

# VIANNEYNEWS

SAINT JOHN VIANNEY COLLEGE SEMINARY  
SPRING 2025



## AT HOME IN THE HEART OF THE FATHER



# LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

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## Walk Slower...

Vocations are born in the home. Before a man ever steps onto the campus of Saint John Vianney, the seeds of his calling have already been planted. They grow in the love of his family, in the quiet witness of the faithful daily rhythm of prayer and sacrifice. The family, often called “the domestic Church,” reflects the hidden life of Jesus in Nazareth, where the foundation of His public ministry was laid.



At SJV, this vocation finds a “second home” where it can be nurtured and deepened. Immersed in a life of prayer, fraternity, service, and study, our seminarians embark on a profound apprenticeship in what it means to be beloved sons of God. They seek a greater awareness of how they are called to make a gift of themselves in response to His love. My prayer is that the men in formation at SJV do not see their time here as merely preparing for a role, but rather as being drawn ever deeper into the Heart of the Father—the source from which every vocation flows.

SJV senior John Paul Narog, from the diocese of Duluth, expresses this beautifully in our newly released *Heart of the Father* series, where he takes viewers along for a day of street ministry to the homeless in St. Paul. “I always tell guys: walk slower,” he says. “It’s not about getting somewhere; it’s about connecting with a person.” His words capture the essence of formation at SJV. Our seminarians are not simply learning about God—they are encountering Him and being conformed to His heart, allowing His love to shape the way they go out into the world.

In this issue of *Vianney News*, you will read about the many ways SJV is forming men for mission. You will hear about our seminarians, who are engaging in apostolic outreach within their communities. You will learn about the dedicated staff—priests, religious, lay men and women—who work behind the scenes to support their formation. And you will see the impact of alumni who, having encountered the Heart of the Father during their time at SJV, now live out their own fatherhood in the vocations God has entrusted to them.

Our *Heart of the Father* series, which follows SJV seminarians as they minister on campus and in the streets, is now available on our website. I invite you to watch these videos and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to “walk slower”—to find your home in the Heart of the Father and then to allow Him to send you out to be that Heart for others.



Scan to watch our *Heart of the Father* series.

Coraggio,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Jonathan Kelly".

Fr. Jonathan Kelly

COVER: As featured in our *Heart of the Father* series, John Paul Narog '25 (Duluth) visits with Gabriel, a new friend he made during a day of street ministry to the homeless in St. Paul.

Two years after the tremendous occasion of our Chapel Dedication, we are overjoyed to present our new

## **Chapel Theology and Design Guide Booklets.**

We pray these booklets will be a great blessing as we continue living into the chapel and allowing the Lord to work in our hearts through the thoughtful design elements and theological details so intricately fashioned to bring our spiritual home into being.



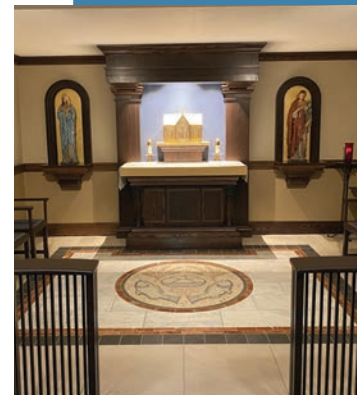
Scan to view the guide booklet.

This year, the **Propaedeutic men**—those in their first year of formation—had the opportunity to enter deeply into the **Triduum at SJV**, guided by Fr. Kelly, Fr. Olofson, Fr. Forner, and Fr. Gitter. Participating in the planning and serving of these sacred liturgies offers a profound way for them to prepare their hearts for Easter while growing in their understanding of the Paschal Mystery at the heart of the priesthood.

The **fourth-floor chapel**, a private place for resident and visiting clergy to pray, **is now complete!** Archbishop Hebda dedicated the altar on February 20, the three-year anniversary of the last Mass in the former main chapel at SJV.

Accompanied by Fr. Jeff Norfolk and priest alumnus Fr. Frankie Floeder '19, **11 seminarians spent 15 days in Kolkata, India** over J-term. Working closely with St. Teresa of Kolkata's Missionaries of Charity, they spent time with children in an orphanage, served in a home for the destitute and dying, visited Kolkata's seminary, and left with deepened appreciation for Mother's words quoting St. John, "How can we love God who we don't see, if we don't love our neighbor who we can see?"

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*Casey LaMotte '27 (Omaha) and other seminarians at a parish school in rural India with students educated by the Daughters of St. Anne.*

Over spring break, 20 second-year seminarians and two priest formators spent **seven days in Denver with Christ in the City missionaries**. This poverty immersion experience is an important part of SJV's pastoral formation, giving the men an opportunity to serve the homeless and create a culture of encounter where each person is seen, known, and loved.

**Sr. Miriam James Heidland, SOLT, and Christopher Lafitte from the John Paul II Healing Center** returned to SJV in January to offer a Holy Desire Retreat for SJV's new men in the propaedeutic stage. We gratefully continue offering our men this opportunity for growing in authentic masculinity, intimacy with Christ, and deeper discernment.

Eleven seminarians, coached by Edmund Havlicek '26 (Saint Paul & Minneapolis), competed against 15 other seminary teams at the **St. Francis de Sales Seminarian Basketball Tournament** in Milwaukee the first weekend of March. Over 400 seminarians and priests participated in the event, and it was a terrific showing of sportsmanship and holy competition on the court!

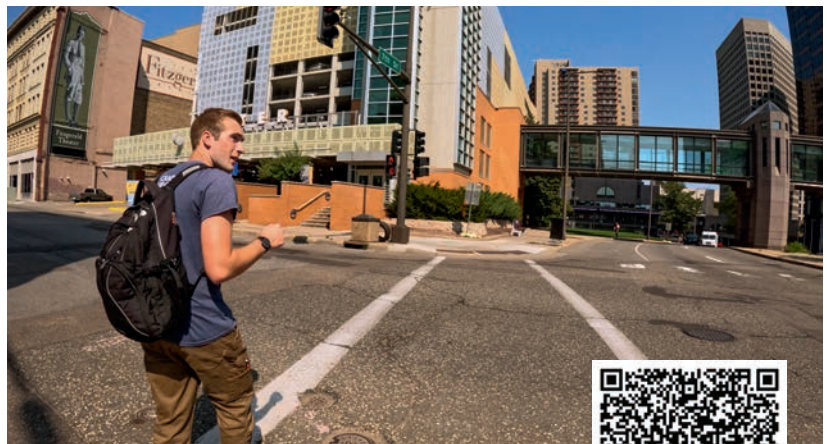
**The Catholic Spirit** featured SJV's street evangelization ministry in an **article published March 20**, entitled "Ministering to people on streets and on campus, SJV seminarians gain pastoral skills". Fr. Jonathan Kelly, Fr. Jeff Norfolk, and John Paul Narog discuss the role of apostolic outreach in formation at SJV, revealing another dimension of our *Heart of the Father* series.



Second-year seminarians serving with Christ in the City missionaries in Denver.



Holy competition at St. Francis de Sales Seminarian Basketball Tournament.



Scan to read the full article in *The Catholic Spirit*.

# NEWS BITES



Another season of **evaluations** draws to a close. Sincere gratitude to all our bishops and vocation directors who have taken the time to meet individually with each of their seminarians and SJV's formation staff. This is a **great time of encouragement** for our men to articulate what God is doing in their lives and record their growth in the presence of the priests and bishops who so greatly support their vocational discernment.

**Dr. Michael Naughton**, Director for the University of St. Thomas' Center for Catholic Studies, offered a morning of **formation for SJV's lay staff** in January. After Holy Mass celebrated by Fr. Austin Dominic Litke O.P. '05, Dr. Naughton spoke to the staff about holy leisure and reclaiming the Lord's Day. We are grateful for SJV's partnership with Catholic Studies and the opportunity for our lay staff to receive ongoing spiritual formation and professional development.

Nearly 70 seminarians packed the ice for a Saturday night **broomball tournament** at the backyard rink of James and Alexandra Sirba. James is a nephew of the late Bishop Paul Sirba - SJV alumnus and spiritual director who sent men here as Bishop of the Duluth Diocese.





## MEET THE MEN

In this season of fond farewells, we'd like to introduce our Senior Class of 2025. You're sure to have a smile on your face as you read the thoughtful answers these **20 Men in Christ** shared in response to four quick questions:

**My Priest Hero?**

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV?**

**On My Bookshelf?**

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration this Time of Year?**

**LUKE CAPOUN**  
ARCHDIOCESE OF OMAHA

**My Priest Hero:**  
Fr. Michael Eckley because of his great joy and magnanimity in pastoring and his ability to suffer well.  
**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**  
Dive into your vocation. It helps no one to be fickle while pursuing God's will.  
**On My Bookshelf:**  
*That Hideous Strength* by C. S. Lewis.  
**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**  
Priestly Ordinations.



**NICHOLAS DEUTSCH**  
ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS

**My Priest Hero:**  
Fr. Tom Niehaus for his fidelity, conviction, and commitment to living the Gospel.  
**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**  
How to abide in the Love of God rather than myself with my weaknesses and failures.  
**On My Bookshelf:**  
*Joan of Arc: Her Story* by Régine Pernoud and Marie-Véronique Clin.  
**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**  
SJV's Crowning of Mary & Benefactor Mass.



**JOE ETNIER**  
ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS

**My Priest Hero:**  
Fr. Peter Yakubu Ali for his fiery love for God and the joyfulness he shows others.  
**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**  
Being real and genuine with God in prayer.  
**On My Bookshelf:**  
*Reiser's Ramblings: A Collection of Columns by the Founding Pastor of Epiphany Parish in Coon Rapids, Minnesota* by Fr. Bernard Reiser.  
**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**  
Holy Week.



**ANDREW GLOTZBACH**  
DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

**My Priest Hero:**

Fr. Tom McNally for showing me how God loves me as a beloved son.

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**

“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11).

**On My Bookshelf:**

*Island of the World* by Michael D. O'Brien.

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**

Solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.



**JOHN KLEIS**

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS

**My Priest Hero:**

Fr. James McConville for showing me the glories and difficulties of the priesthood.

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**

Through our honesty and vulnerability, God will mold our hearts to understand, desire, and choose the Good.

**On My Bookshelf:**

The Old English epic poem, *Beowulf*.

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**

Solemnity of Pentecost.



**JOSÉ ANTONIO GONZÁLEZ**  
ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

**My Priest Hero:**

Father Miguel Venegas Aceves for his resemblance of St. Joseph, exemplifying faithfulness, hard work, rest, and balance.

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**

To be a beloved son of God is becoming a Man of Christ which, in freedom, requires discipline.

**On My Bookshelf:**

*The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods* by A.G. Sertillanges, OP.

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**

Memorial of St. Maria Goretti.



**ASHTON LACKO**

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS

**My Priest Hero:**

Fr. Frankie Floeder because his humility enables the Lord to work profoundly through him.

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**

The importance of discipline in the spiritual life, especially in the life of a priest.

**On My Bookshelf:**

*The Glories of Divine Grace* by Fr. Matthias J. Scheeben.

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**

Feast of Corpus Christi.



**LOGAN HALMA**  
ARCHDIOCESE OF OMAHA

**My Priest Hero:**

Fr. Joseph Forcelle because he was the prototype of joy the summer I spent with him.

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**

To be vulnerable and make yourself known to the formation team.

**On My Bookshelf:**

*The Autobiography of Saint Margaret Mary*.

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**

Memorial of St. Augustine.



**BRENDEN LAKE**

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

**My Priest Hero:**

Fr. Paul Guzman, U.S. Navy Chaplain, inspired me by his incredible witness of faith and service to others.

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**

A disciplined life fosters freedom, creating space for joy to fill and sustain the soul.

**On My Bookshelf:**

*No Bullet Got Me Yet: The Relentless Faith of Father Kapaun* by John Stansifer.

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**

SJV's Crowning of Mary & Benefactor Mass.



## ANDREW LEHNEN

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL  
& MINNEAPOLIS

### My Priest Hero:

Fr. Matthew Alexander for the incredible love he has for the Heart of Jesus which allows him to live in deep prayer as a truly beloved son of God.

### Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:

I can only find stable ground in Christ, because His Love is the source of everything that really matters.

### On My Bookshelf:

*Fathered by God* by John Eldredge.

### Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:

The Triduum.



## JOHN PAUL NAROG

DIOCESE OF DULUTH

### My Priest Hero:

Fr. Seth Gogolin for his example of living a balanced life, putting God's Will first, and doing all things in charity.

### Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:

How to truly pray, especially through the daily Holy Hour.

### On My Bookshelf:

*In Sinu Jesu* by a Benedictine monk.

### Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.



## JOHN PIANG

DIOCESE OF JOLIET

### My Priest Hero:

Fr. Ethan Hokamp for his sincerity in celebrating Holy Mass and for his relatability.

### Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:

"We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father's love for us and our real capacity to become the image of his Son."  
-St. John Paul II.

### On My Bookshelf:

*The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis.

### Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.



## DOMINIC ROMPORTL

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL  
& MINNEAPOLIS

### My Priest Hero:

Bishop Michael Izen for his prayerfulness.

### Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:

How important a relationship with Christ is for holiness.

### On My Bookshelf:

*Fr. Elijah: An Apocalypse* by Michael D. O'Brien.

### Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:

SJV's Crowning of Mary & Benefactor Mass.



## ISAAC SCHNEIDER

DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

### My Priest Hero:

Fr. Noah Thelen for his reverence in the sacraments, being present to those around him, firmness in his identity, and strong pursuit of the true, good, and beautiful.

### Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:

Learning how the Lord speaks and how He sees me.

### On My Bookshelf:

*I Believe in Love* by Fr. Jean C. J. d'Elbée.

### Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.



## CARLOS SEPULVEDA

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

### My Priest Hero:

Fr. Luke Winkelmann for being a man of deep prayer, wholly committed to the Lord, who brings the people of God closer to Jesus Christ.

### Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:

In our weakness, God draws us closer so that we learn the way of the Lord and listen to Him.

### On My Bookshelf:

*Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales.

### Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:

Feast of Corpus Christi.





**DAVID SHAMBLIN**  
DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

**My Priest Hero:**

Fr. John Vallier for teaching me a good pastor must be present to his people.

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**

How to have a structured prayer life; without it, our spiritual life can become a mess.

**On My Bookshelf:**

*Jesus of Nazareth* by Pope Benedict XVI.

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**

Memorial of St. John Vianney.



**GREGORY WASINSKI**  
DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

**My Priest Hero:**

Fr. Troy Nevins who has shown me in countless ways what it means to live as a man after God's own heart.

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**

Holiness consists in turning to the Lord amid life's struggles, joys, and everything in between.

**On My Bookshelf:**

*The Man Who Was Thursday* by G. K. Chesterton.

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**

Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.



**DERICGLADIO SHAMMI**  
ST. THOMAS SYRO-MALABAR  
DIOCESE OF CHICAGO

**My Priest Hero:**

Fr. Kevin Mundackal for integrating the intellectual and pastoral pillars in his priesthood.

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**

Surrendering myself to God's will, constantly learning to "seek first the kingdom of God" through prayer.

**On My Bookshelf:**

*The Priest is Not His Own* by Archbishop Fulton Sheen.

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**

The Syro-Malabar season of the Growth of the Church.



**MATTHEW WILSON**  
DIOCESE OF LANSING

**My Priest Hero:**

Fr. Mark Rutherford for his joyful witness to a life of intimacy with Jesus.

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**

A life given wholly over to God is worth living and beyond our greatest desires.

**On My Bookshelf:**

*I Want to See God* by Fr. Marie-Eugène of the Infant Jesus, OCD.

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**

Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



**NOAH U'REN**  
DIOCESE OF NEW ULM

**My Priest Hero:**

Msgr. John Richter (†) for showing me the gaze and charity of Christ by giving others his full attention.

**Biggest Lesson Learned at SJV:**

God's wisdom and providence supersede human planning and all we can hope for.

**On My Bookshelf:**

*Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* by Brant Pitre.

**Favorite Liturgy or Celebration:**

Feast of Corpus Christi.





# A NEW CHAPTER FOR SAINT JOHN VIANNEY

On February 20, exactly three years since the last Mass in our old chapel, Archbishop Hebda dedicated the altar in our newly constructed fourth-floor chapel, marking a significant milestone for SJV. Located on our guest room floor, this chapel enhances prayerful hospitality for visiting priests and bishops while providing a peaceful place for our staff priests to pray on our rest days. With this final piece of our building project complete, I reflect on my three and a half years as rector of Saint John Vianney with deep gratitude for the healthy foundation that preceded me. We are entering a new chapter of stability which will allow us to go even deeper into the unique mission God has given us.

## Construction Complete - Developing a Spiritual Memory

What started as a vision in 2016 became a reality in April 2023 when we dedicated the new chapel and addition. Our facility now matches the excellence of our formation program, thanks to the contributions of many, and has truly become our formational home – now and for generations to come. By living into the space, our chapel is developing a holy “spiritual memory” as thousands of hours of liturgies and personal prayer are creating paths into the heart of God the Father. I am very grateful to present to you, for your inspiration, our Chapel Theology and Design Guide Booklet, available on our website at [sjvseminary.org/chapel-theology-and-design](http://sjvseminary.org/chapel-theology-and-design).

We are also in a strong financial position, especially considering the magnitude of the renovation and construction project. SJV is debt-free, and remaining project pledges will replenish our reserves. Benefactors will be invited to

remember us in their estate planning and help build our endowment even as we continue raising annual funds in our next chapter of development. Our goal is to cover one-third of our operating budget through endowed funds (which currently covers about 15%). I am hopeful and trust God will continue providing for us through your generosity and support as we continue fulfilling our unique and important mission.

### **Implementing a New Stage of Formation and Full Enrollment**

We have thoughtfully implemented a propaedeutic stage curriculum that responds to the Church's most recent directives for priestly formation. During their first three semesters, our men are integrated into university and seminary life and grow in confidence and maturity. Building a strong foundation of prayer, fraternity, and self-knowledge prepares them for the discipleship stage of formation as an upperclassman.

With our last small class from the COVID-era graduating this spring, we anticipate being at full capacity next fall. Our number of applicants for 2025-2026 is one of the largest we have seen in recent memory and exceeds space available. We're overjoyed at the prospect of this abundant harvest and humbly discerning how to steward our resources amid the Holy Spirit's calling to so many young men.

### **Our Unique Identity and Mission**

Thanks to decades of hard work and incredible long-standing partnerships, SJV is considered the gold standard of college seminary formation in the country. The dedication of our formation team and staff ensures the success of our day-to-day operations. We continue to collaborate fruitfully with The Saint Paul Seminary. From our successful joint capital campaign under "The Seminaries of Saint Paul" banner, we have emerged as two strong and complementary but independent seminaries, each with its own unique identity and mission. Finally, we have never had a better relationship with the University of St. Thomas, thanks to our ongoing collaboration with the Philosophy and Catholic Studies departments and university leadership.

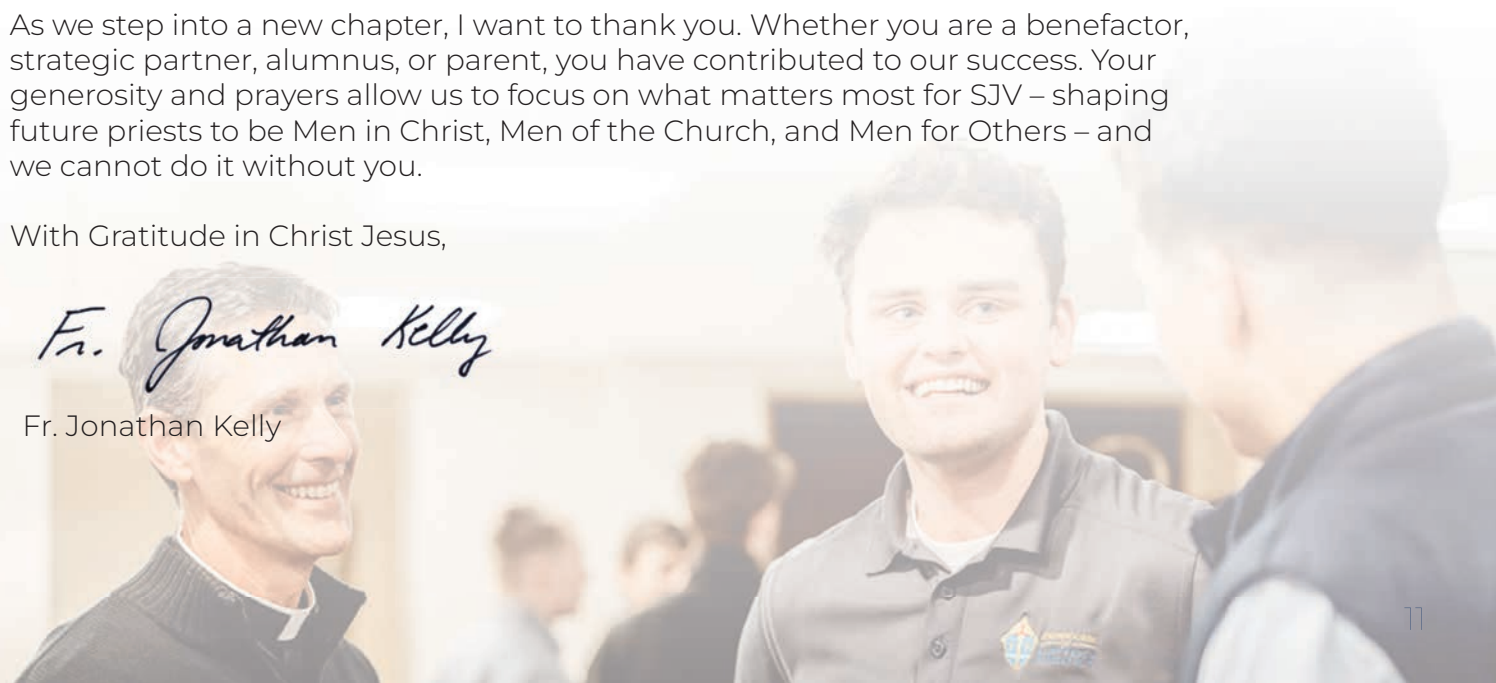
As we step into a new chapter, I want to thank you. Whether you are a benefactor, strategic partner, alumnus, or parent, you have contributed to our success. Your generosity and prayers allow us to focus on what matters most for SJV – shaping future priests to be Men in Christ, Men of the Church, and Men for Others – and we cannot do it without you.

With Gratitude in Christ Jesus,



*Fr. Jonathan Kelly*

Fr. Jonathan Kelly



# LIVING THE HIDDEN LIFE: WHO IS FORMING YOUR SEMINARIANS?

Underneath a thoughtfully managed organization built up by roles, meetings, and tasks, a mission-focused family is daily in pursuit of Heaven through their labors for Saint John Vianney College Seminary.

From recent college graduates to faithful decades-long employees, the SJV “family” represents a plethora of vocations including ordained priests, professed religious sisters, husbands, fathers, mothers, wives, singles, and (on occasion) staff children. “All of us are here to serve the Lord and work in the Vineyard, and the varied calls God has placed on our lives complement each other beautifully,” remarked Sarah Carter, executive assistant to the rector.

Geographically, the team represents a wide span. The formation staff priests hail from four different dioceses while the lay staff includes



*Above right: Fr. Kelly celebrates the Baptism of Noelle Jay Carter, the third child of his executive assistant, Sarah.*

*Right: Phil Roeser and board member Pat Kocourek catch up before a meeting.*



*The 2024-2025 priest formation staff. Not pictured: Fr. Bryce Evans (adjunct spiritual director), Msgr. Aloysius Callaghan (Rome spiritual director), and Fr. Colin Jones (Rome formation assistant).*

Macalester-Groveland locals to hour-long commuters. This familial microcosm of the universal Church is fitting as the seminarians (themselves representing 18 dioceses) have opportunities to spend two weeks on mission in Kolkata, India and study abroad for a semester in the Eternal City.

“It’s a humbling experience to do what small part I can to help these men discern,” explained Phil Roeser, director of development. Sr. Fabiola, PES, agreed as she shared the best part of spending an afternoon each week at SJV: “Knowing the Lord wants us to contribute a tiny bit to the formation of His future priests!” Indeed, each team member’s contributions to the mission are unique and invaluable.

Mike Roesch, director of business and operations, enjoys working with vocation directors in the admissions process and at Vianney Visits. “Given my title, people might assume I spend all my time working on the books or arranging building maintenance, but I do spend a lot of time with the seminarians too,” he said.

When the new men arrive at SJV on move-in day, Dede Leininger, event and hospitality specialist, is the first to feed them something and introduce herself. “I love when they come to my office to ask me ‘mom’ questions, and I can say, ‘You should probably go to urgent care with that,’” she said with a smile.

Jack Kelly, development officer, recently joined the team to help fund the mission of SJV. “We don’t call it fundraising,” he explained. “We’re here to help people do terrific things.”

A keen attentiveness to detail helps Sue Quam, finance assistant, track SJV’s resources and ensure bills are paid accurately and correctly. “It’s important to build good rapport with our vendors,” she shared.

The communications office keeps SJV connected with bishops, vocation directors, alumni, families, and benefactors. “For all the stories we tell each year about the Lord’s work at SJV, hundreds more beautifully unfold yet go unshared,” said Katie Angstman, marketing and communications manager. As St. John’s Gospel concludes, “. . . if every one of these should be written, not even the world itself, I think, could hold the books that would have to be written” (21:24).

*Jack Kelly visits with a team member in his office.*



*Our joyful registration crew at the Vianney Cup Golf Tournament.*

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While the operations team focuses on new student admissions and advancing the mission, the formation team is tirelessly undertaking the work of forming the next generation of holy priests and fathers. “People aren’t formed by programs or systems,” said Fr. Scott Nolan ‘09, spiritual director and formation advisor. “People form people.”

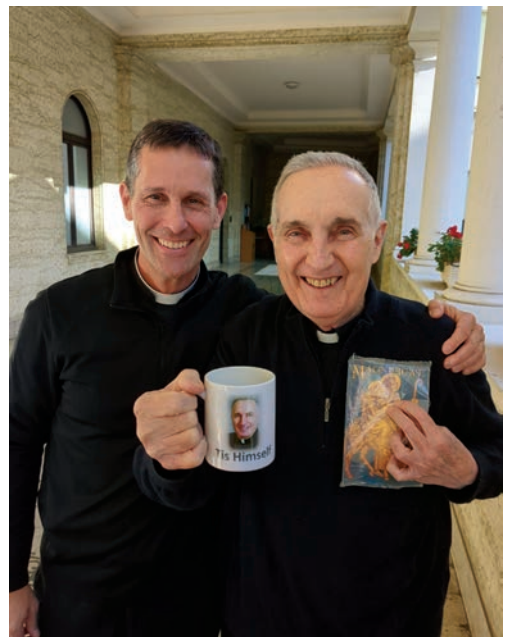
*Fr. Jeff Norfolk meets with a seminarian for spiritual direction.*

The seminarians regularly meet with their formation advisor and spiritual director to discuss matters of human formation (living an ordered human life, relational skills, academics, etc.) and spiritual formation (prayer and sacramental life), yet most of formation happens outside of these meetings. The formal meetings simply help guide what is happening in daily life. “All those simple interactions over the course of a day, week, month, and semester are how formation actually happens,” explained Fr. Nolan.



Fr. Paul Gitter, director of spiritual formation, has been at SJV part-time since 1996 and full-time since 2007. In his experience, the priest formators have an opportunity to live out their priestly fatherhood in a unique way at SJV. “No pastor lives 24 hours a day with his parishioners, yet we live 24 hours a day with the seminarians,” he noted. “It allows us to get to know them much better, and I think it gives them a better understanding of what the priesthood is about.”

The intense community life is bolstered by priestly fraternity among the formators. “It’s not a solitary project, unlike being assigned in a parish by myself,” said Fr. Nolan. “It’s a joy to work in a day-to-day way with priests who are peers.”



*Fr. Jonathan Kelly and Msgr. Aloysius Callaghan*

Another notable difference from parish ministry is the condensed scale of priestly ministry at SJV. “Between formation and spiritual direction, I have been entrusted with 30 men,” shared Fr. Jim Olofson ‘14, vice-rector. “While the number of people I directly serve pales in comparison with parish pastors, the depth of relationship I am privileged to have is a real gift. By serving these 30 men well, they will one day be sent out to serve many others in their own vocations.” This “multiplier effect” is an extension of God’s generosity, allowing the men formed at SJV to go forth and impact hundreds, if not thousands, of others in the future.

For the priests and seminarians in residence at the college seminary, it isn't difficult to see how SJV is considered another home along the way to our eternal Home. Perhaps more telling is the sense of "home" and "family" shared even by members of the lay staff.

The centrality of the Eucharist in SJV's building and shared faith is certainly foundational to this experience. "We're all on the same page, both the work ethic and spiritual aspect," explained Sue Quam.



*Seminarians on the fourth-floor share a laugh with their formator, Fr. Jim Olofson.*

Sr. Emy, PES, who assists in teaching the religious education practicum, humbly points to the Source of all blessings at SJV: "Every time we come to SJV, we first go to the chapel to pray for what we are going to do that day and for the Lord to be the one doing it!"

One of the things that most surprised Michael Malkowiak, development services specialist, upon starting at SJV one year ago was "how close knit the team is. We're almost like a small family," he noted. Accompanying one other through family weddings, funerals, births, illnesses, and everything in between, the team is devoted to honoring each member through the joys and sorrows of life's varied seasons.

*Mary Frame takes the field to greet the men after the 2024 Rector's Bowl.*

The occasional comings and goings of family members also contribute to the feeling of home. Feeling supported in her motherhood at work, Sarah Carter shared, "One seminarian told me how much he loved seeing my infant at SJV because he missed having little ones around."

Despite the manifold blessings of a supportive group of colleagues, SJV's tremendous team firmly ranks second among staff members' favorite part of working at SJV. The resounding #1 answer is the men. "They bring a lot of energy and zeal, and their desire for the Lord is truly contagious," Fr. Olofson explained. Fr. Jeff Norfolk, spiritual director and formation



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advisor, echoed his observations: "It is an incredible gift to see God's work in the lives of the men in how they live as sons of our Heavenly Father and seminarians of the Church."

It doesn't take long for the glimmers of transformation and growth to become obvious to the people spending each day with the seminarians. "The mission of SJV is truly wonderful because of how these men grow in confidence," Sue remarked. "They're still a lot of fun [as the years go on], but you can tell a different reverence in how they carry themselves," Dede added.

Mary Frame, student services and office support specialist, has been blessed to see many seminarians come through formation in her 18 years at SJV and return to visit years later as priests and vocation directors. "It's a great honor getting to know the men and watching them grow and mature. And, of course, giving them a hard time," she added.

The priest staff sees growth on even deeper levels. Fr. Colin Jones '14, Rome formation assistant, shared what a gift it is to see the transformation "from the day they arrive, which is for many of them the first time outside the U.S., to four months later, when they now feel comfortable living in and navigating a major European city."

"Many of them enter right after high school graduation," said Fr. Gitter. "First time away from home and starting the whole college experience. To see the tremendous amount of spiritual growth that takes place in four years is very rewarding."

The work of a spiritual director and priest advisor can be challenging when helping foster this growth, but the joys and graces abound even more. "The best part of working at SJV is the opportunity to walk closely with the men and rejoice with them in the good work the Lord is bringing about in them," expressed Fr. Clayton Forner '16, spiritual director and formation advisor.



*New men at the Peoria Cathedral and Tomb of Archbishop Fulton Sheen with Fr. Jonathan Kelly and Fr. Scott Nolan over J-term.*





*Fr. Jim Olofson and Fr. Scott Nolan finish the Stillwater Log Run 10K with five seminarians.*

Fr. Norfolk spoke graciously about his personal growth as a formator. “I am deeply grateful to God that through my work at SJV with the seminarians, the Lord has been very generous in working interiorly in me as well. He is making me into a new priest in ways I couldn’t have imagined.”

Dr. Chris Burke, director of counseling services, has also experienced development in his time at SJV. “It’s surprising how much my job requires me to think, act, and enjoy life like an undergraduate college student,” he laughed. “Learning from their humor, energy, and fresh perspective is not only enjoyable but wise.”

“It feels like home,” concluded Jack Kelly. “It looks effortless as you walk around, but there’s a lot of hard work, faith, and prayer that has gone into getting where we are now.”

The team at SJV looks forward to many more seasons of loving labor in Our Lord’s Vineyard as they continue forming Men in Christ, Men of the Church, and Men for Others.

# YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES:

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*Traditionally, a newly ordained priest presents his first stole to his father—a gesture that honors the father’s role in forming his son’s moral compass. This sacred act symbolizes the passing on of right judgment, a gift essential for any priest striving to be a wise and faithful spiritual father.*

*The ability to discern right from wrong, to seek truth, and to administer justice lies at the heart of our Catholic faith. This commitment is vividly reflected in the lives of our alumni serving in legal vocations—both in the Church and in the public sphere.*

*We are proud to highlight Fr. Michael Johnson, JCL ‘05 and Judge John Sandy ‘07, who recently shared with us their journeys and appointments to serve the cause of justice in both canon and civil law.*



## **Very Rev. Michael Johnson, JCL ‘05 (Archdiocese of Saint Paul & Minneapolis)**

### **Since SJV?**

After one year at the University of Minnesota, I attended SJV for three years of undergraduate studies. I graduated from The Saint Paul Seminary and was ordained in 2009 before serving three years at St. John the Baptist in New Brighton and one year at Epiphany in Coon Rapids. Archbishop Nienstedt

then assigned me to study canon law at The Catholic University of America. I completed the JCL degree in 2015 and was made judicial vicar on January 1, 2016. In July 2024, I was also named pastor at St. Jude of the Lake in Mahtomedi.

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### What does your job as judicial vicar entail?

As judicial vicar, I run the Metropolitan Tribunal for the Archdiocese. The Metropolitan Tribunal is part of the Catholic Church's judicial system. Most of our work regards marriage annulments, but we will occasionally receive other cases as requested by the Archbishop. My staff of three priests, a deacon, and eight lay people handle about 200 trials annually.

### How do you live out your priesthood in such a unique role?

I have wrestled with this question more than any other over the past decade because it is not immediately obvious why the Church requires her judicial system to be run by a priest. My job running the tribunal has not seemed particularly "priestly" to me. Additionally perplexing, my staff has much more knowledge and practical experience than I do.

I have come to realize my ministry as judicial vicar is a unique way to participate in the salvation of souls (which all my students should know is the supreme law of the Church) by and through the judicial process. At its heart, the judicial process seeks the truth. And so, I see my ministry as helping people pursue truth. Once the truth has been found, they can come to know God's Will for them and move toward a place of freedom, acceptance, and healing by encountering the one who is Truth.



I have also found that people coming for marriage annulments often feel outside of the Church or that the Church has rejected them because the marriage they celebrated in the Church is now broken. The fatherhood of the priest is expressed by the Good Shepherd bringing home the lost sheep and reconciling those who feel they are outside the fold.

### Advice for brother alumni?

To my brother priests – I encourage you to seek out those carrying the heavy cross of a broken marriage, because they are in your pews. People in this situation often feel as if they need to carry this soul-crushing burden themselves but, truly, they need their priest to walk with them. Make it known that you're willing to walk with or (as Pope Francis would say) "accompany" them.

To all – Pursue the life of virtue, just as Fr. Baer taught us.

### Currently on your bookshelf?

I'm going through the Holy Father's encyclical *Dilexit Nos* ("He Loved Us") on the Sacred Heart, and it's one of his most beautiful reflections. I would recommend it to anybody.

On a more secular note, I am currently reading *Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany* by Donald Miller. It follows the same theme as *Band of Brothers*, which Fr. Baer always had the seminarians watch together. His impetus was for us to be inspired by great men who met outrageous circumstances, rose to the challenge, and did virtuous and heroic things.

continued on next page...

# YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES: CONTINUED

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## Judge John Sandy '07 (Diocese of Sioux City)

### Since SJV:

Right out of high school, I spent three years at SJV from 2003-2006. The summer after stepping out of formation at SJV, I met my best friend, Elizabeth. We married in June 2008 and have four children: John (10), Thomas (8), Charles (6), and Claire (4). I graduated from the University of St. Thomas School of Law in 2010 then practiced law with my family at Sandy Law Firm, P.C. in Spirit Lake, Iowa where I maintained a busy trial practice and worked as a public defender for the State of Minnesota. I was appointed to the district court in Iowa Judicial District 3A in 2021, serving as a trial judge.

### What is your current role?

In June 2024, Governor Reynolds appointed me the 38th judge to the Iowa Court of Appeals, which was established as the State's intermediate appellate court by the Iowa Legislature in 1976. It reviews decisions from trial courts across Iowa in appeals transferred by the Iowa Supreme Court.

### How did SJV prepare you for what you do today?

At SJV, I was regularly confronted with the reality that I am not as great as I may think. Living with 125 other men and five priests who continuously challenged me

and evaluated my progress resulted in a development of a keen self-awareness, which is necessary to know whether one possesses the temperamental attributes required of a good judge.

Excluding my parents, nobody had a greater impact on my vocation than Fr. William Baer. I arrived at SJV a petulant and impulsive 18-year-old and left with discipline, structure, and a desire to give freely of myself to others. I hate to imagine what would have been had I not landed at SJV. Any success I may enjoy is Fr. Baer's success.

### **Why the legal field?**

SJV helped flame the fire of "gift of self." Helping the sick, the abandoned, and the marginalized was always a calling. Over time, I came to discern that such could occur as a lawyer.

My parents are both attorneys, and I have always had great respect for them. As a lover of literature and history, Harper Lee's portrayal of Atticus Finch's rigid commitment to justice in *To Kill a Mockingbird* resonated with me. John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Samuel Chase, and other Founding Fathers studied and practiced law. These examples paved the road to a reverence for the legal profession that always stuck.

### **How has your fatherhood informed your work in the legal field?**

Fr. Baer taught me that real men protect, provide, and establish. In the priesthood, faithful adherence to the Liturgy of the Hours, Mass, confession, spiritual direction, and administration are required in the same way a father of four children must dutifully attend to his family and work. There is no luxury for laziness. I hope I have carried that mentality into



*Judge Sandy at his Court of Appeals Investiture, with Fr. Jonathan Kelly and St. Thomas President Rob Vischer, holding a photo of Fr. William Baer (†).*

the care of my family and faithfulness to my work on the bench. My response to the sacrifice of those who came before me (including Fr. Baer) is my work. Cutting corners or doing anything with less than full effort or passion is an insult to the sacrifice others have made to put me where I am.

### **Currently on your bookshelf or playlist?**

*The Words that Made Us: America's Constitutional Conversation* by Akhil Reed Amar. And still listening to collective soul (since I haven't escaped the '90s).

# OUR DEVELOPING STORY

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This is easily one of the most joyful times of the year at SJV. After a long winter and Lenten season, we remember what it means to be “an Easter people” as St. John Paul II (and St. Augustine before him) wrote about with such zeal. What blessings are we singing God’s praises for *this* spring?:

- Days away from our Crowning of Mary & Benefactor Mass, our annual, signature gratitude event.
- Eagerly anticipating our second annual Lay Alumni Silent Retreat at SJV this summer.
- 4 Virtuous Business Leadership events brought Catholic businessmen into our SJV community for fellowship and meaningful conversation.
- 11 seminarians served the poorest of the poor in Kolkata and 20 seminarians served with Christ in the City in Denver.
- 20 graduating seniors.
- 23 seminarians studied abroad in Rome this year.
- 108 men in formation this year.
- 132 new donors supporting our mission.
- 160+ prospective seminarians from 15 dioceses attended Vianney Visits this year.
- 1,100+ alumni called by seminarians during our spring phone-a-thon.



And all this is the culmination of countless hidden moments of fervent prayer, hard work, and God’s abundant graces and love.

We ask that you would prayerfully join us in celebrating the victory of the risen Christ this Easter season. Attend an Ordination or first Mass of a newly-ordained priest in your diocese. Register for one of the last remaining seats at a Crowning of Mary & Benefactor Mass you don’t want to miss. Share this magazine with a friend who needs to bolster their hope in the future of the Church. Make a gift to support our work of forming the next generation of holy priests and fathers. And please don’t forget to keep our seminarians, priest formators, and staff in your prayers. Know of ours for you in turn!

God bless,

Phil Roeser  
Director of Development

# DEVELOPMENT CORNER

## Stay in Touch

Join our mailing list or update your contact information! Please scan the QR code or contact:

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Development Services Specialist  
mmalkowiak@sjvseminary.org



## A Grateful Word



Bishop Zielinski visits with his seminarians studying for the Diocese of New Ulm.

“Keep up the great work! We are blessed to have this seminary in our state.”

-Most Rev. Chad Zielinski, Bishop of New Ulm

“The two years Peter spent at SJV forever changed his life... Every time I visited SJV, I became more and more impressed with the holy and practical atmosphere SJV instills in all the young men preparing for the priesthood.”

-Mary Greco Famera, Past Parent

I'll end in saying that every time I visited SJV I became more and more impressed with the holy and practical atmosphere SJV instills in all the young men preparing for the priesthood.

Sincerely,

Mary Greco Famera



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# SUPPORT VOCATIONS!

Attend an Ordination to the Priesthood, and bring your parish altar servers, sons, or nephews with you!



**Saturday, May 17**

Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus (**Joliet, IL**)

**Thursday, May 29**

Cathedral of St. Joseph (**Sioux Falls, SD**)

**Friday, May 30**

Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe (**Anchorage, AK**)

**Saturday, May 31**

Cathedral of St. Paul (**Saint Paul, MN**)

Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception (**Lafayette, IN**)

**Saturday, June 7**

Cathedral of St. Peter (**Rockford, IL**)

Cathedral of St. Mary (**Saint Cloud, MN**)

**Saturday, June 14**

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish (**East Lansing, MI**)

Photo by Dave Hrbacek, *The Catholic Spirit*