

CONTENTS

4-5

SNAPSHOTS

6

Rector's Corner

Very Rev. Eurel Manzano '11 Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

7

SERRAN PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

8

Praying in Advent: O Antiphons

Rev. Mr. Matthew Jewell '24

Diocese of Austin

9

MINISTRY WITH HOUSTON'S HOMELESS

Mr. Caleb Krischke '25 Diocese of Victoria in Texas

10

A LIGHT IN DARKNESS:

FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

Dr. Thomas Harmon *University of St. Thomas*

12-13

A HEART THAT CONTINUES TO BEAT:

SUMMER AT ST. MARY'S SEMINARY

Rev. Mr. David Ramirez '24

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

14-15

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Rev. Evan Simington '17

Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter

16

In Memoriam: Fr. Mark Dunne

VERY REV. JOHN GOMEZ, J.C.L. '09 VERY REV. HANK LANIK '11

VERY NEV. HANK LANK 11

Diocese of Tyler

17

ALUMNI UPDATES

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Cover: The Coronation of the Virgin by Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez, a print of which hangs in the Beran Library at St. Mary's Seminary.

This publication was written, edited & photographed by the students, alumni, faculty & staff of St. Mary's Seminary & University of St. Thomas. Additional photography provided by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston & the Diocese of Tyler.



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of St. Mary's Seminary is to accompany discipleship and configuration stage seminarians in their discernment of a call to the Roman Catholic priesthood in Texas and across the country, and to form holy, virtuous, competent, and compassionate Roman Catholic priests.



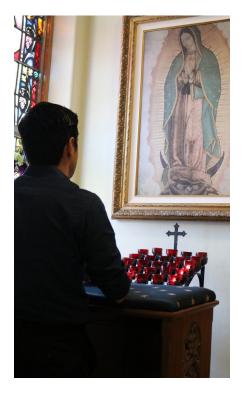
























Dear Alumni & Friends of the Seminary,

Greetings in the Lord! As we look forward to the coming of Advent and Christmas, it is a humbling thing to look back on what has felt like a brief moment and realize how much has transpired since the end of the last formation year. It seems like not too long ago we were celebrating a flurry of ordinations and associated festivities, getting word of first priestly assignments, and looking forward with excitement, and not a little trepidation, to the arrival of a new group of men who would pass through our gates in pursuit of the Lord's call in their lives.

Suffice to say, that new cohort of seminarians has not only crossed our gates but has filled our halls and classrooms with evangelical zeal, lively faith, and a wide array of gifts that have made these months of the new formation year a great joy. Our days are spent in the navigation of certain responsibilities, ministries, and commitments - some of which you will hear more about in these pages - and the plumbing of the depths of our own hearts. In traversing the terrain of this human heart made by and for God, an activity which can be as beautiful as a sunset over the Hill Country and as treacherous as Houston freeways, each man at St. Mary's grows in his awareness of the Father's passionate love for him and of his capacity to be a true image of Christ in the world.

It is my fervent prayer that as we follow the guidance of our bishops in forming men after Christ the Good Shepherd, we will also realize with quiet joy the great privilege it is to witness the awe-inspiring work of priestly formation in our midst. The Gospel demands that we equip our seminarians with the practical skills they need to preach effectively in a rapidly changing landscape. But it also demands that we remind them of the riches already lavished upon us in the sacraments and the intimacy with God made available to us through the wounded heart of the Savior. It is this confidence in the Father's love that animates the vibrant activity of our seminary and allows our men to be heralds of Good News.

Please know of my gratitude for joining me in this prayer and for supporting the mission of St. Mary's in so many practical ways. Entrusting you and your loved ones to the powerful intercession of Our Blessed Mother the Queen of Peace, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Very Rev. Eurel Manzano Rector, St. Mary's Seminary

SERRAN PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

O God, who wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, grant we beseech You, through the intercession of Blessed Virgin Mary, ever Virgin, Saint Joseph, her spouse, Saint Junipero Serra, and all the saints, an increase of laborers for your Church, fellow laborers with Christ, to spend and consume themselves for souls, through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever, Amen.

Praying in Advent: O Antiphons

REV. MR. MATTHEW JEWELL '24, DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

RO CRAS. In Latin this means "tomorrow (cras), I will be (ero)." This comes from the reverse acronym of the Latin O Antiphon titles found in the Liturgy of the Hours, the official prayer book of the Church, at the hour of evening from December 17-23, O Sapientia, O Adonai, O Radix Jesse, O Clavis David, O Oriens, O Rex Gentium, O Emmanuel, respectively.

More familiarly, these antiphons are known through the hymn O Come O Come Emmanuel, which also makes use of each of these titles for its verses. Now, whether the author of these antiphons, which were in use from at least the eighth century, intended to construct them in such a way as to create this acronym, I cannot say. But it communicates, along with the antiphons, a two-fold meaning: One, we are told that someone is coming, and two, that we should understand who is coming.

The O Antiphon titles originally come from the book of the prophet Isaiah, which St. Jerome termed as the "fifth gospel" due to its numerous prophecies and language about the future messiah. These titles give us a summary of what the Jewish expectations were of the Christ figure, as well as a perennial

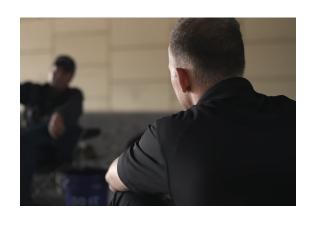
reminder for Christians afterwards: He is Wisdom (Sapientia), Lord (Adonai), Root of Jesse (Radix Jesse), Key of David (Clavis David), Radiant Dawn (Oriens), King of the Nations (Rex Gentium), and most importantly, Emmanuel, God with us.

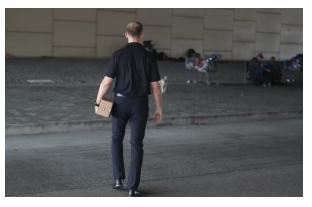
Then we arrive to Christmas day. Imagine how much preparation goes into the reception of the pope at a particular place. We make meticulous plans for an event such as the pope's visit because we know who it is that is coming, and rightly so; the pope is the representative of Christ here on earth. However, the same should be true for the coming of our Lord, and even more so, albeit in a spiritual way.

At the feast of Christmas, at every Holy Mass really, "there is something greater here" than the pope. We must make enough room for him in our inns. The O Antiphon chants help us to achieve this goal. They are the ancient way of preparation.

Consider joining St. Mary's Seminary in meditating on these chants, which for so many years have given our Church the correct disposition to welcome our Savior, Jesus Christ. Together, we will be able to say truthfully, "Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel!"









Ministry with Houston's Homeless

Mr. Caleb Krischke '25, Diocese of Victoria in Texas

y pastoral ministry this year is providing spiritual nourishment to Houston's homeless population. This ministry is coordinated through St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Kane Street in downtown. When Fr. Victor Perez mentioned that he needed somebody to continue a bible study program for the homeless on Wednesdays, my gut reaction was to say no. This feeling of unease only increased when I feebly mentioned to Fr. Victor that I might be interested in that ministry.

Growing up in rural Texas, I haven't had much interaction with homeless people, and, though I've been living in the city for

some years now, I was still uncomfortable.

Going into homeless ministry for the first time was difficult in its own right. I had to take a large step out of my comfort zone. But what was immediately apparent when I began talking to these men and women was that they are just normal people! They are not much different from me. For many of them, the only difference was that they caught a bad break.

Talking to a few them, I was delighted to learn their stories. One man told me of his stint in the Vietnam War. Another man explained to me

the inscrutable weather patterns that hover over Houston. While my previous discomfort had not totally gone away, I was able to enter into this ministry with an open heart, knowing the common brotherhood that we share.

I believe the mission of our ministry is very simple. We want to provide for these men and women the confidence to know that God loves them, that the Father sent His only begotten Son into

> the world to save us from our sins and to give us a way to be together with Him forever in Heaven, and furthermore, that God has established His Church through which he dispenses his mercy.

Homeless ministry has helped me realize that God is mercy itself.

> We hope that by the weekly reading of the bible together, these men and women may be fed spiritually just as they are fed physically by the food that St. Joseph's offers. Homeless ministry has helped me realize that God is mercy itself. His mercy is so great that even when I am acting as a cause of God's mercy, God returns the favor by speaking to me through these homeless men and women - through their experiences, through their keen insights into life, through the love that they show even when they have nothing! I thank God for including me in this ministry, and I ask Him to continue to show me how to serve.

A Light in Darkness: Faith Seeking Understanding

Dr. Thomas Harmon, University of St. Thomas

n a famous formulation, theology is faith seeking understanding. Unlike other religions, which usually understand themselves in the first instance to be some version of divine law, Christianity first comes to sight as a matter of the mind: the subject matter of faith is a word that must be understood. Even the highest calling of Christians, charity—and especially the love of God and neighbor in God—depends on faith because no one can love what he does not know.

But understanding can be hard, even on the normal level of interpersonal communications in our everyday lives. Unlike most of those instances, misunderstanding revelation has the most serious implications because our salvation is at stake.

While theology has other purposes, its first purpose is to make sure that we use our minds to the best of our abilities—assisted hopefully by the grace of the Holy Spirit and nourished by prayer and sacrament—to understand what God wants to convey to us.

Every age has its special challenges in understanding the faith that we receive from the Church, and so the Church requires theology for that task, along with the aid of the Church's magisterium to discern faithful theology. It is especially important for the Church's pastors to have a theological formation, since they are the ones to whom the Church looks for leadership in teaching the faith and translating the Christian message into a way of life that responds sensitively but courageously to the particular challenges of contemporary life.

But theologians do not come about either by accident or through an automatic process. They must be educated. I am honored to help in the task of providing a theological formation to our seminarians, to help them to develop a scientific habit that will serve them well in their ministry.

Theological study is not usually the first thing seminarians look forward to in their formation, but increasing numbers of men discerning the priesthood in recent years have begun showing up already convinced of how crucial it is.

It is perhaps clearer today than in prior decades what a distance there is between the Church and her doctrines and the secular culture and its doctrines. In previous times it might have been possible to take for granted foundational agreement on mores or even a certain amount of intellectual overlap.

If that was ever true, it is obvious that it is not any more. The task of theology in the formation of the Church's pastors is therefore felt to be more urgent—as it is! As we enter a period of decline in Western civilization, the Catholic faith—especially grasped accurately, deeply, and theologically—as ever provides a light in the darkness.



The 6th edition of the Program of Priestly Formation notes that the seminarian is to pursue theology as a response to the questions of the human condition and in relation to the larger mission of the Church.

Specifically, the PPF states: "Intellectual formation through the study of theology enables priests to contemplate, share, and communicate the mysteries of faith with others. In this way, it has an essentially pastoral orientation" (267). As seminarians, we don't study theology just for the sake of studying; rather, we seek the truth because the doctrines of the Catholic Church are medicine for the human souls we are called to serve.

With a beginning and ending in faith, we study theology, "seeking ever deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries," for the salvation of our brothers and sisters.

-Rev. Mr. Romeo Garcia, Jr. '25 Diocese of Brownsville



REV. MR. DAVID RAMIREZ '24, ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON

It is difficult not to despair and lose hope in the "future of the Church" with the dramatization and glamorization, often by the media, of the challenges the Catholic Church has had to face in recent years, especially when it comes to the issue of the declining number of priests in the Church.

While there is indeed a great need for more vocations to the priesthood, as is especially visible in our rapidly growing local Church in southeastern Texas, we do have reason to hope in the Lord, who never ceases to provide for His Church.

This past summer, I had the opportunity to help Fr. Richard McNeillie, Vocation Director and Director of Seminarians of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, with the Archdiocese's Propaedeutic Program for new seminarians. This gave me the opportunity to experience the Seminary during those long summer days.

As the hustle and bustle of the school year came to a close at St. Mary's Seminary with the culmination of the spring semester and ordinations to the priesthood for the class of 2023, and the Seminary seemed to briefly come to a slumber-like stillness, we were quickly reawakened with the breath of life of the men who found in St. Mary's a home of summer discernment and formation.

The summer began with the reunion of about fortyfive seminarians for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston as we gathered together to catch up after another school year, celebrate, and pray for the men from our Archdiocese who would soon be getting ordained priests on June 3.

All the while, St. Mary's was gearing up to host the new seminarians and discerners for a full summer of formation and prayer, during which time these young men were able to experience many aspects of the life of the seminarian, with an emphasis on community life, spiritual formation, parish experience, and continued discernment. The Seminary also hosted the Diocese of Austin, including many of their priests and seminarians already in formation, along with a number of their new seminarians in their own Propaedeutic Program.

Along the way, we saw four separate Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter discernment retreats for the diocesan priesthood, which called to the Seminary about sixty high schoolers and forty young adult men for days of fraternal camaraderie, discussion on the diocesan priesthood, and fruitful prayer as a means

to explore, begin in earnest, or continue their discernment process.

The summer ended with the annual Convocation Summer of the seminarians of the Archdiocese, culminating in Mass with our shepherd, Cardinal DiNardo. We all had the opportunity to spend

time in discussion with the Cardinal, and he gave us his words of wisdom, sending us off to begin another academic year.

The life of the seminary doesn't really stop with the conclusion of the academic year in May. After a couple of weeks of rest, the seminary quickly comes back to life with different activities and events. It truly is hopeful to see the number of men that walk through the halls of St. Mary's Seminary, from the moment they begin thinking about the priesthood with their first discernment retreat to the moment they take their last steps as seminarians approaching the altar for ordination. At each point of the journey, they are preparing for the holy priesthood of Jesus Christ and a life of service in his Church.

Throughout the ages, Christ has remained faithful to his promise to be with us always, and he continues to provide shepherds for His Church.

While there is certainly much to pray for, the Lord gives us abundant opportunities to rejoice. Throughout the ages, Christ has remained faithful to his promise to be with us always, and he continues to provide shepherds for His Church, priests dedicated to bringing Christ to his people.

And, with the very generous support and the faithful prayers of God's people through the years, our St. Mary's Seminary—the heart of the Archdiocese, under the patronage of the Blessed Mother—has been a place of discernment and formation for the many generations of priests of this vibrant local Church; and it continues to witness and form the faithful "yes" of the men still answering the call of Christ to follow Him.





And as I was encountering this convergence of these two aspects, my intellectual life and my faith life, I was confronted with a critical moment of crisis:

What am I going to do with my life?

I began to experience with this enlightening a really profound sense in which I felt the Lord calling me to an opportunity to serve the Church, bringing that service and faith life together. And that's where I first began my conversation with my college priest, and I said, you know, I think I might be called to the priesthood. That was all as an Episcopalian.

And then the more and more that I began to think critically about the reality of the Episcopal Church and the issues going on at the time, although I kept wanting to pursue the idea of ministry, I was confronted by certain challenges of the Episcopal Church. So, even as I entered into and began seminary formation as an Episcopalian, I was on the road to becoming Catholic.

What finally brought you here to St Mary's Seminary?

During my time in an Episcopal seminary, the Ordinariate was being established. So, I came into full communion and confirmation as a Roman Catholic at a new Ordinariate parish without a clear understanding yet of what that would mean for me. I was actually the first Ordinariate seminarian to formally be accepted and enter into formation with a Catholic seminary as a celibate.

Tell us a little bit about your background.

My name is Father Evan Simington. I was born in Marietta, Georgia, baptized and raised in the Episcopal Church. Having gone to church with my parents, I was very well exposed, very well formed in the life of the Episcopal Church.

But even though I was immersed, it was only when I went to college that I really started to consider the significance of my faith.

What came first, discernment to the priesthood or your conversion to the Catholic Church?

That's a great question because my movement from the Episcopal Church to Catholicism began really with this emergence or this awakening of my ownership of my faith. When I went to college, intellectually I was growing into this enlightenment, this awareness of what I personally think and believe. At Florida State in Tallahassee, Florida, I began thinking more and more about what I believe and why. Which in turn lead to the question, should I keep practicing this faith, or should I just let it fall by the wayside?

After your time at an Episcopal seminary, how did St. Mary's prepare you for the Catholic priesthood?

The formation at St. Mary's was very concrete, giving me the theological, spiritual, and mental framework of the Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council, especially regarding canon law. As an Episcopalian, canon law is perceived as like the last line; for Catholics, it informs day-to-day life.

St. Mary's also connected me to a network of Catholic friends, the seminarians and priests here, who would support me and share their Catholic life experiences. Those relationships continue to be very formative.

Entering your first assignment after ordination, what lesson from St. Mary's stood out to you?

Fr. Lockey always emphasized to me that I was in formation to become a Catholic priest. That's it. Even if my situation was unique, at the end of the day, I am simply a diocesan priest, cooperating in the same vineyard of Christ's one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.

How do you feel about being back in Houston?

Very, very excited! My first assignment was at St. Alban's Catholic Church in Rochester, NY and then, for the past 3 years, I served at St. John Henry Newman Catholic Church in Irvine, CA. So, I've been all over the United States, and I'm happy to be back in Texas.

I had such a positive experience at St. Mary's, and Houston is of course the location of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Walsingham. I've been telling people that I'm still pinching myself to see if I wake up.

Will this be your first experience as chaplain?

Yes, and honestly it is pretty intimidating! I will be working closely with Bishop Steven Lopes and splitting my time between the Cathedral of Our Lady of Walsingham and Cathedral High School.

Do you have any ideas about how you might foster vocations in your new role as chaplain?

I want to embody a very relatable type of example of the priesthood, to help the high school students see that there is a calling and a responsibility of holiness, but not one that draws you out of the world. I think Cathedral High School is committed to leading the students to the universal call to holiness that will help them to discern their vocation.

I also hope the daily opportunity for Mass, confession, and conversation are some of the very intentional ways of keeping that active question of discernment in their minds. Maybe God is calling them to marriage, maybe consecrated religious life as a sister or holy orders as a man. But with the gift of the sacraments, we are all always called to holiness.

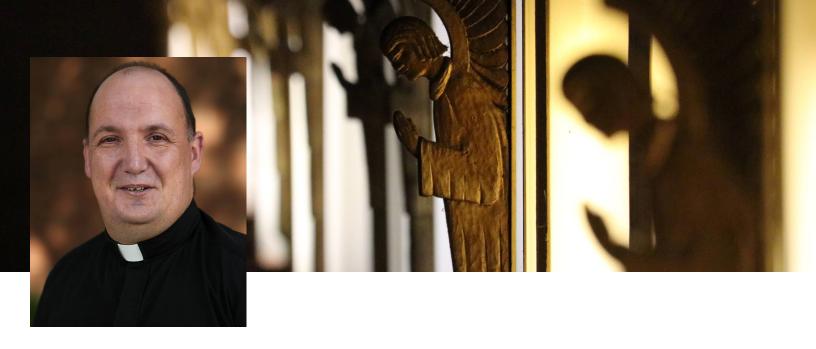
What advice do you have for seminarians?

There is so much afflicting our current age; the seminarian has to be willing to give himself completely over to formation to become a magnetic witness, to draw people out of the sadness, the malaise, the dysfunction of the world. The seminarian has to be willing to be molded into a well-integrated man, so we can show the world what redemption looks like in Christ: a human being, most fully alive.

In your new ministry working with young people, what do you see in them that gives you hope for the future of the Church?

I see that these high school students want to be committed to their Catholic faith. I'm seeing them in the classroom and in the hallways, in Mass and in confession, on the sports field and interacting with each other. Their Catholic faith is not reserved to the four walls of the church but impacting every part of their life.

Our Catholic young people today are like a city set on a hill. They might be a minority, but they are a bright witness in a secular culture, ready and willing to give a defense for the hope they have within them.



In Memoriam: Fr. Mark Dunne

Very Rev. John Gomez J.C.L. '09 & Very Rev. Hank Lanik '11, Diocese of Tyler

Tyler, passed away on Aug. 4, 2023, in Tyler at age 50. Fr. Mark was born on Aug. 19, 1972, in Carrick-on-Shannon, County Roscommon, Ireland and studied for the priesthood at St. John's Seminary and St. Patrick College before coming to the United States in 1999 and completing his studies at St. Mary's Seminary in Houston.

Fr. Mark was ordained to the priesthood on March 9, 2002, by Bishop Alvaro Corrada, SJ, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Tyler.

His priestly service included parochial vicar of St. Anthony Parish in Longview (2002-2007), administrator of Holy Family Parish in Lindale (2007-2011), priest-in-residence at St. Mary Parish in Longview (2011-2012), parochial vicar of St. Matthew Parish in Longview and administrator of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Gilmer (2012-2013), pastor of St. Theresa in Union Grove and St. Francis of Assisi in Gilmer (2013–2020), and pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Mt. Vernon (2020-2023). He also served as a member of the Presbyteral Council, Dean of the Northwest Deanery, and Chaplain at UT Health Center at Tyler.

Fr. Mark was a priest dedicated to his vocation and to the people that he served. He made time to get to know his parishioners and took good care of them, placing a great priority on each person and their pastoral needs.

In particular, Fr. Mark had a sincere love for visiting the sick and was well known at the local hospitals for spending time with anyone who needed ministry. He also loved serving at the Pines Catholic Camp and parishes around his own. He was a good, dedicated Dean of the Northwest Deanery of our Diocese and cared for the priests of that area.

Although he was from Ireland and always enjoyed his visits back there, Fr. Mark considered the thirty-three counties of the Diocese of Tyler his home, and he made a profound impact on the parishes in which he faithfully served. He truly was a wonderful man, a great priest of the Lord, and a good friend to have. He loved the Lord and His Holy Church in a deep-Irish way. He was not perfect, as none of us are, but he cared for God's people. He is in our prayers and in the prayers of many people who had the blessing of meeting and knowing him. May the soul of this good and faithful servant of God rest in peace.

ALUMNI UPDATES

Class of 1973

 Golden Jubilee—50th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination

Class of 1983

- Ruby Jubilee—40th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination
- Rev. Tom Rafferty, appointed Director, Ministry to Priests for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, July 2023

Class of 2001

- Very Rev. Pete Elizardo, V.F., appointed Pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Beeville and Sacred Heart Mission in Pettus. He will retain his duties as Director of Divine Worship in the Diocese of Corpus Christi
- Rev. Donald Zeiler, appointed Vice Rector of Holy Trinity Seminary in Irving, TX, July 2023

Class of 2016

 Rev. Tony Franco, appointed Pastor of Queen of Peace Parish in Brownswood, TX, July, 2023

Class of 2017

 Rev. Evan Simington, appointed Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Walsingham and Chaplain of Cathedral High School in Houston, TX, July 2023

Class of 2021

 Rev. Chad Henry, appointed Administrator of St. Matthew the Evangelist Parish in Houston, TX, August 2023

Class of 2023

- Rev. Luke Prihoda, appointed Parochial Vicar of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Schulenburg, TX, June 2023
- Rev. Ryan Kapavik, appointed Parochial Vicar of Holy Family of Joseph, Mary & Jesus Parish in Victoria, TX, June 2023
- Rev. Matthew Krusleski, appointed Parochial Vicar of Sacred Heart Parish in Conroe, TX, July 2023
- Rev. Zachary Muldrow, appointed Parochial Vicar of St. Martha Parish in Kingwood, TX, July 2023
- Rev. J Serrato, appointed Parochial Vicar of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Manvel, TX, July 2023
- Rev. Thomas Swierc, appointed Parochial Vicar of St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church in Corpus Christi, TX, July 2023

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