

REGINA CLERI

ora pro nobis



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For more information about St. Mary's Seminary,
please visit our website at
www.smseminary.com.

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Mary's Seminary, with additional photography
contributions from Archdiocese Galveston-
Houston Archives & Records, Diocese of Austin,
and St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in The
Woodlands, TX.*

A photograph of a man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a white clerical shirt, holding a large, ornate golden monstrance. The monstrance features a central circular window and several smaller circular windows with religious figures. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and a candle.

The Rector's Corner

Dear Alumni and Friends of the Seminary,

Greetings in the Lord! After a brief hiatus of sorts, it is a joy to greet you once again through this newsletter under the patronage of Mary, the Queen of the Clergy, the Regina Cleri. As this formation year comes to a close and the faculty and seminarians begin summer assignments and ministerial activities, we thank you for your faithful support and renew our commitment to priestly formation in service to the local Church. We are also keenly aware of the tremendous legacy of faith upon which we stand, and by which we can look forward to a future filled with hope.

Appreciation for this legacy arises spontaneously in our hearts and minds these days—especially as we celebrate the 175th Anniversary of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and the 75th Anniversary of the Diocese of Austin. The recent death of Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza, a key figure in the life of faith in the state of Texas and indeed the Church in the United States, also gives us pause to reflect on how far we have come, and how far we have yet to go, as a community dedicated to pastoral charity and missionary discipleship.

As we continue to experience in this part of the world a period of intense growth and the proliferation of challenges that this time and place offer us, we can find in these natural moments of reflection not only great consolation, but also the inspiration to witness to the Gospel with ever greater zeal.

This is manifest in our robust engagement of new frontiers of human experience—just as the faith of our forebears drove them to navigate the wild frontier lands

of Texas, under numerous political flags, in order to nourish and extend the Catholic faith, so too we must engage in our own day those limits of human language, culture, and even digital media where the Gospel is no less needed. In the pages that follow, I hope you will find inspiring accounts of how members of our seminary community, both past and present, are worthy inheritors of so great a legacy of evangelistic strength and boldness.

You, too, play a vital role in sustaining this distinctive heritage when you live your faith with a desire to carry the Good News across new thresholds. In carrying out priestly ministry in a way which invites authentic Eucharistic revival, enhancing apostolates with a missionary focus, or simply trading the anxieties of self-absorption for the serenity that comes with a renewed confidence in Christ's final victory, this legacy of faith continues to grow. Know of our desire to encourage you in this noble task and of our deep gratitude for your spiritual and material support. May Mary, the Queen of the Clergy continue to guide us all to that imperishable inheritance that stands ready to be revealed in the final time.

Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, Sancta Dei Genetrix!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fr. Erel Manzano".

Very Rev. Erel Manzano
Rector

Snapshots





Introducing Rev. Matthew Súniga, Vice Rector

VERY REV. EUREL MANZANO

Among the many blessings of this past year of formation, the seminary community certainly celebrates with gratitude the addition of its new Vice Rector and Director of Human Formation, Fr. Matthew Súniga ('18). While far from being a stranger to St. Mary's, having spent the entirety of his priestly formation on or connected to the campus, and even taking up residence here a few years ago during his assignment as Priest-Secretary and Master of Ceremonies to the Cardinal-Archbishop, this nevertheless marks a new phase in his relationship with the Seminary, as he now takes on several crucial responsibilities in the life of the house.

While proudly a priest of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, Fr. Súniga was born and raised in Central Texas, where the air is saturated with classic country and Tejano music and redolent with the fine aroma of no-frills barbecue served on butcher paper. There, he came to love the Sacred Liturgy through his frequent participation at Mass as an altar server. Thanks to the good example of his childhood pastor, he also became particularly interested early on in liturgical preaching.

He came to Houston as an undergraduate at the

University of St. Thomas, where he studied business and philosophy. After working in the community banking industry in the Houston area, he entered into a period of intense discernment and began priestly formation at St. Mary's Seminary in the fall of 2011.

Following his ordination in June of 2018, he began his priestly ministry as a Parochial Vicar at St. Theresa Parish in Sugar Land, Texas, where I had the privilege of serving as Pastor at the time. It was there that I was able to witness first-hand his great love for the Church, both local and universal, his fine skills as a preacher and administrator, and his keen sense of humor.

It was thus with great joy that I received the news that Cardinal DiNardo graciously assigned him here to St. Mary's Seminary this past summer, seeing the need for a Vice Rector possessing "strong pedagogical gifts, a joyful love of the service he renders and a spirit of collaboration" (Program of Priestly Formation, 442).

I can say with confidence that we have all benefitted greatly from these qualities and that Fr. Súniga's passion for the Church and her ministers will redound to great good for the Lord's flock.



Men of Grit

REV. MATTHEW SÚNIGA

I am tasked with sharing a little bit about myself and some thoughts on priestly formation at St. Mary's Seminary. By way of personal narrative and reflection, here goes.

The story of my priestly vocation is incomplete without retelling the stories of the many people who have shaped my life over the years. They are family members, friends, past and present co-workers and people in authority over me, clergymen, and laypersons. The figure that looms largest in the landscape of my vocation is the man who was my parish priest during my growing up years, the late Monsignor Fred Bomar (SMS, '60) of the Diocese of Austin.

Like me, Monsignor Bomar was a Central Texas native, one of two sons in a family of four, baptized in the Roman Catholic faith, educated by the Church, formed at St. Mary's Seminary, and ordained a priest. He was born in Luling, Texas on June 15, 1935, during one of the worst flash floods the region had known. Further north, the rains that day caused the Colorado River to breach its banks, inundating downtown Austin and the

area around the Texas Capitol.

Monsignor recalled his childhood fondly, but he referred to his experience of the Great Depression as the "unsentimental years," since the days were marked by very hard work and few comforts. Like other children in rural Texas, Monsignor and his older brother picked bean pods from mesquite trees to be bagged and sold to ranchers for stockfeed. The family needed the money.

He occasionally repeated to me what his mother often told him during those tough times: "The shoemaker's wife goes barefoot." Which is to say that no matter who you are, you must sacrifice in order to do what needs doing. It was the rigors of his upbringing that instilled in Monsignor a drive, determination, and resilience that coalesced into a personal quality that I call grit.

Despite his father's strenuous objections, Monsignor Bomar entered St. Mary's Seminary for the Diocese of Austin in the fall of 1953, and he never looked back. He had a goal; he knew what he wanted. He wanted to be a diocesan priest, so he undertook the Seminary's program

of formation and conformed himself to the challenging work set before him. He was ordained a priest by Bishop Louis Reicher at St. Mary's Cathedral in Austin on May 28, 1960, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The seminarian must be a man of grit, or to use the language of the Church, a man of fortitude. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that fortitude is "a moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good" (no. 1808). If priestly formation can be likened to a journey, then the path the seminarian walks will sometimes be filled with uneven terrain, unexpected turns, and unforeseen obstacles to be overcome.

The same can be said of the priest. The same can be said of any man or woman in pursuit of goodness, holiness, and their vocation in Christ. This reality is not necessarily an indication that something has gone wrong; it is simply part of the human condition.

One of my hopes for the men in priestly formation at St. Mary's Seminary is that they cooperate with God's grace to cultivate within themselves the virtue of fortitude as they engage fully in all dimensions of priestly formation.

In this age of social media and gleaming promotional campaigns for priestly vocations, it can be easy to view the life of the diocesan priest as one prolonged "mountaintop experience." Being a priest is not a drudgery, but like any vocation, in addition to the joys and highpoints, the life of a parish priest entails entering into some difficult situations, facing challenges, making tough decisions, and having crucial conversations.

The task of the formation faculty is to prepare our seminarians for the totality of the priestly life. A lively

sense of fortitude will keep them from wilting in the heat that they will encounter from time to time. To quote the hook of a popular country music song from the 1970s, "I beg your pardon, I never promised you a rose garden. Along with the sunshine, there's got to be a little rain sometime."

I am a diocesan priest today because the good example of Monsignor Fred Bomar lit within me the fire of aspiration. Like my father, he showed me what it is to be a man of God, a man of the Church, and a man of Christian charity. The church of St. Peter the Apostle Parish along Highway 71 in southeast Austin continues to be a small, humble, out-of-the-way place, but it was the place where I came to love the Lord Jesus, and his Church, and his liturgy.

The seminarian must be a man of grit, or to use the language of the Church, a man of fortitude.

Monsignor Bomar was a fine preacher, an astute administrator, an effective leader, a man of prayer, and the kind of guy you just wanted to be around. Yet, for thirty-nine years, with all his gifts, he was the pastor of a bunch of blue-collar families and retirees, and he loved us, and we loved him.

Monsignor was not well known outside our parish, except to the priests of the diocese. He once told me that he had been asked a few times to take on a larger parish, a more well-off parish, but he said no. He said he wanted to stay with us. That made me love him all the more.

When the men of St. Mary's Seminary are priests, I also hope that their parishioners aspire to be like them. Not for any fame, reputation, or skills that they might possess as priests, but for the depth and ardor of their love for the Lord Jesus, which makes itself evident in the quiet, unassuming, untiring way they carry out their ministry.

I hope they too will be men of grit.



Fr. Swift: Wisdom, Wit & Kindness

REV. RICHARD HINKLEY, S.T.L.

Among the highlights of the 2022-2023 Formation Year was the addition of the Rev. James Swift, C.M., to the Seminary Formation Faculty. Fr. Swift most recently had been serving as rector of Holy Trinity Seminary, Irving, Texas, and joined St. Mary's Seminary in the capacity of one of several in-house spiritual directors.

The Program of Priestly Formation 6th edition states: "Spiritual direction 'is one of the privileged ways of accompanying each seminarian in discerning his vocation.' Those who act in this capacity should be exemplary priests who are dedicated to the Church's service and to the ministerial priesthood. They should be wise, seasoned priests and should possess some formal training in spirituality and related areas of expertise."

All these qualities describe Fr. Swift aptly. Besides his years of experience in the field of the formation of men for the ministerial priesthood, Fr. Swift has contributed to community life at St. Mary's in a variety of ways, among them was that he took a key leadership role in organizing the three annual inter-seminary sports competitions: the Archbishop's Cup against Assumption Seminary, San Antonio, Texas; the Rector's Cup against Holy Trinity Seminary, Irving, Texas; and the Hellfant Classic Basketball Tournament, the Pontifical College Josephinum, Columbus, Ohio, at which numerous seminaries compete.

Fr. Swift was already known by a significant portion of the house when he arrived, given that many of the

men knew him as their rector while they attended Holy Trinity Seminary for their first few years of formation. This not only aided Fr. Swift's own introduction to the community, but was also a benefit for the men, knowing that this additional faculty member was someone whom they already respected and whose company they already enjoyed.

During the annual retreats, which are held during the first weeks of January, Fr. Swift organized and led the retreat that was provided for the men on Pastoral Year and held at St. Mary's Seminary. In addition to these projects, throughout the year Fr. Swift has been a reliable and industrious member of the team of spiritual directors who meet with their seminarians every two weeks to discuss their spiritual progress in formation. His wisdom, wit, and kindness are on regular display, from the ambo to the refectory and everywhere in between.

All the faculty have benefited greatly from his considerable experience, and we are all very grateful that he has taken up residence here at St. Mary's. As a member of the Congregation of the Mission, Fr. Swift is no stranger to the vocation of education, especially of those aspiring to the priesthood.

While he frequently and facetiously refers to his own struggles to understand the concept of "holy indifference" as encouraged by St. Francis de Sales, the community of St. Mary's Seminary is anything but indifferent about its pleasure to have spent this year with Fr. Swift and its hope to enjoy his presence for years to come.





Spes Gregis

REV. JAMES SWIFT, C.M., S.T.D.

Following in the mission given to us members of the Congregation of the Mission by St. Vincent de Paul, I have spent nearly all my forty-four years of Vincentian priesthood connected in some way to seminary ministry, most of which has been in priestly formation at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis, where I taught theology and liturgy.

Besides teaching, I also served as a spiritual director for seminarians. Even during the years of serving as the Provincial Superior and Ordinary of my Vincentian Community, I was deeply involved in re-shaping our Chicago-based Vincentian seminary as well as our seminaries in Kenya, at that time a mission of my Province.

Throughout the years, my seminary ministry has always been within diocesan seminaries, bringing something of our Vincentian charism to priestly formation, whether in Saint Louis, in Dallas, and now in Houston.

I'm particularly happy to come to St. Mary's Seminary. When this seminary moved from La Porte to Houston in the early 1950s, the administration of the seminary was given to the Vincentian Fathers. We continued running the seminary for thirty years until 1982, when we

withdrew and the Archdiocese took over. So, I'm happy to be bringing back to the seminary the Vincentian presence, especially during this 175th anniversary year of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

Being a seminary priest is markedly different from being a parish priest. What we miss in terms of directly serving the People of God, in baptisms and marriage preps, in parish Sunday Masses and hospital calls, in visiting the schools, we more than make up for in helping form the future pastors of Christ's beloved people. The greatest blessing of this unique ministry for me has been the influence of the seminarians themselves on my own priestly formation.

Serving at St. Mary's is a breath of fresh air for me. After nearly twenty years of top leadership in the Church, I am enjoying being free from administration and being able to give all my attention to the *spes gregis*, Latin for "the hope of the flock," the traditional term for seminarians.

The future of the Church is indeed hopeful because of the kinds of men who continue to respond to Jesus' invitation to follow him and participate in his own priesthood.

The future of the Church is indeed hopeful!



Archbishop Fiorenza

Fr. Troy Gately worked with Archbishop Fiorenza in multiple capacities throughout the years, but they met for the first time when Fr. Gately was a seminarian and Fr. Joseph Fiorenza was the chancellor of the then Diocese of Galveston-Houston. One might assume that a chancellor of a diocese would be a remote figure from the daily lives of the seminarians, but Fr. Gately recalls how, as chancellor, Fr. Fiorenza made it a point to be on the grounds of the seminary. “From a seminarian standpoint, he was chancellor of the diocese, and so of course he was known to all the seminarians. But the interesting thing was, he also knew who we were.”

Fr. Gately continues, “Over the years, as I got to know him, and then later worked with him, I realized that he had an incredible memory and a mind, and that he remembered people throughout the diocese. He remembered when he met them, if he met their parents, if they were parishioners from his first assignment as a priest. He just made these connections literally all over the city, all over the state, and all around the country. I can’t tell you how many stories he remembered of people from fifty years ago. It didn’t matter if he hadn’t seen you in forever, it was like last week.”

According to Fr. Gately, Archbishop Fiorenza was often on campus at St. Mary’s to celebrate Mass, and he made it a point to attend board meetings. Fr. Gately remembers one specific meeting that he attended as seminarian

student representative. “Fiorenza wanted to know specifically about the spiritual life and the intellectual life of the seminarians. And then he did a fascinating thing: Fiorenza pulled out his own rosary from his pocket, and he said, ‘I hope they know what this is for. I hope they know how this thing works.’ It was a little bit dramatic and definitely a challenge.”

Msgr. Borksi, who was later named rector of the seminary, concurs. “Devotion to the Blessed Mother was very important to him, and he wanted to be sure that the rosary was part of the community prayer life of the seminary.”

Dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to her spouse, his namesake St. Joseph, Archbishop Fiorenza’s inner spiritual life was reflected in the

way he connected to everyone he encountered: deeply relational. He spent time in prayer, and he also spent time in conversation with people. “It wasn’t necessarily an overt piety; but whether it was with the Lord, the Blessed Mother, his brother priests and bishops, or his people, relationship was key.”

Fr. Gately recounts that, despite Archbishop Fiorenza’s elevation, first to bishop and then later to archbishop, he still remained Fr. Joe, a priest who simply cared for his people. “He loved the Church, and he truly, truly loved the people of this Archdiocese.”

*We have to do our part
to build the kingdom of
God every single day. He
took that to heart.*



Fiorenza: A Legacy of Faith & Mercy

All the stories you read about his life, from his tireless dedication to social justice and fight against racism, including his participation in the Selma to Montgomery marches with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to his promotion of genuine renewal within the Church, are “icing on the cake. They were the result of the substance of the man and of his core values: faith and mercy; every action stemmed from that.”

Fr. Gately remembers one time at lunch at the Chancery, when someone brought up the popular bumper sticker that says: Perform Random Acts of Kindness. “Archbishop Fiorenza just responded with, ‘I hate that.’ So of course, everyone sort of laughed nervously, and then we asked him to explain why.”

His answer was simple: “We cannot do random acts. We do deliberate acts.”

For Archbishop Fiorenza, charity is an integrated force in the life of the Church, demanded of us by our Catholic faith and our understanding of the intrinsic dignity of every human person. And that reality necessitates a deliberate response.

He knew he had a responsibility, given to him by God, for the people of this Archdiocese, but that was never a burden for him. He was worried, even at times deeply grieved, by the suffering and injustices that he witnessed, both within and outside the Church, but he was never

afraid to act. “There were many things that gave him great concern, but he was never paralyzed by fear.” He instilled and expected that same attitude in his brother priests of this Archdiocese. “We couldn’t say, well, I can’t act because I don’t know what the Bishop wants. We knew: our Bishop wants us to act.”

When considering the legacy Archbishop Fiorenza left for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and for St.

Mary’s Seminary, which he considered at the heart of the diocese where future priests are formed, Fr. Gately suggests looking at his episcopal motto: Thy Kingdom Come. “He meant it. He had a sense of optimism that came from faith, Christ will be victorious, but he also believed that we have to do our part to build the Kingdom of God every single day. He took that to heart.”

In particular, it’s what Archbishop Fiorenza would want and expect from our seminarians. The opportunity to work for the Kingdom of God and to

serve those entrusted to us is a privilege; we have to do our part not to squander it.

He believed that the priesthood is a gift, but one that must be earned and worked for. “He recognized that it’s a big Church and there’s room for many. He saw that, and he appreciated it, but he wanted smart, good, holy priests. He wanted solid, solid men, who aren’t afraid to get out there and work.”



En Español: St. Mary's Seminary Spanish Program in conjunction with University of St. Thomas

MR. JOSHUA SVAJDA, ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON

Walking into beginner's Spanish class, I did not know what to expect. I was afraid that I would not learn much Spanish and not be able to follow what was taught. My first thought: I will fail the class. Despite all of this, I took a deep breath and walked into the room. The first couple of weeks in beginner's Spanish was marked by uncertainty. I had taken Spanish classes at my previous seminary, St. Joseph's Seminary College, but did not retain much. I lacked the confidence to speak and understand even basic words of the language.

A great fear of mine was learning vocabulary. It is one thing to memorize tense charts, but the vocabulary was a real fear of mine. The summer before entering Spanish classes, I went on Spanish immersion in Puebla, Mexico. However, for various reasons even those classes were difficult. I had to face the truth: I am not skilled in picking up languages easily.

But I knew I had to try— if not for myself, then for God's people.

The semester began with the very basics. We spent the next few weeks learning the Spanish alphabet and basic numbers. These were not as difficult as I remembered them from previous classes. We then

moved on to tenses, starting with the present. I had to admit that the present tense was not too hard, as all I had to do was focus on the tense chart. However, I soon realized that memorizing the vocabulary was going to be a challenge.

Luckily Profesora Coscio was skilled in repetition. She taught us by using simple Spanish words many times. The first several weeks were taught in mostly English with some words in Spanish. The first word I remember memorizing fully was *pedir* and all its conjugations. For some reason, the Lord gave me the gift of learning irregular verbs better than regular ones. We then moved on to the preterite and imperfect tenses. As the semester passed, I began learning at a pace that I never thought I would. One reason for this was the homework and quizzes. These were difficult for me. The homework took a lot of time to complete each week and was not an easy task, but the time spent helped me learn the tenses and vocabulary, especially because they were built on repetition of vocabulary.

The second semester was similar. Returning from Christmas break, I was not sure what to expect as I knew the class would only get more challenging. I soon found out, however, that the tenses were becoming easier to understand; the

vocabulary was becoming more ingrained into my mind.

One experience that assisted me was ministry at a predominantly Hispanic parish, Our Lady of Fatima in Galena Park. There I was teaching confirmation students. While some of the students understood English, this was a good chance for me to test what I was learning in class in front of others who spoke Spanish. The reality was that most of the parishioners did not speak English, so I had to adapt quite quickly. The language that I had learned in Spanish class this past year had become applicable in a parish setting. This gave me a chance to experience the reality of Spanish in a parish.

In class, we not only learned the language but also Hispanic cultures. It might be easy to fall into the trap of thinking each country speaks Spanish the same, but in learning about different cultures, I realized just how unique each Hispanic country is. My experience this year in beginner's Spanish class was a challenge in that learning another language does not come naturally for me. However, I have seen much growth in myself and am now more confident in speaking basic Spanish and committed to learning more so that I can better serve the Lord's people.



Formed by the Mother of God to Serve Her Son

REV. MAURICIO RODRIGUEZ, DIOCESE OF BROWNSVILLE

Mary has many titles; for example, we might call her Ever Virgin, the New Eve, and the Star of the Sea. And yet the most beautiful title is also the simplest: Mother.

In his homily this year on the Feast of Mary, Mother of God, Pope Francis said: “Let us not take her divine motherhood for granted! Let us allow ourselves to be amazed by God’s choice, who could have come into the world in a thousand ways manifesting his power and, instead, willed to be conceived in full freedom in Mary’s womb, wanted to be formed for nine months like every baby and, in the end, to be born of her, to be born of a woman. Let us pause to contemplate and meditate because there is an essential characteristic of the mystery of salvation here.”

Although the role of Mary is crucial in the life of every Catholic, she is present in a particular way in the daily life of each seminarian. As a mother, Mary cares for her children, the children of the Church. She is always interceding on our behalf. In every baptized person, she sees other Christs. She carries her children, just as she carried Christ when he was incarnated in her womb.

Every seminarian should entrust himself to Mary as he enters seminary, so that she might form and raise him, just as she formed and raised Christ from the moment of the Incarnation to his early years before he entered into the age of maturity. Mary has a special vocation;

indeed, she has a unique role in the history of salvation, which no one else had before her nor will anyone ever have after her, and it is through the lens of her vocation that we can find our own. Mary the Immaculate is the perfect instrument of the Holy Spirit, the perfect instrument of her Son.

As seminarians, we ask her intercession, in both private prayer and when we come together to pray the rosary as a community or honor her with Marian processions in the company of family and friends, so that we, although imperfect, might also be instruments of the Holy Spirit, bringing the salvation of her Son to the world.

That is why Mary is necessary in our lives. We need to have a strong devotion to her to be faithful disciples. She helps us to be more united with Jesus, and she will help us to love Jesus more. Marian devotion should lead us to a strong sacramental life in the Church.

She as the New Eve will help us to be united to the New Adam. Mary cooperates with Jesus Christ in bringing more souls to the divine reality, and she helps her Son in bringing more children to the Father to be transformed, to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. St. Louis de Montfort explains this powerful reality: “Be persuaded, then, that the more you behold Mary in your prayers, meditations, actions and sufferings . . . the more perfectly will you find Jesus Christ, who is always with Mary, great, powerful, operative, and incomprehensible.”

Media in Ministry: A pastor

In my time at St. Anthony of Padua in the Woodlands, TX, my pastoral year has contained all the hallmarks of parish ministry: serving various liturgies, teaching many classes, attending riveting meetings (and some not-so-riveting meetings), and spending quality time with the people of God. All that said, one unique aspect of this parish that I would like to dwell on is its use of online communication and media.

St. Anthony's is a large suburban parish in a highly educated and white-collar area. People come from all over the world to work here, mainly in the energy business. Because so many people move to this area for their jobs, one crucial work of this parish is to cut through the isolation that is so easily felt and to build a community.

It is very easy to feel alone here, and people need a home. This is especially the case given the rise of social media, which readily provides a false sense of community to the world.

One way that St. Anthony's has faced this challenge is by treating the internet as a mission field. If we are to "meet people where they're at," and they're on their phones, then we must go to their phones. St. Anthony's has a stellar communications team, and the media manager pumps out videos every week. Some are serious, such as the weekly "Clergy Corner" that works to explain catechetical points and changes that might be happening in the parish. The Sunday homily is also posted separately from the livestream video so that it can be listened to on its own.

Some videos are sillier, trying to make St. Anthony's feel welcoming to families (and to make the parish stand out amid the Protestant megachurches of the area). These usually highlight a ministry of the Church with some

humor involved, like a press conference of two dads dropping their kids off at our daycare program.

The parish also makes long-form content, operating two podcasts for the edification and education of the people. These podcasts introduce staff members and their roles, teach about tougher Church teachings, provide theology lessons on solemnities, and give our people something to listen to on their commutes.

In working with our media team here, I have noticed two things. First, we have an odd goal—to use social media to get people off of social media. The incarnational aspect of the Church and her life of prayer are what we are always inviting people into. The community here is vibrant, and

helping people integrate—either after moving for work or coming back from COVID—is the main goal of our online presence.

Second, I recognize that our people do listen to and watch our content. Moms have told me, "I watched the video on confession, and now I know to just say my sins and how many

times I did them." Dads have said, "I listened to that podcast on annulments, and now I can help my friend out."

Given the rise of more and more cellphone reliant infrastructure, it seems clear to me that social media will not be going away, despite its obviously destructive and dangerous aspects. I would rather our people hear the voice of the Church than that of something else. There is an obvious issue that hangs over all of this. Budgeting for high quality video and audio production is a challenge. I recognize that many, if not most, parishes will not be able to produce this kind of content. Even if a parish cannot

I would rather our people hear the voice of the Church than that of something else.

al year perspective

BY MR. JOHN CLARK,
ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON

budget for a media manager (or fundraise for one), every parish can look at its media presence.

When people look up a parish, they go to two places—the website and Facebook (and maybe Instagram for the younger crowd). When looking at each of these pages, there are some simple questions that can be asked: Is the messaging consistent? Do we share interesting but unhelpful Catholic content that clouds our key information (i.e., Mass times, parish announcements, and the like)? Do we take advantage of other well-produced content, such as that made by Ascension, St. Paul's Outreach, and Word on Fire? Do we have access to FORMED?

Without a plan, our media is not very helpful. Consistency and clear goals regarding media go a long way, even if the parish cannot produce much of its own content. Just as

we would always like our receptionists to be smiling and our office foyer to feel comfortable, so too should our media help people feel invited to the parish.

I'd like to close with a note on prayer. Some Saints stand out as obvious intercessors for this type of ministry, and before practical work, it would be good to ask for their intercession. The studio at St. Anthony's is named for St. Maximillian Kolbe, who ended up in Auschwitz because his ministry by pamphlets and radio was so strong. He stands in a long line of great figures for this sort of work.

I would call on a few of them now: St. Paul, St. Clare, St. Maximillian Kolbe, St. André Bessette, St. John Paul II, Bl. Carlo Acutis, come to our aid and help this new media be yet another means of spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.





Alumni Spotlight: Fr. Henry Cuellar, Jr.

1. Can you tell us a little about your background to get started?

My name is Father Henry Cuellar, Jr. I am a priest of the Diocese of Austin and currently the pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Manor, Texas. I am an alumnus of St. Mary's Seminary in Houston, ordained on June 23rd, 2018. So I turned five years old as a priest on the 23rd of this year.

2. Can you share briefly about your discernment experience?

The majority of my discernment was post-college. I had been working as a social worker for four years and helping families in homeless situations, and it was then that I felt that there was something more that needed to be done, because I was taking care of their temporal needs, but I couldn't go into their spiritual needs as a state employee.

I had thought about the priesthood a few times

throughout my teenage years, when I was like 14, 16, 18 years old, but at the time, it just didn't click. I went to college and got my BSW, and it was during that time that I was able to hear God's call. I think it was because I was seeing the needs of the people, and I wanted to be able to lead them and shepherd them to the true good.

3. How did your time at St. Mary's prepare you for the priesthood?

You know, I think what St. Mary's allowed me to do was to have a very practical application of all things, which is tremendously helpful, because if we're stuck in the classroom all the time and everything becomes about academics, we will lose our true calling, right? It's not only about being a theologian. It's about being a shepherd; it's about being a father.

St. Mary's really implanted in my heart the true need of being a pastoral presence.

4. Out of all the academic courses you took

during your time in seminary, which St. Mary's Seminary class are you most grateful for?

My favorite class would actually be multiple classes: the scriptural classes I took with Dr. Manzo. Her classes, the way she would explain things, were just amazing. She would open Scripture and help us understand the context, the spiritual implications. But then she would also give us the practical things. I still talk to her every once in a while, and I just tell her, you know, Dr. Manzo, you have no idea, but you really prepared me for preaching.

Now as a priest, sometimes I'm preaching and I'm repeating these things I learned back in Scripture class, and people come up to me after Mass and say, "Fr. Henry, I had never thought of that."

And I just say in response, "Well, I didn't think about that either until someone taught me in seminary!"

5. What lesson did you learn during your first assignment?

I think the one lesson I learned during my first assignment was this: don't be afraid to make mistakes. A little chaos is going to happen. Real life is messy!

6. Now as pastor, describe the process of building and then finally consecrating the new church building.

So first of all, this is my first rodeo as a pastor! It felt like I was trying to take a drink from a fire hydrant; there was just so much to learn, and we had a lot of money to raise. But I found that, for myself and my parishioners, it was helpful to look at challenges as future blessings.

I always want to be an encouraging father, and my parishioners were so generous in giving. We had breakfast sales and our first ever gala, which was a huge success. I kept saying, we're one family, and we're working together for the same thing.

We raised the money and broke ground, and I would go weekly to check on the property and communicate back to the parish. It was stressful, I will not lie! But I reminded myself, we are a family, and I'm the head of this household, and I want to be sure our house is built.

This is what a father does.

Finally, on January 21st, 2023, we had our consecration of our church. When it got to the point where I, as the pastor, go with my Bishop and consecrate the four walls, I did two, and he did two, and I had tears in my eyes. It was emotional because I'm thinking to myself, who am I? Who am I to have such a beautiful gift to be able to do this?

7. What advice do you have for seminarians and brother priests?

My advice to them would be: try not to close yourself off to real experience. You have to learn how to shepherd people, and the only way to do that is to allow yourself to enter into their experience; not take on their experience, but be empathetic and enter into the experience. So I think we have to really pray with that cliché saying, what would Jesus do? Because the reality is, that's what we're called to do, right? To be Jesus.

8. What do you see happening today that gives you the most hope for the future of the Church?

In the seminarians and young priests, I see this deep, deep desire to live in truth. We all want to stop preaching platitudes; we want to bring the truth of Christ to His people. I also see seminarians who are truly men of God and men of prayer. If we want to bring the Truth, we have to be in prayer.

When I look at my brother priests and the younger seminarians coming in, I can see that, and it gives me hope.

**ORDINATION TO THE
PRIESTHOOD**

VICTORIA – MAY 13, 2023
Reverend Luke Prihoda
Reverend Ryan Kapavik

BROWNSVILLE – JUNE 3, 2023
Reverend Mauricio Rodriguez

GALVESTON-HOUSTON – JUNE 3,
2023
Reverend Matthew Krusleski
Reverend Zachary Muldrow
Reverend J Serrato

CORPUS CHRISTI – JUNE 17, 2023
Reverend Thomas Swierc

**ORDINATION TO THE
TRANSITIONAL DIACONATE**

VICTORIA – MAY 1, 2023
Deacon Joseph Blackburn

GALVESTON-HOUSTON – MAY 13,
2023
Deacon Luis Armas
Deacon Viet Nguyen
Deacon David Ramirez

AUSTIN – MAY 20, 2023
Deacon Matthew Jewell



Rev. Ryan Kapavik
Diocese of Victoria in Texas



Rev. Mauricio Rodriguez
Diocese of Brownsville



Rev. Matthew Krusleski
Archdiocese of Galveston-
Houston



Rev. Zachary Muldrow
Archdiocese of Galveston-
Houston



Rev. Luke Prihoda
Diocese of Victoria in Texas



Rev. J Serrato
Archdiocese of Galveston-
Houston



Rev. Thomas Swierc
Diocese of Corpus Christi

Farewell, Graduates

REV. MR. JOSEPH BLACKBURN, DIOCESE OF VICTORIA

Describing the mission of priests in his work entitled *From the Depths of our Hearts*, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, “The priest must be on the watch. He must be on his guard in the face of the menacing powers of evil. He must keep the world awake for God. He must be the one who remains standing: upright before the trends of the time. Upright in truth. Upright in the commitment for good. Standing before the Lord must always include, at its depths, responsibility for humanity to the Lord, who in his turn takes on the burden of all of us to the Father.”

Brothers, as you embark upon this great priestly mission, our prayer for you is that Our Lord will grant you the graces of fortitude and perseverance to stand watch before Him and to abide in Him (Jn 15:4), so that you

may guard the flock against evil and faithfully minister the sacraments, shepherding God’s people to their eternal abode in heaven, where they will live forever in communion with all the saints and with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

As you depart from St. Mary’s Seminary and begin your first assignments in your respective dioceses, know that your brothers here in formation will continue to pray for you every day, and we ask you to keep us in your prayers, that we might discern our vocation in holiness and one day be found worthy to join you in the mission as fellow workers in the vineyard.

St. Joseph the Worker, pray for us!





Godspeed Msgr. Borski & Dr. Manzo

REV. MR. DAVID RAMIREZ, ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON & REV. LUKE PRIHODA, DIOCESE OF VICTORIA

To Dr. Manzo and Monsignor Borski, we thank you for the many years you have dedicated to educating and forming seminarians here at St. Mary's.

Dr. Manzo's time here has been more than a responsibility of passing along factual information, but rather it has been an intentional guiding us in finding the Lord speaking to man, to the world, and to us in the particular moments of our lives. She taught us that the Lord always has something to speak to us, from the wisdom books to the prophets, to the gospels to St. Paul.

Dr. Manzo also taught us that we must have the humility to be still and listen to each encounter with Scripture and not allow it to go by without changing our lives so that we can preach it to our people honestly and with a clear conscience. Her fervor and zeal for the word of God and for the faith is contagious and has been nothing short of inspiring.

Indeed, Dr. Manzo's very decision to step down from teaching to go and take care of her mother is merely a confirmation of how she has strived to live out the

gospel, because it is always Him we are listening to and imitating. Dr. Manzo, please know that we will miss you, and we will be praying for you to continue following Christ in this next journey of your life.

We also send our heartfelt thanks to Msgr. Borski, who has faithfully served St. Mary's Seminary in numerous capacities for so many years and shared a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to our community from his experience as a priest. Within his fatherly presence, Msgr. Borski also used his sense of humor and offered many quips, witty remarks, and wisecracks to enliven the moment with shot of joy or offer a pick me up.

We trust that the parishioners of St. Faustina in Fulshear, TX will continue to benefit from Msgr. Borski's priestly heart and appreciate his increased presence as he takes up residence there. The St. Mary's Seminary community looks forward to seeing him back around campus as a spiritual director. Msgr. Borski, this has been your home for many years, and you are always welcome to return to St. Mary's Seminary to share your experience, insight, and wild game.





2023-2024 Upcoming Events

August

- Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Procession—August 15, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

October

- Second Annual Rector's Dinner—October 4, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

November

- Alumni Day Mass & Dinner—November 9, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.

December

- Lessons & Carols—December 3, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

February

- Presentation of the Lord Mass & Procession—February 2, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.
- Rector's Cup—February 23-24, 2024
- Come & See Weekend—February 23-25, 2024

April

- Solemnity of the Annunciation Marian Procession—April 8, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

May

- Closing Mass, May Crowning & End of the Year Celebration—May 5, 2024, at 9:30 a.m.

To read more about our seminarians and how you can support St. Mary's Seminary, please scan the QR code or visit us at www.smseminary.com/give.



Alumni Updates

Class of 1973

- Golden Jubilee—50th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination

Class of 1983

- Ruby Jubilee—40th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination

Class of 1993

- Fr. Miguel Solorzano, appointed Pastor of St. Bartholomew in Katy, TX, August 2022

Class of 1995

- Rev. John Ouellette, appointed Pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Skidmore, TX and Saint Francis Xavier Mission in Tynan, TX, March 2023
- Fr. Stephen Nestrta, pastor at Holy Trinity Parish in Cornhill, TX, awarded the Memorial Medal of the Czech Bishops' Conference, May 2023

Class of 1998

- 25th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination

Class of 2011

- Very Rev. Victor Perez, Pastor of St. Joseph and St. Stephen Parish in Houston, TX, appointed as Episcopal Vicar of the Central Vicariate, a member of the Presbyteral Council, and an Archdiocesan Consultor, February 2023

Class of 2018

- Rev. Matthew Súniga, appointed Vice Rector of St. Mary's Seminary, Houston, TX, August 2022
- Rev. James Dorman, appointed Parochial Vicar at St. Rita Parish in Dallas, TX, July 2022
- Rev. Andrew Dinh, appointed Associate Pastor at University Catholic Center, University of Texas in Austin, TX, July 2023

Class of 2020

- Rev. Michael Cellars, appointed Pastor of St. Theresa the Little Flower in Summerville, SC, January 2023
- Rev. Justin Cormie, appointed Administrator of Our Lady of Fatima in Galena Park, July 2022
- Rev. Eduardo Rivera, CSB, appointed Chaplain at University of St. Thomas in Houston, TX, July 2023

Class of 2021

- Rev. Chad Henry, appointed Parochial Vicar of Holy Family Parish in Galveston, TX, October 2022
- Rev. Wayne Ly, appointed Parochial Vicar of St. Ignatius of Loyola Catholic Church in Spring, TX, February 2023

Help us stay up to date and better keep in touch by sending us your updated contact information and any recent assignment changes to cheryl.castillo@smseminary.com

Snapshots





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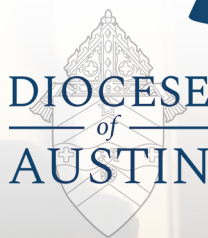
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF
GALVESTON-HOUSTON

Celebrating

175



years of faith



75TH
ANNIVERSARY

