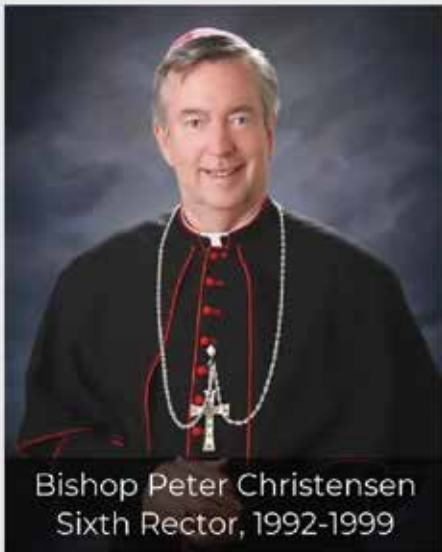


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**6:00 PM Wednesday, June 12
- 1:00 PM Friday, June 14**