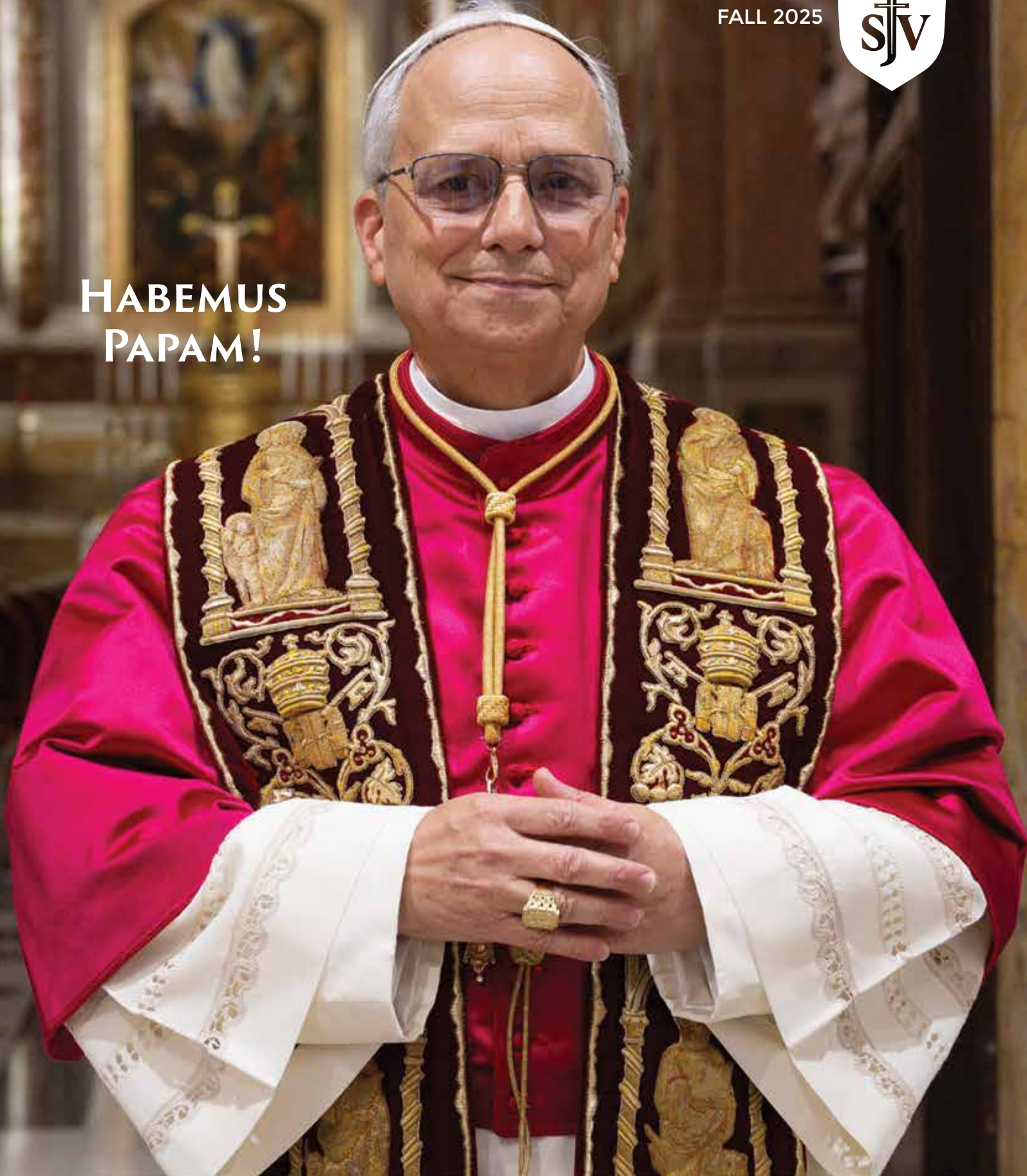


VIANNEYNEWS

SAINT JOHN VIANNEY COLLEGE SEMINARY
FALL 2025



HABEMUS
PAPAM!



LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

WE HAVE A POPE!

In these initial months of Leo XIV's pontificate, his encouraging messages to priests and seminarians have deeply inspired me. After contemplating an ordination homily and his Jubilee addresses, three essential themes have emerged that I shared with our seminarians at the start of the year. They are:

Friendship with Jesus

Pope Leo reminds seminarians and priests that our first and lifelong task is to become friends of Christ: "Priestly formation is about more than learning concepts alone; it is a journey of growth in intimacy with the Lord...only those who live as friends of Christ and are imbued with his spirit can preach with conviction, console with compassion, and lead with wisdom." As friends of Christ, we seek to put on His mind and embrace the sentiments of His heart, so that, as Leo beautifully states, our "entire life can breathe the fragrance of the Gospel."

Friendship with Each Other

Speaking to seminarians, he says, "each one of you is the protagonist of your own formation...but protagonist does not mean soloist." The best formation happens in community, not in isolation, and that is true for priests as well. Our seminarians cherish the fraternal life they experience here and are catching a vision for living in and building healthy communities as future leaders in the Church.

Credible Witnesses Who Rebuild Credibility

He encouraged Roman seminarians at their ordination to "transparency of life...so that we may stand before the People of God as credible witnesses. Together, then, we will rebuild the credibility of a wounded Church..." The inner coherence of an authentic Christian witness is attractive and evangelistic. We encourage our seminarians to live not just with greater intensity, but with greater integrity, becoming "bridges and not obstacles" to others' encounters with Christ.

I am grateful for Pope Leo's vision and that our program already resonates deeply with his priorities. The stories of our seminarians vary, and their lives are unique, yet every day I see how they are rebuilding the credibility of the Church through their zeal, compassion, and humility.

Through our Holy Father's own credible witness, I believe that more young men will respond to God's call to be stewards of the sacred mysteries. Let us pray for our Holy Father and for our seminarians.

Coraggio, Pope Leo!

Thank you for being an important part of our mission to form Men in Christ, Men of the Church, Men for Others!



Very Rev. Jonathan Kelly
Rector



FRIENDSHIP ESSENTIAL TO FORMING HEALTHY PRIESTS, POPE LEO SAYS



Twenty-nine SJV alumni participated in the annual Summer Conference for the Companions of Christ, a diocesan priestly fraternity which began in the Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis.

As an Augustinian priest, **Pope Leo XIV** understands the importance of priestly fraternity. He is even reported to have renovated the Papal Apartments so he can live in community with four other priest friends! It's no surprise, then, that the pope would emphasize the importance of deep friendship for priestly life. Recently he said the following while addressing a group of formator priests in Rome:

"Formation should help forge solid bonds within the presbyterate ...

For how could we, as ministers, be builders of living communities, unless we first experience a genuine spirit of fraternity among ourselves?"

Pope Leo's words resonate deeply with our mission because friendship and fraternal life are key to SJV's culture. For decades, SJV has been a place where men form friendships that endure long past ordination. We are forming men who are **"protagonists in their formation but not soloists"** and then go out to build communal life in the Church.

The choice of so many SJV alumni to commit to community living is a fruit of what they received here: a vision for following Jesus together with other disciples. Our formation team understands that, as Pope Leo says, "the formation of future ordained ministers cannot be carried out in isolation" because friendship is an essential element of a healthy priesthood.

"I was so moved by this experience of fraternity at SJV that it created in me an undeniable determination to make this vision of fraternity a reality in my diocese."

FR. MATHIAS THELEN '06

"Like at SJV, [my brother priests] call me out [of myself] and call me on to be a better man and a better priest, loving me all the while."

FR. JAMES GUARASCIO '16

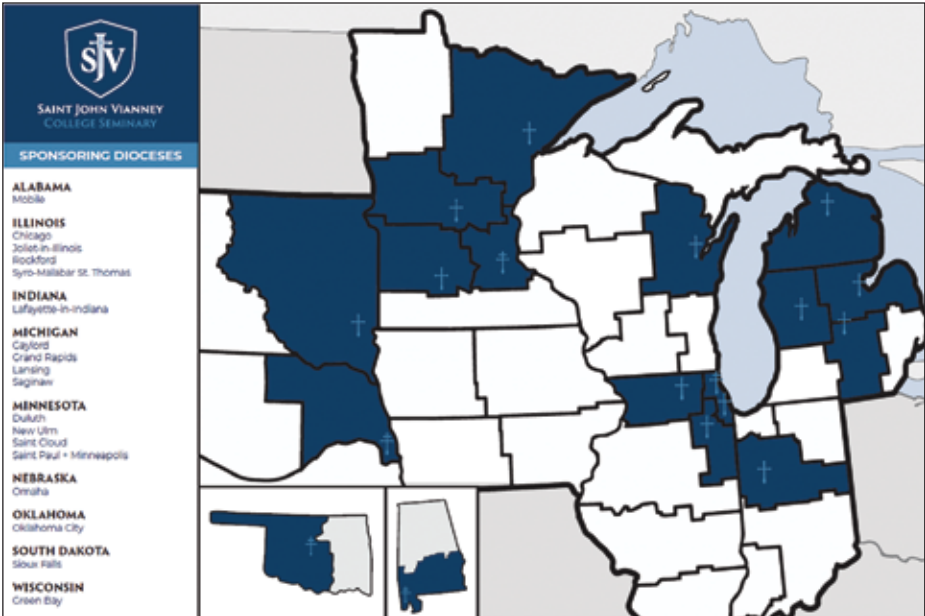
"SJV planted the seeds for discovering the same call, gift, and necessity for priestly fraternity in ordained diocesan life."

FR. DANIEL EUSTERMAN '12

NEWS BITES



We are grateful to have **115 men in formation from 18 dioceses** during the 25-26 academic year. With 42 new men, this marks the **largest incoming class since 2014** for the second year in a row. We thank God for these young men who continue to hear and respond to Jesus' call to "Come, follow me."



Archbishop Hebda blessed our community by celebrating our opening Sunday Mass – moving the Feast Day of our patron Saint John Vianney. He inspired and challenged our men in his homily: "I need you, brothers, to be men who know God's love and are able to communicate it and reveal it to His people." Thank you, Archbishop!



Caruso's Crew made an appearance – alongside Coach Caruso, President Rob Vischer, and Fr. Kelly – at the University of St. Thomas' annual **March through the Arches**. Roll Toms!



Our **21st Annual Vianney Cup** was a great success. Over 100 benefactors played at Midlands Hills, fundraising our goal for the tournament in addition to two Honda Vans for our seminarians to use for their apostolic outreaches. Congratulations to champions Tony Wolf, Chris Sauer, and Tom and Jake Gendron!



Following 18 years of dedicated service to SJV, **Mary Frame retired** from her role in June. She has been a dedicated fixture of our community over the years, impacting countless seminarians and their families. **Director of Development, Phil Roeser**, retires in October after bringing great enthusiasm and energy to the work of funding our recently completed building project. We also offer our congratulations to **Sue Quam, Finance Assistant**, who will retire this fall after supporting SJV's accounting efforts since 2012. Please join us in praying for them as they all begin a new chapter!

We welcomed **Fr. Dan Westermann '10 (Diocese of Lansing)** to the SJV formation team this year! Ordained in 2014 after attending SJV and the North American College in Rome, Fr. Westermann completed a licentiate in Moral Theology and most recently served for eight years as pastor of St. John the Baptist, which was the home of campus ministry for Eastern Michigan University. With Fr. Westermann's appointment, **four of the seven priests on our formation team are SJV alumni.**



Jacob Hornecker '18 began assisting SJV seminarians with academic scheduling in 2024 and is now established as our **Intellectual Dimension Coordinator**. Jacob spent six years in seminary (including four at Saint John Vianney) before pursuing a career in education. In addition to his work at SJV, he is an adjunct professor of theology at St. Thomas.

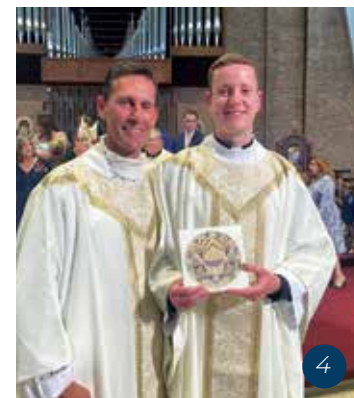


Savannah Siegler joined the SJV team in August as **Operations Coordinator**. A 2014 graduate of St. Thomas, she was a FOCUS missionary after college and comes to us from her previous role as Director of Campus Ministry at the Newman Center parish for the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.





1 - Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis, featuring Fr. Clayton Forner, Fr. Mark Pavlak, Fr. Benjamin Eichten, Fr. Alexander Marquette, Fr. Jonathan Kelly, Fr. Zachary Ochsenbauer, Fr. Randall Skeate, and Fr. Paul Gitter.
 2 - Diocese of Joliet, featuring Fr. Jim Olofson and Fr. Christian Sinclair.
 3 - Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana, featuring Fr. Jason Diebolt and Fr. Scott Nolan.
 4 - Diocese of Lansing, featuring Fr. Jonathan Kelly and Fr. Joshua Luttig.
 5 - Diocese of Rockford, featuring Fr. Jonathan Kelly, Fr. Ryan Nooraee, and Fr. Clayton Forner.
 6 - Diocese of Sioux Falls, featuring Fr. Jeff Norfolk and Fr. Gerald Thornton.
 7 - Diocese of St. Cloud, featuring Fr. Paul Gitter and Fr. Nathaniel Daubner.
 8 - Diocese of Lansing, featuring Fr. Jonathan Kelly, Fr. Randy Koenigsknecht, Fr. Christian Salata, Fr. Jonathon Bokuniewicz, and Fr. Jack Jobst.



PRIESTS FOREVER: CLASS OF 2025 ORDINATIONS

The harvest was abundant this year as **16 SJV Alumni** were ordained as priests, joining more than 750 alumni who have given their lives to Christ as His priests forever. We give thanks for these vocations and pray for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon these men as their priestly ministries begin in this Jubilee Year of Hope!

Rev. Jonathon Bokuniewicz
Diocese of Lansing

Rev. Edward Burke
Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau

"Please pray that I can be an instrument of our Lord in giving His people hope, and pray that we will have an increase of holy seminarians in Alaska."

Rev. Nathaniel Daubner
Diocese of St. Cloud

Rev. Jason Diebolt
Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana

"Please pray for me to be a faithful steward to Christ and His Church."

Rev. Benjamin Eichten
Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis

"I would be especially grateful for your prayers that I may minister well with the heart of Christ. Prayer possesses real power and can truly transform the lives of those we keep in our intentions."

Rev. Jack Jobst
Diocese of Lansing

Rev. Randy Koenigsknecht
Diocese of Lansing

"Please continually pray for me, and keep praying for vocations to the priesthood."

Rev. Joshua Luttig
Diocese of Lansing

"Pray for me and my future parish!"

Rev. Alexander Marquette
Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis

"Please pray that I would love Jesus and my vocation even more each day."

Rev. Ryan Nooraee
Diocese of Rockford

"Please keep me in your prayers, and keep encouraging young men to discern their vocations!"

Rev. Zachary Ochsenbauer
Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis

"As members of the mystical body of Christ, our holiness redounds to everyone connected to the vine. The best way to support me or any other priest is personal conversion - to 'love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind' (Mt 22:37)."

Rev. Christian Salata
Diocese of Lansing

"Pray that my heart may always remain open to the Holy Spirit."

Rev. Christian Sinclair
Diocese of Joliet

"Please pray for me, and all my newly-ordained classmates, that we may always have the grace to love with the heart of Jesus."

Rev. Randall Skeate
Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis

"Please pray daily for all SJV alumni and for all the people we serve. Also, encourage the seminarians to be in regular contact with priest alumni for further guidance and accompaniment."

Rev. Gerald Thornton
Diocese of Sioux Falls

"Please continue to pray for your priests and for those men discerning a call to the priesthood!"

Rev. George Younes
Our Lady of Lebanon Eparchy (Maronite Church)



MEET THE MEN

We would like to introduce you to the new men beginning formation at SJV this year! Please keep them, and all of our seminarians, in your prayers as they enter more deeply into their identities as beloved sons of the Father.



NOAH ABRAM
DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Favorite Book:
The Blessed Eucharist: Our Greatest Treasure by Fr. Michael Müller, C.S.S.R.
Favorite Way to Leisure:
Board games.
What Drew Me to SJV:
The possibility that God could be calling me to the priesthood.



LUKE BONANNI
DIOCESE OF LANSING

Favorite Saint:
St. Maximilian Kolbe.
Favorite Summer Happening:
Serving at Catholic Heart Work Camp in Indiana this July.
What Drew Me to SJV:
Experiencing the witness of faithful priests and seminarians opened my heart to consider the priesthood.



JAMES BOYLE
ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

Favorite Saint:
St. Albert the Great.
Favorite Summer Happening:
Sand volleyball.
What Drew Me to SJV:
A call to be a priest of Jesus Christ.



MARSHALL BROADT
ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

Favorite Bible Verse:
“You did not choose me. Rather, I chose you . . .”
-John 15:16
Favorite Way to Leisure:
Spiritual reading.
What Drew Me to SJV:
God’s grace and a desire to do His Will.



LUKE BROWN
DIOCESE OF LAFAYETTE-IN-INDIANA

Favorite Bible Verse:
The “Miserere”: Repentance for Sin (Psalm 51)
Favorite Summer Happening:
Knights of the Holy Temple through my diocese’s Office of Vocations.
What Drew Me to SJV:
[The opportunity] to discern my vocation.



ASHER BUCHOLZ
DIOCESE OF SIOUX FALLS

Favorite Saint:
St. Ignatius of Antioch.
Favorite Fall Food:
Pumpkin pie.
What Drew Me to SJV:
The witness of older seminarians.



SEAN CZAPLEWSKI
DIOCESE OF JOLIET

Favorite Saint:
St. Joseph.

Favorite Summer Happening:
A trip to Lake Michigan.

What Drew Me to SJV:
Love of the Lord and devotion to the Eucharist.

MATTHEW DRIETZ
DIOCESE OF SIOUX FALLS

Favorite Book:
Into Your Hands, Father by Fr. Wilfrid Stinissen, O.C.D.

Favorite Fall Food:
Apple pie.

What Drew Me to SJV:
The peace and joy of men who have given themselves to God in their formation.



BEN FLICKINGER
DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Favorite Bible Verse:
"Looking at him, Jesus was moved with love and said, 'You need to do one further thing. Go and sell what you own, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'" -Mark 10:21

Favorite Way to Leisure:
Playing piano.

What Drew Me to SJV:
The idea of giving my life to God, and I wish to serve Him in the way that He wishes.

AARON GNERER
DIOCESE OF NEW ULM

Favorite Book:
The Power and the Glory by Graham Greene.

Favorite Summer Happening:
I went on a FOCUS mission trip to Rio in Brazil this summer!

What Drew Me to SJV:
Having the opportunity to discern within the Heart of the Church the call to diocesan priesthood.



PETER DIFUCCIA
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS

Favorite Bible Verse:
The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)

Favorite Way to Leisure:
Throwing a football and having a conversation with friends.

What Drew Me to SJV:
My love of serving God as an altar server, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and small group leader.

COLTON ESTES
ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

Favorite Saint:
St. Pio of Pietrelcina.
Favorite Summer Happening:
Working at a diocesan summer camp.

What Drew Me to SJV:
A strong pull from God during the National Eucharistic Congress.



GEORGE FREDERICKSON
DIOCESE OF DULUTH

Favorite Saint:
Mary, Mother of Sorrows.
Favorite Way to Leisure:
Sitting in a snowbank when it's -20°F and talking to God while listening to nature.

What Drew Me to SJV:
The peace and joy I experienced at a Vianney Visit.

JEREMY HENDRICKSON
DIOCESE OF LANSING

Favorite Saint:
St. Maria Goretti.
Favorite Fall Food:
Taco Bell (year-round).
What Drew Me to SJV:
The desire to further discern a [calling] to the priesthood, knowing I did all the "couch" discerning I could at home.



ALEXANDER DONETH
DIOCESE OF LANSING

Favorite Saint:
St. Francis de Sales.
Favorite Way to Leisure:
Mountain biking.

What Drew Me to SJV:
I felt drawn to put the most foundational years of my life in the hands of God.

STEPHEN FLANAGAN
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS

Favorite Saint:
St. John Bosco.
Favorite Fall Food:
Apple Crisp.

What Drew Me to SJV:
The fraternity.



HECTOR GARCIA
DIOCESE OF LAFAYETTE-IN-INDIANA

Favorite Saint:
St. Carlo Acutis.
Favorite Way to Leisure:
Playing soccer.

What Drew Me to SJV:
Discernment of the priestly vocation and hopefully one day be able to be Jesus in people's lives.

MICHAEL HORNECKER
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS

Favorite Bible Verse:
"My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself to endure trials." -Sirach 2:1

Favorite Summer Happening:
Lifeguarding at Trinity Woods Catholic Retreat Center.
What Drew Me to SJV:
Intimacy with Christ.





OWEN HOWARD
 ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. PAUL
 & MINNEAPOLIS

Favorite Saint:
 St. Maximilian Kolbe.
Favorite Way to Leisure:
 A good game of Hacky Sack.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 Through trial and error, I
 found the Eucharist and the
 Church to be the only things
 that could truly satisfy me.

LOGAN KILLELEA
 ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Favorite Saint:
 St. Joseph.
Favorite Fall Food:
 Butternut squash soup.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 Seeing the very fruitful,
 brotherly relationships that the
 other seminarians had.



THEODORE LOEHR
 ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. PAUL
 & MINNEAPOLIS

Favorite Saint:
 St. Hubert.
Favorite Fall Food:
 Smoked turkey.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 The joy and fraternity of the
 way seminarians live out
 their lives.

BENJAMIN MATE
 DIOCESE OF JOLIET

Favorite Saint:
 St. Philip Neri.
Favorite Fall Food:
 Pumpkin pie.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 Trust in God and the Church.



CRISTIAN KARAKASH
 DIOCESE OF DULUTH

Favorite Bible Verse:
 "Although I am free and belong
 to no man, I have made myself
 a slave to all so as to win
 over as many as possible." -1
 Corinthians 9:19
Favorite Way to Leisure:
 Fishing.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 The unignorable stirring of the
 Spirit in my life to sacrifice all
 for the Will of God.

GERARD LAFRAMBOISE
 DIOCESE OF SAGINAW

Favorite Bible Verse:
 ""No one can have greater
 love than to lay down his life
 for his friends."" -John 15:13
Favorite Way to Leisure:
 Reading a good book.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 I felt God calling me, and so I
 came, because He is worth it.



ADAM LOKKEN
 DIOCESE OF DULUTH

Favorite Bible Verse:
 "Rejoice always." -1
 Thessalonians 5:16
Favorite Fall Food:
 Applesauce from my grandma.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 The Holy Spirit.

JOSEPH MIN
 DIOCESE OF JOLIET

Favorite Saint:
 Our Blessed Mother.
Favorite Way to Leisure:
 Walking and contemplation.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 The truth of eternal life
 and God.



ADAM KARARO
 DIOCESE OF ROCKFORD

Favorite Book:
 The Book of Psalms.
Favorite Summer Happening:
 Camping with family and
 friends.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 First and foremost, God:
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
 but also, my family, the
 priests I know, and the beauty
 of the Mass.

NICHOLAS LAMMERS
 DIOCESE OF LANSING

Favorite Book:
The Autobiography of
St. Teresa of Avila.
Favorite Summer Happening:
 Painting half of a car.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 The life.



MATHIAS LUNDGREN
 ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. PAUL
 & MINNEAPOLIS

Favorite Saint:
 St. John the Beloved.
Favorite Fall Food:
 Gravy over anything.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 Love of Christ in fraternity.

DAWSON MORRISSEY
 DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Favorite Book:
 The Book of Job.
Favorite Summer Happening:
 Thursday game night with
 the boys.
What Drew Me to SJV:
 The great community with
 all the men.





LUCIEN NEBA
ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Favorite Bible Verse:
“I have other sheep too that do not belong to this fold. I must lead them as well, and they will hear my voice. Thus, there will only be one flock, one shepherd.” -John 10:16

Favorite Way to Leisure:
Playing music and music composition.

What Drew Me to SJV:
I feel Jesus is calling me to be His priest and give my life for the salvation of souls.



NATHAN OSEN
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS

Favorite Saint:
St. Anthony of Padua.

Favorite Summer Happening:
A trip to Italy.

What Drew Me to SJV:
To be with the Lord and to accept His calling for me.



NIKOLAS PATTERSON
DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Favorite Saint:
St. John Paul II.

Favorite Fall Food:
Pumpkin spice muffins.

What Drew Me to SJV:
A desire to strengthen my spiritual life and discern priesthood.



ETHAN POND
DIOCESE OF DULUTH

Favorite Saint:
Bl. Solanus Casey.

Favorite Fall Food:
Pumpkin pie.

What Drew Me to SJV:
The strong brotherhood built on faith.



JAMES RICE
DIOCESE OF ROCKFORD

Favorite Bible Verse:
“Then Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word.’ After this, the angel departed from her.” -Luke 1:38

Favorite Fall Food:
Anything made by my grandma.

What Drew Me to SJV:
A strong desire to serve the one true Church.



LUKE ROSS
DIOCESE OF LAFAYETTE-IN-INDIANA

Favorite Saint:
St. John Paul II.

Favorite Fall Food:
Banana bread.

What Drew Me to SJV:
A deep desire to learn to love [and listen] more deeply to the Good Shepherd.



LUIS SALDIVAR
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS

Favorite Saint:
St. José Luis Sánchez del Río.

Favorite Way to Leisure:
Working on cars.

What Drew Me to SJV:
Formation, spiritual direction, union with God.



DAVID SHIELDS
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS

Favorite Bible Verse:
“Stay awake and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak.” -Matthew 26:41

Favorite Way to Leisure:
Read a book.

What Drew Me to SJV:
Continual gentle promptings on my heart from God.



JACK VAN MOORLEGHEM
ARCHDIOCESE OF OMAHA

Favorite Saint:
St. Ignatius of Loyola

Favorite Way to Leisure:
Reading and trying to learn new languages.

What Drew Me to SJV:
The Good Shepherd placed a desire for priesthood in my heart from a fairly young age, and going to seminary at SJV is where this “seed” will be matured, nurtured, and cultivated.



MATTHEW WEATHERFORD
ARCHDIOCESE OF MOBILE

Favorite Bible Verse:
“I have given you a command. Be strong and brave, do not be afraid nor dismayed. I, the Lord, your God, will be with you wherever you go.” -Joshua 1:9

Favorite Fall Food:
Chili roast.

What Drew Me to SJV:
The desire to do God’s Will and grow in holiness.



NICHOLAS WHITMER
DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Favorite Saint:
St. John Paul II.

Favorite Way to Leisure:
Reading, writing, or playing cello.

What Drew Me to SJV:
I wanted to become a more perfected man; to conquer my passions for the good of the Kingdom.

THE POPE HAD DINNER WITH OUR MEN BEFORE HE WAS THE POPE

Brennan Crow '26 (Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis) was studying alongside 10 other SJV seminarians in the Eternal City at the time of Cardinal Prevost's visit to the Irish College in November 2024. In his own words:

After waking up to a very abundant day, my brother seminarians and I were unaware of how impactful the night of November 13 would be on our lives. Wednesdays were typically the day where priests and students of the Irish College gathered for Mass, dinner, and a talk with a special guest. At the time, we had never heard of Cardinal Prevost. He was a very young cardinal, the newly appointed head of the Dicastery of Bishops. We were mostly just thrilled to have a speaker talk to us about a fascinating subject in our own midwestern accent.

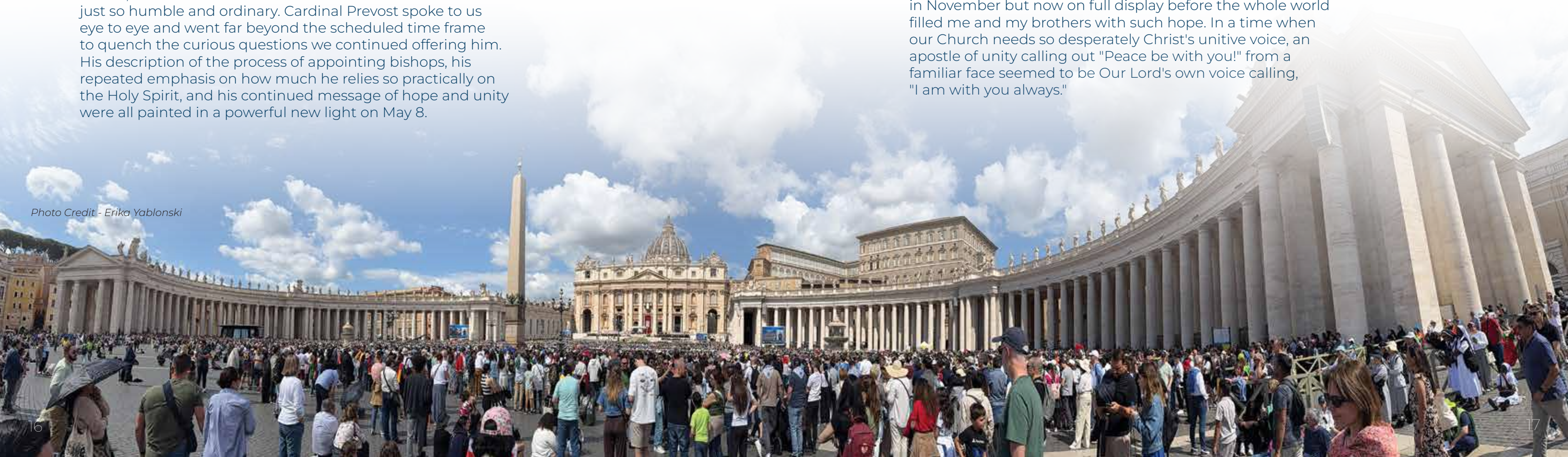
I remember distinctly having to remind myself on several occasions, both within his thorough question-and-response session as well as the brief interactions I had with him at dinner, that this man was a cardinal. His demeanor to us was just so humble and ordinary. Cardinal Prevost spoke to us eye to eye and went far beyond the scheduled time frame to quench the curious questions we continued offering him. His description of the process of appointing bishops, his repeated emphasis on how much he relies so practically on the Holy Spirit, and his continued message of hope and unity were all painted in a powerful new light on May 8.



Rev. Colin Jones '14 (SJV Rome Formation Assistant), pictured to the right of Cardinal Robert Prevost, during his 2024 visit to the Irish College.

When Pope Leo XIV walked out on the loggia that Thursday morning, seeing a man I had talked to and shook hands with, and a man who grew up in a similar culture and experience to me, was (and still is) surreal. Witnessing his humility back in November but now on full display before the whole world filled me and my brothers with such hope. In a time when our Church needs so desperately Christ's unitive voice, an apostle of unity calling out "Peace be with you!" from a familiar face seemed to be Our Lord's own voice calling, "I am with you always."

Photo Credit - Eriko Yablonski



THE CONCLAVE: IN ROME AND IN ST. PAUL

The election of Pope Leo XIV and death of Pope Francis caught the attention of most of the world in the spring of 2025. Events which captivated even those of other faith traditions was profoundly impactful, even life-changing, for the seminarians of SJV.

As the men at SJV united with the universal Church to pray for the repose of Pope Francis' soul, seminarians studying abroad in Rome were immersed in their own experience from the Eternal City. Most were able to adjust their spring break schedules to attend Pope Francis' funeral. After arriving to an already huge crowd at 4:30 AM, they found a spot right in front of St. Peter's obelisk to pray.



Returning to Rome for the funeral Mass of Pope Francis

Our seminarians were greatly moved by the immense number of pilgrims lined up to process to St. Mary Major and crowded on side streets to pay their respects to the late Holy Father. Some sources estimate they may have joined 250,000 others in attendance. "There were priests, bishops, cardinals, heads of state, random tourists, recent converts . . . It was the entire Catholic Church, and that was very beautiful for me to see," described **Samir Bhatt '26 (Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana)**.

Reflecting on his enduring legacy, **Benjamin Sundlie '26 (Diocese of Duluth)** was most moved by Pope Francis' wish for the Church's priests "to be shepherds with 'the smell of the sheep.'" "He emphasized this throughout his papacy many times and desired it to be a reality for the Church's priests," Ben explained. Pope Francis' care for the poor and marginalized was especially striking to **Giovanni Gonzalez '26 (Diocese of Joliet)**. "I think he'll be remembered for his humility and his simplicity which you could just see in the way he conducted himself, the way he dressed himself, and even in his own funeral with his simple wood coffin." **Dominic Scott '26 (Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana)** was touched by the Pope's role as



the visible head of the Church and sign of unity for Catholics everywhere, saying "Pope Francis was our shepherd for twelve years — my whole adult life — and it was a blessing to be part of the Church's farewell to him."

Just 12 days after Pope Francis' funeral, a new Bishop of Rome was named. The joy on campus was extraordinary, as President Rob Vischer noted in an email to St. Thomas faculty and staff: "Our St. Paul campus erupted in celebration on Thursday as Pope Leo XIV was announced. A packed viewing party at Scooter's, our own Popemobile parade, and even white smoke emanating from a chimney built for the occasion above our SJV seminary marked a jubilant day in history."



"The SJV seminarians became the face of St. Thomas throughout the Twin Cities and campus communities during this pivotal moment in the Church's history," remarked Dr. Michael Naughton, Director of the Center for Catholic Studies at St. Thomas. "Their energy, joy, and love for Christ were an invitation for everyone to participate in the election of a new pope. It was an evangelical moment, and it was fun."



The festivities in St. Paul took place with equal joy to the celebration in St. Peter's Square following "Habemus Papam."

continued on next page...

Photo Credits - Dave Hrbacek, The Catholic Spirit

Thomas Nelson '26 (Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana) was in St. Peter's itself as the white smoke emerged from the chimney. "There was just this uproar of energy like, 'We have a new pope!' and I was able to rush in and be able to be there when Pope Leo XIV came out for the first time to address the people and give us his blessing," he recalled. "My hope and my prayer is that with Pope Leo being everywhere—on the videos, on the metro, and people talking about him—it will bring hearts closer to Christ through His Church and through the Petrine ministry."

The question **Ethan Menning '26 (Archdiocese of Omaha)** began asking those he met in Rome was "What do you think of the first American pope?" In his own words, "Their answers are so good to hear. . . People are excited for an American pope. They tell [us] things like, 'Ethan, you don't know how good the American Church is. You're doing so much on evangelization, so much on youth ministry. It's so inspiring for the rest of the world.'"

Their experience of being seminarians from the United States during the conclave in Rome has opened many doors to conversation for our men. They are learning what it means for their whole lives to "breathe the fragrance of the Gospel," to borrow an expression from Pope Leo.

This message flows seamlessly into Pope Leo XIV's meditation for the Jubilee of Seminarians, delivered June 24: "You are saying 'yes' to Christ's call, and doing so with humility and courage. Your 'yes' to Christ is maturing within the life of the Church, as you allow yourselves to be guided on the necessary path of discernment and formation." Their "yes" to formation and, ultimately, to their vocations will forever be shaped from the experience of this historic moment for the Church and the world.

As Pope Leo XIV continues through his first year as Holy Father, we give thanks to God for the Petrine Office and the gift of apostolic succession through which Christ will continue to lead His Church until the end of time.



First Angelus Address of Pope Leo XIV



View our news features from KARE 11, KSTP - 5 Eyewitness News, and more at:

<https://bit.ly/HabemusPapamSJV>.

SJV ALUMNUS IN THE CONCLAVE

We are honored to have had an SJV alumnus participate in the conclave electing the next pope. We were grateful to catch up with His Eminence Blaise Cupich '71 (Archdiocese of Chicago) and learn what this experience was like for him.

How did your formation at SJV help prepare you for your life as a priest, bishop, and now cardinal?

I believe that the formation by the faculty and, also, by the other students [was] instrumental in helping me appreciate the demands of priesthood but also the joys of this life. The education I received at the then-College of St. Thomas, particularly from the faculty in the Philosophy department, was also impactful for my priesthood and service to the Church.

What is it like being part of such a monumental moment in Church history?

I have to admit that I took it somewhat in stride simply because I was joined by other cardinals in a matter that was important for the life of the Church. This is the approach that I will always try to take when asked to serve the Church in various capacities.

How has the conclave helped you experience the Holy Spirit's movement and guidance of the Church?

It was clear to me that there was a presence of God that went beyond the number of people in the Sistine Chapel as we took up our work. That was very comforting to me but also a source of inspiration as I tried to listen to the promptings of the Spirit in my own heart and in our deliberations.

How might this encourage us to experience God leading us in little ways each day?

[T]here were no flashes of lightning or rolling of thunder at the moment in which we [were] asked to cast our vote



but a deep sense of consolation and serenity as we took up our work. Perhaps that is a great gift of the Holy Spirit that we ignore at times, namely, the gift of serenity in which we [make] important decisions.

What is your prayer for Pope Leo XIV and his pontificate?

First of all, I pray for a long life and that he will have the grace necessary to carry on the very onerous responsibilities that he now faces. I am confident that God has already blessed him with many gifts. As we say during the Rite of Ordination, "May God who has begun the good work in him bring it to fulfillment."

Any personal stories of Pope Leo?

[During our meetings in the Dicastery for Bishops, I have always witnessed him as a very deliberate and careful thinker, who listens attentively to others with great respect. I imagine these traits will serve him well as he takes up his new responsibilities.



YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES:

VINCENZO RANDAZZO '13
(DIOCESE OF LANSING)

What have you been up to since SJV?

After entering SJV in January 2008 following high school, I was in formation at SJV for five semesters. I've lived and worked in a number of places since SJV, most notably for Father—now Bishop—Joseph Williams at St. Stephen's in Minneapolis and later for Bishop Andrew Cozzens in evangelization at the Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis. I now live and work in Rome, where I run a Catholic pilgrimage company.

What has it been like living in Rome—both as a college seminarian and now leading pilgrimages—through the past three pontificates?

Immensely moving. As a seminarian, I remember praying for Pope Benedict XVI from St. Peter's Square until the light in his apartment went dark each night. I was back in Rome when he died, prayed as he lay in state, and attended his funeral. Just two years later, I was again in Rome for the funeral of Pope Francis, followed by the conclave and the announcement of Pope Leo XIV—where I unexpectedly ran into alumni brother Patrick Flanagan '12, also from the Diocese of Lansing.

I could sense I was witnessing history but even felt I was somehow part of the story. In the words of Cardinal Newman, I am indeed “a link in a chain,” one I am humbled beyond words to be part of: a chain that binds saints to Christ and binds today's Church to the ancient Church.

How has this experience helped shape your work today?

Living in Rome through these events has deepened my awareness of what it means to be Catholic in time—rooted in the Resurrection yet still unfolding in history. In the United States, we tend to observe history as something outside ourselves, as though reading it from a book. But living and working in Rome, especially during moments like the death of a pope or a conclave, you begin to feel as if you're inside the history book itself or perhaps part of the scroll being unrolled.

The Italian verb *sviluppare*—which means “to develop” but originally refers to the act of untangling—feels appropriate. It seems like God is untangling knots in history through the Church, perhaps through Our Lady. It's this unfolding mystery that shapes and animates my work today.

How did your time at SJV prepare you for this chapter of life?

My company has been profoundly shaped by the SJV spirit of hospitality I encountered during the days of the late Fr. Baer (and have been practicing myself ever since he asked me to oversee the Samba event in the Pope Benedict Room). This vision enlivens my entire work of being keenly attentive to the desires of our pilgrims, going beyond what's required, and offering generosity in service. Proper hospitality flows from Christ, through the Church, for others. It mirrors SJV's motto: Men in Christ, Men of the Church, Men for Others.

Advice for brother alumni?

Pray the Liturgy of the Hours. More specifically, Sunday Night Prayer. Do it with the full confidence you learned to pray it at Saint John Vianney.

Best part of fall?

Autumn leaves at their peak on Summit Avenue.

Currently reading?

Saint Catherine of Siena: Mystic of Fire, Preacher of Freedom by Fr. Paul Murray, OP.



CONNECT



To connect with Vincenzo or explore pilgrimage opportunities, visit vincenzoinrome.com.



YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES:

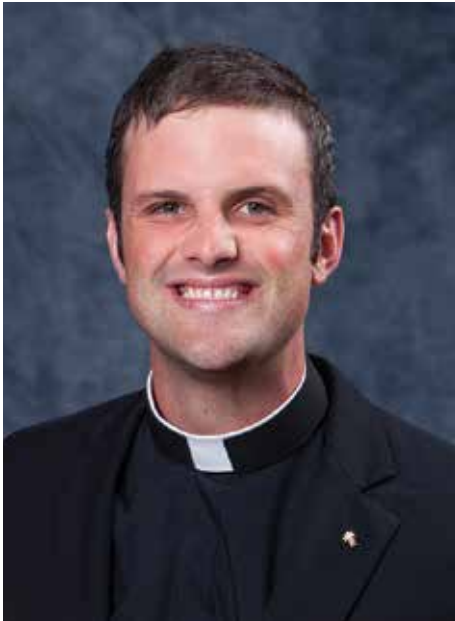
REV. COLIN JONES '14
(ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS)

What have you been up to since SJV?

I entered SJV in 2010 after high school and have since been in seminary in Rome at the North American College, at a parish in Wayzata, and back on staff at SJV. Currently, I'm a doctoral student at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and serve as SJV's Rome Formation Assistant, helping coordinate their semester abroad experience.

What has it been like living in Rome—both as a college seminarian and now as a priest—through these past two conclave experiences?

There were all these “last things” before Pope Benedict XVI's retirement—his last audience, his last Mass, the last day of his papacy. It was a mourning process but different since we all knew this was coming. We just lived at St. Peter's during those February and March days of 2013, constantly there for different events.



I was excited, obviously, for Pope Leo XIV, but it was even cooler for me to see it through the eyes of the seminarians. They were able to experience it all like I did 12 years ago.

Tell us about meeting Cardinal Prevost in November 2024.

He visited the Irish College at an ongoing formation night where we'd have Mass and dinner together as a community. Most weeks, we'd have a guest invited to give a talk or Q&A. When I heard his name at “Habemus Papam,” I'd met him and knew who he was. That was absolutely incredible.

How do you make sense of this transition between popes?

Popes come and go, bishops come and go, pastors come and go, rectors come and go. Not to say these people aren't important—we're links in a chain, and we all have a unique work the Lord has given to us. But at the same time, the fact that these people come and go shows that God is bigger than all of it. The Holy Spirit is working despite our finitude and weaknesses.

Being the pope is essentially an impossible job with the rapidity of communication and everyone wanting his comments on everything—and not just at the theological level but even in the world and politics . . . I get stressed just thinking about it! Continue to pray for him and have a charity and gentleness toward him. We really have to keep Jesus at the center of everything.

How did your time at SJV prepare you for this chapter?

The emphasis on prayer. I'm realizing how much I need to continue to fight to pray a Holy Hour; it's not automatic. Also, the culture of authentic masculinity and fatherhood is very much still part of my heart. Even though being a spiritual husband and father by studying in Rome isn't what I imagined in my priesthood, this is what the Church imagined for me. SJV gave me that sense of “Your life is not about you. It's time to put away the boyhood of ‘Let me just do what I want to do’ and become a man.” It's a daily choice to receive the mission from outside of myself and make that mine.

Best part of fall?

Play-off baseball.

Currently reading?

Moby Dick by Herman Melville.

OUR DEVELOPING STORY

I have been blessed by many opportunities to raise dollars for non-profits over the past 20 years. I have been part of campaigns that transformed organizations and part of last-ditch efforts to save non-profits. Each organization had a great mission, and they all had some loyal donors.

The logical question to ask is “Why do some non-profits fail while others prosper?”

I do not have the wisdom to answer this question for all organizations, but I have had ten months to witness what has been happening at Saint John Vianney and why it has been so successful:

Our mission of forming Men in Christ, Men of the Church, and Men for Others has remained the same, but Fr. Kelly and his team have taken the very best from previous rectors, building a model that continually looks to innovate how they can best serve the 115 young men in the building. In addition, Fr. Kelly has been strategic about putting his team of priests together. Each priest brings a different skill set which benefits the seminarians in a unique way.

Fundraising has been brisk over the past four years. The campaign to transform the chapel and the entire building was completed ahead of schedule and completely funded. The operational funding required to keep pace with the needs of our priests and seminarians continues to grow, but our loyal benefactors have responded generously.

From the moment you walk through our front door, SJV’s vibrant culture is palpable. You experience the sacredness of what we profess as Catholics when attending Mass with the seminarians. You experience



the humility of our formation staff when speaking to our priests. You experience the gratitude of our benefactors who are overjoyed to support our work of forming this next generation of holy priests and fathers.

As you can tell, I am very excited to be a part of the team at SJV. Our biggest development challenge over the next few years is keeping pace with the priests and seminarians who continue to raise the bar for us. What a fantastic challenge to face! Your continued support of our events and this year’s annual appeal will ensure SJV continues to prosper.

God bless,

Jack Kelly

Jack Kelly
Interim Director of Development

Please scan the QR code for giving options.



Stay in Touch

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

Dede Leininger
dleininger@sjvseminary.org



WITH GRATITUDE



Phil Roeser (left) pictured with board member Pat Kocourek

Phil Roeser is a longtime friend and benefactor of Saint John Vianney College Seminary. For years, he served generously on the institutional advancement committee of SJV and The Saint Paul Seminary, and he was instrumental in founding the Vianney Cup Golf Tournament.

Phil was also part of the leadership team which helped guide the mission of our Virtuous Business Leadership program. In three short years, Phil has played a significant role in creating a team and atmosphere which focused on relationship-based fundraising while installing a development structure to enable our mission to flourish.

Phil leaves behind him a team that is both prepared and empowered to do great things.

We wish him well, and may God’s blessings continue to follow Phil and his family.



SAINT JOHN VIANNEY
COLLEGE SEMINARY

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage

PAID

Saint John Vianney
College Seminary

2115 SUMMIT AVENUE
MAIL #5024
ST. PAUL, MN 55105-1048

sjvseminary.org



PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR SEMINARIANS

·TU·ES·FILIUS·MEUS·DILECTUS·IN·TE·COMPLACUI·

115 "REASONS FOR YOUR HOPE"