

ORACLE



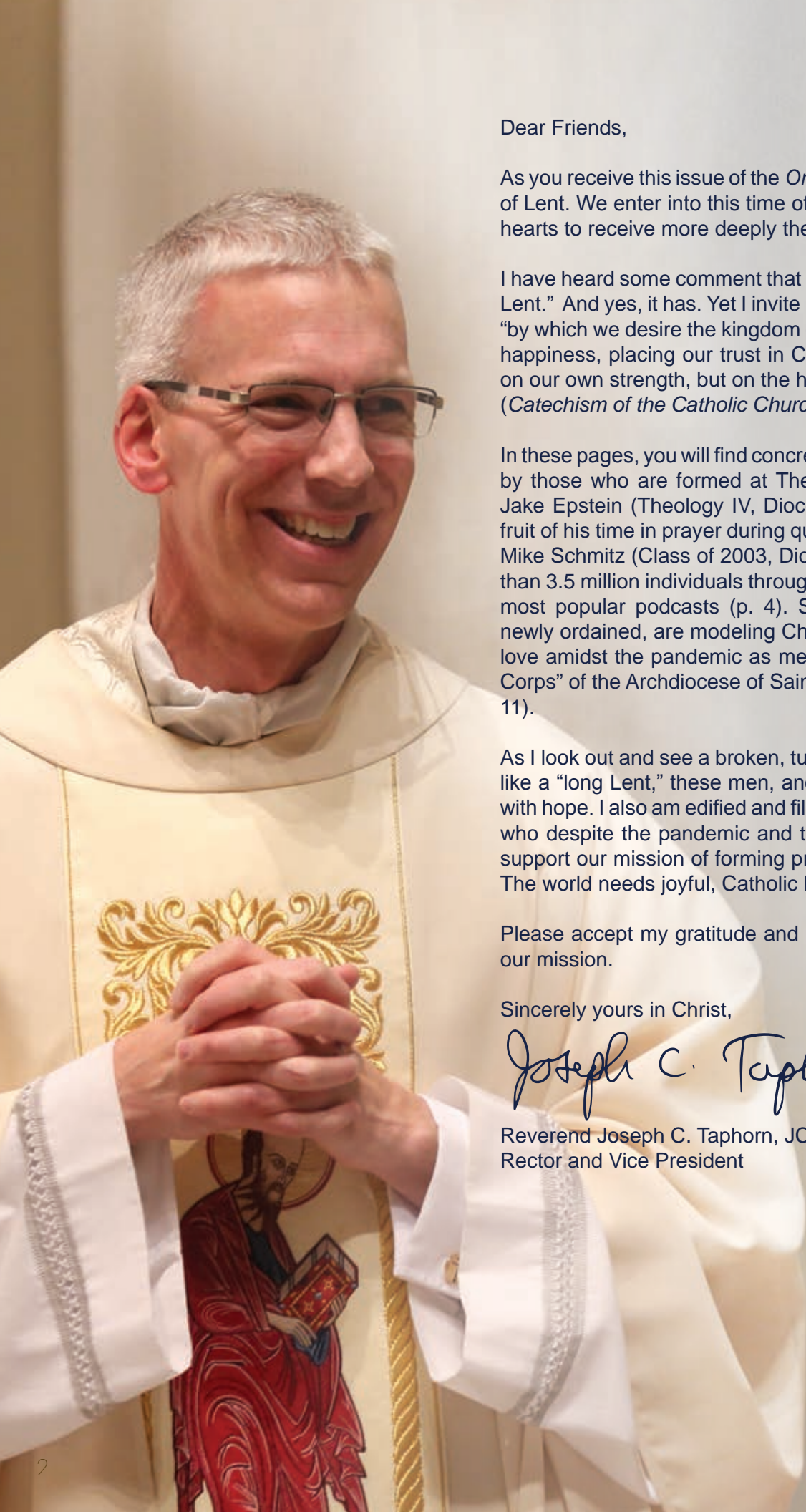
SAINT PAUL SEMINARY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY | WINTER 2021

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Dear Friends,

As you receive this issue of the *Oracle*, we are well into the season of Lent. We enter into this time of purification to help prepare our hearts to receive more deeply the gift of new life at Easter.

I have heard some comment that the past year has felt like a “long Lent.” And yes, it has. Yet I invite us to hold fast to the gift of hope, “by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help and grace of the Holy Spirit” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1817).

In these pages, you will find concrete expressions of our lived hope by those who are formed at The Saint Paul Seminary. Deacon Jake Epstein (Theology IV, Diocese of Des Moines) shares the fruit of his time in prayer during quarantine (p. 3). Alumnus Father Mike Schmitz (Class of 2003, Diocese of Duluth) is leading more than 3.5 million individuals through the Bible in one of the nation’s most popular podcasts (p. 4). Several alumni, including some newly ordained, are modeling Christ’s courageous and sacrificial love amidst the pandemic as members of the “COVID Anointing Corps” of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (pp. 10-11).

As I look out and see a broken, tumultuous world, after what feels like a “long Lent,” these men, and all those we form here, fill me with hope. I also am edified and filled with hope by so many of you, who despite the pandemic and turmoil in our world, continue to support our mission of forming priests, deacons and lay leaders. The world needs joyful, Catholic leaders now more than ever.

Please accept my gratitude and prayers as you stand with us in our mission.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Joseph C. Taphorn

Reverend Joseph C. Taphorn, JCL
Rector and Vice President

LESSONS FROM Quarantine

BY DEACON JAKE EPSTEIN
DIOCESE OF DES MOINES

Quarantine came at a bad time for me. I was in the middle of final exams, I had books ready to be picked up at the library, and I had house responsibilities that needed to be finished. Plus, I had stocked the refrigerator to cook dinner for my brother seminarians. Then my COVID-19 test came back positive, and everything was put on hold for 10 days.

St. Paul tells us that “We know that all things work for good for those who love God,” even those things we do not desire.

As I moved a few bags into my temporary room, I had heroic images of how I would be on retreat during a busy end-of-semester, how I would experience God in new ways like the hermits in the desert, and how I would unite my sufferings in my quarantine room with Christ.

I did not do those things.

Thanks to the marvels of technology, my classes and papers and meetings followed me seamlessly into quarantine. In prayer, I mostly moped or thought about what the others might drop off for dinner outside my door. I did suffer a little, but mostly just from feeling cooped up. I felt sorry for myself in an embarrassingly un-Christlike way.

Still, all things really do work for good for those who love Christ.

In quarantine, I learned some humility. I learned to receive the abundant charity my seminary brothers offered to me. This came in the form of food deliveries, errands, book drops, phone calls, and words of encouragement shouted through the door.

I also learned, in new ways, that I am weak. I learned I am a creature of habits I had not known that I had. For example, I do not work well at the same desk where I also eat, go to class, read, talk to my family, and watch Mass.

Most importantly, I learned, once again, for the one millionth time, that in my weakness Christ remains faithful. The Divine Physician came to me when I was sick with COVID-19 and sick with a frustrating lack of heroism. He came to me in my half-hearted prayer and study. He came to me with His strength when I was most frustrated by my weakness.

He made those 10 days work for good for this man who tries to love God.





Ordinations and Installations Celebrated Mid-Year

On February 9, the Most Reverend David Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay, installed 16 Theology I seminarians as Lectors, marking the second of four distinct rites that lead to and culminate in ordination to the priesthood. This class represents five dioceses from Minnesota and Iowa.

“Being installed into the Ministry of Lector is one of many affirming milestones along the way in priestly formation,” said Derek Gilde from the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. “It means I am being called to respond to the Church’s continued invitation to grow as a faithful servant and proclaim the living Word of God in a new and public way.”

James Herzog, a seminarian from the Diocese of New Ulm, shared his joy of being an instrument of God in his new role: “As I prepared to receive this ministry, I reflected on the many hours I have prayed and studied the scriptures, formally and informally. I am greatly humbled that God wants to use my voice to bring these same scriptures alive, no longer for my personal use, but for the People of God.”

Brent Bowman, Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Peter Brown, Duluth
Luisito Cabrera, Des Moines
Philip Conklin, Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Francis Floeder, Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Derek Gilde, Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Alexander Hall, Saint Paul and Minneapolis
James Herzog, New Ulm

Timothy Lyngdal, Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Michael Panka, Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Alex Rasset, Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Daniel Ruprecht, Saint Cloud
Kevin Soenneker, Saint Cloud
Ryan Sustacek, Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Nicholas Vance, Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Christopher Yanta, Saint Paul and Minneapolis

On December 26, 2020, Nicholas Stark was ordained a Transitional Deacon by the Most Reverend William Joensen, Diocese of Des Moines, at his home parish of St. Pius X in Urbandale, Iowa.

Photo credit:
America Duran/Diocese of Des Moines



The Most Reverend John Folda, Diocese of Fargo, ordained Kevin Lorsung a Transitional Deacon at the Cathedral of St. Mary on December 19, 2020.

Photo credit:
Kristina Lahr/New Earth



**PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR NEW
LECTORS AND DEACONS!**



SPS ALUMNUS HOSTS NO. 1 PODCAST IN US

Written by Marketing and Communications Specialist John Stokman (UST Class of 2018) and Brant Skogrand (UST MBC Class of 2004) and published in the University of St. Thomas *Newsroom*, January 15, 2021. Revised for the Winter 2021 *Oracle*.

The No. 1 podcast in the U.S. might come as a surprise. It's not true crime, news or sports. Think instead of "The Bible in a Year," hosted by Father Mike Schmitz.

Within 48 hours of its Jan. 1 launch, Schmitz's podcast rocketed to the top of the Apple Podcasts chart. As of January 12, there have been more than 3.5 million downloads.

In "The Bible in a Year," Schmitz invites listeners to journey through the full text of the Catholic Bible in a daily podcast format. He uses multimedia Catholic publisher Ascension's *Bible Timeline Learning System* to structure each episode and welcomes the *Bible Timeline* creator Jeff Cavins, founding director of the Archbishop Flynn Catechetical Institute at The Saint Paul Seminary, onto the podcast for special guest appearances. Ascension, with whom Schmitz collaborates on the popular "Ascension Presents" YouTube channel, also produces the podcast.

"It reveals a lot about people's hunger," Schmitz told Fox 5 New York. "It reveals that it's the new year, and that people have a desire to make a change."

Each episode is approximately 20 minutes long and features Schmitz reading several chapters from Scripture followed by a short reflection.

Schmitz earned his Master of Divinity at The Saint Paul Seminary and was ordained a priest in 2003. Besides hosting the country's top podcast, Schmitz serves as the chaplain for Newman Catholic Campus Ministries at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

"One of the primary reasons why I wanted to create this podcast was because my own mind was being filled with a lot of chaotic voices. Some were wise, many were merely distracting," Schmitz said. "I think that a lot of people are tired of those same distracting and temporary voices. And they want what I want: to allow our hearts and minds to be shaped by something eternal – God's eternal Word."

The show's 365 total podcasts will cover every verse of the Bible. Cavins and Schmitz also are collaborating on bonus content.

"The Bible in a Year" is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and other podcast platforms, and through Hallow, a Catholic prayer app.



MEET

Mariah Mulderink

Wife. Mother. Graduate Student. Youth Minister. Marketing Consultant. Ireland Scholar.

If Master of Arts in Theology student Mariah Mulderink had a business card, all five titles would appear under her name.

In 2015, Mariah graduated with a degree in Catholic Studies from the University of St. Thomas. After working as a Youth and Confirmation Coordinator for more than two years at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Hastings, Minnesota, she investigated the Ireland Scholarship, a full-tuition award for recent graduates of the university pursuing a degree at The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity.

An information night led to an application which led to an offer she couldn't refuse: an opportunity to pursue a graduate degree in Theology at the seminary.

"Receiving this scholarship was huge!" she recalls. "I couldn't do graduate school without it."

Mariah enrolled in 2018, got married in 2019, and became a mom in 2020. Juggling evening and summer classes around home and work schedules continued with the support and encouragement from classmates and faculty members.

"Everyone really cares and understands," she says. "They know what is most important in life."

With a robust list of required courses, including Ecclesiology, Fundamental Moral Theology, Old Testament Literature, and the Eucharist, Mariah is grateful for the community that makes the journey possible.

Now enrolled in her last semester of classes, Mariah plans to complete comprehensive exams this summer. Soon she will add "MAT '21" to her long list of titles.

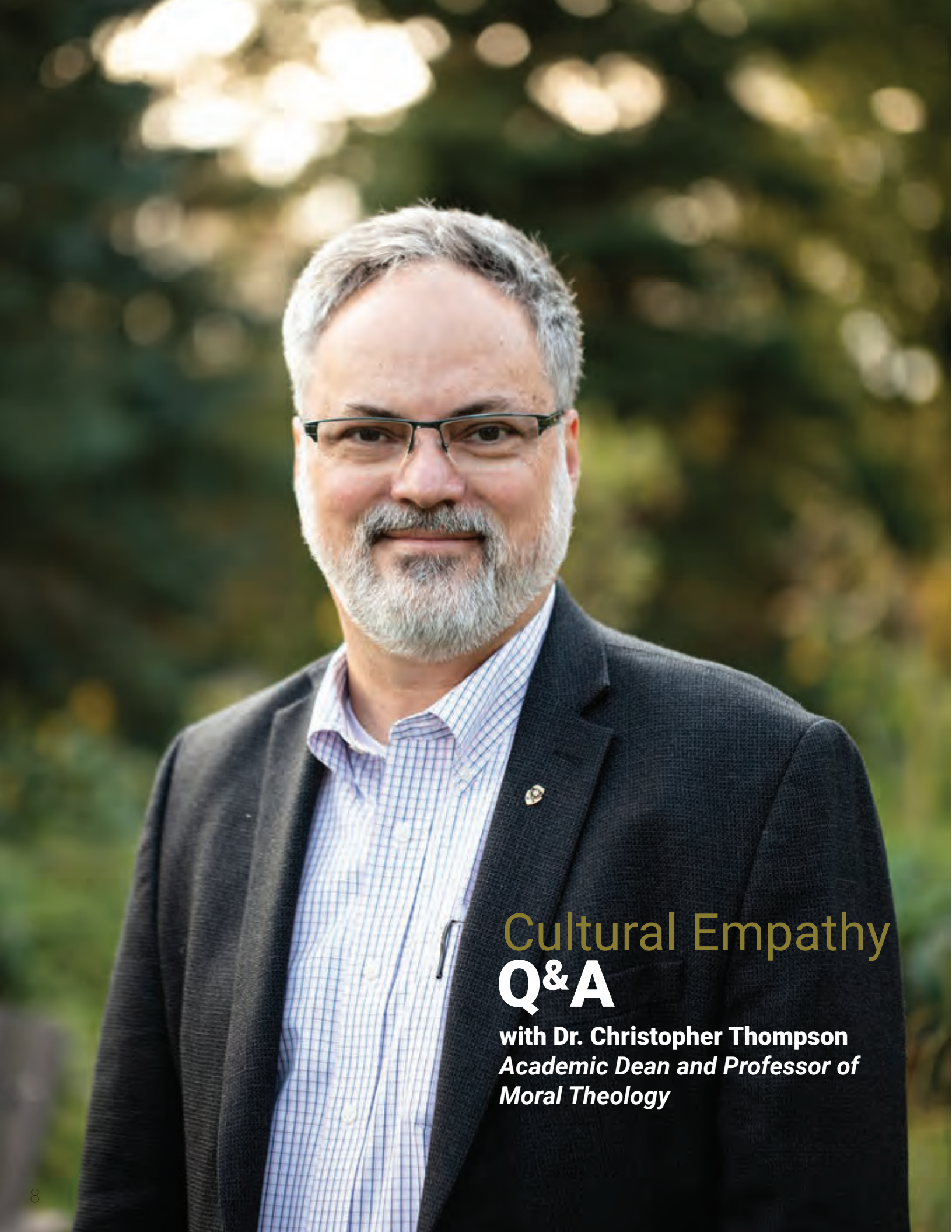
"No matter how I use this degree – as an employee, as a volunteer, or in my own home – it will be instrumental," she says.

The Ireland Scholarship

The Saint Paul Seminary and the University of St. Thomas were founded by Archbishop John Ireland, the third bishop and first archbishop of St. Paul. The John Ireland Scholarship honors his commitment to Catholic education and service to God's people by offering recent graduates of the university a full-tuition scholarship for the opportunity to pursue full-time graduate studies in any of the degree programs at The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity.

To learn more or to register for the Graduate Studies Information Night on April 13, contact:

Rosalinda Romportl, Recruitment and Student Services Coordinator:
(651) 962-5069 or rosa0024@stthomas.edu



Cultural Empathy Q&A

with Dr. Christopher Thompson
*Academic Dean and Professor of
Moral Theology*

Q: What is cultural empathy?

THOMPSON: Within the seminary community we understand cultural empathy to be the habit or capacity to enter into the experiences of others (i.e., from other cultural backgrounds) as they struggle to pursue a life of dignity and meaning. Of course, for us, that dignity and meaning is found in the encounter with the person of Jesus, but for many that remains a truth to be discovered or, in some cases, recovered.

The priesthood of Christ, the only means by which our fractured world is made whole, is a gift given to the entire community. Empathy is that first condition of evangelization, that first touch point in transformation. I cannot love those whom I do not know. Empathy is coming to encounter and know the other for the sake of love.

Q: Why is cultural empathy important?

THOMPSON: It is important because it is at the heart of the mission of the seminary – to develop joyful, Catholic leaders. Leadership does not mean being at the head of the pack; it means accompanying others on the journey toward a fulfilled life. Again, we believe that the answer to a fulfilled life has been graciously disclosed through the revelation of God's presence in Christ. Our future priests, deacons and lay leaders will need the skills to walk with whomever crosses their paths and engage in a dialogue of mutual discovery of the newness of the Gospel.

Q: How is cultural empathy applied at the seminary?

THOMPSON: It has been applied in so many ways over the years, but recently we have been working to become more intentional in our efforts to create moments of reflection and encounters with diverse cultures within our formation programs. This year we conducted an audit and identified more than 180 “inflection points” where empathy with another is a key feature of the experience. Not surprisingly, those points of contact have been largely intellectual in nature. We offer, after all, graduate degrees within our formation program. But it is critical for us to remember that we do not strive to produce graduates as much as men and women transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and thus eager to foster the faith-filled lives of those God puts in their paths.

Q: Can you provide a specific example?

THOMPSON: We have created a new Pre-Theology course called “Thomistic Epistemology: Empathy and Identity.” It applies St. Thomas Aquinas’ theory of knowing and loving to the pastoral challenge of serving in a diverse cultural setting. I am delighted to be a part of it and look forward to seeing its fruits.

Q: Are there plans to further integrate cultural empathy at the seminary in the future?

THOMPSON: Our audit allowed faculty and staff to share where they felt the issue of empathy was relevant in their work with men and women in formation. We did not judge or evaluate those claims but accepted them for what they were. This allowed us to see those places where we can celebrate and those where we can be invited into something richer.

ALUMNI SERVE COVID ANOINTING CORPS

For the past year, every industry across the globe has formulated and re-formulated their responses to the ever-changing needs of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes health care, education, technology, travel, agriculture, and manufacturing, to name a few.

In the spiritual sector, the Catholic Church turned to well-established plans laid out in the sacraments. Specifically, the quieter, less familiar sacrament of Anointing of the Sick became even more important when faced with a new virus that was more deadly among our elderly and most vulnerable.

Locally, the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis responded, and continues to respond, to the great need for this Sacrament of Healing by forming the COVID-19 Anointing Corps, a team of priests trained in the necessary safety precautions to offer the final sacrament to those dying during the pandemic.

Established last spring by Bishop Andrew Cozzens (Class of 1997) and coordinated by Fathers Joseph Bambenek and Paul Kubista (both Class of 2010), the Anointing Corps is made up of more than 15 priests who have donned their Personal Protective Equipment and administered the sacrament more than 860 times.* All are volunteers, and most are alumni of The Saint Paul Seminary.

“You never know, when you are in formation for the priesthood, where God is going to lead you,” Father Kubista said. “Generous priests, who seek strength from God, are following where He leads and are willing to anoint the dying under these new circumstances. That’s powerful.”

Powerful enough to answer a call or a text at any time of the day or night when someone is near death. In many cases, because of COVID restrictions, the priest might be the only one present when the patient takes his or her last breath.

In addition to the priests, the Anointing Corps is supported by volunteer nurse triage coordinators who arrange each visit, doctors who advise on process matters, and a prayer team of more than 2,000 people across the archdiocese who receive a text when someone is at the hour of their death.

Father Bambenek explains the powerful formula for the prayer team: “We ask them to pray an ‘Our Father’ for the person who is passing and preparing to meet the Lord; a ‘Hail Mary’ for the comfort of the family; and a ‘Glory Be’ for the priest and the medical team attending to the patient. This is a way the Body of Christ can connect with those who are suffering, and it allows us to participate at a time when many feel helpless and hopeless.”

In January, after more than seven months of this beautiful ministry, Bishop Cozzens extended the invitation to participate to more priests throughout the archdiocese. Those under the age of 55 with no underlying health conditions are welcome to train and join this team who bring Jesus’ healing touch to the dying and their loved ones.

**Total anointings by the Anointing Corps as of February 5, 2021.*



Now and at the *hour* of our *death*.

Father Andrew Jaspers, Class of 2013, is one of several alumni serving the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis' COVID-19 Anointing Corps.

Photo Credit:
Dave Hrbacek/*The Catholic Spirit*



January Term: COVID Edition

Every December, seminarians finish semester exams, return to home parishes for Christmas, and pack their bags for January Term. Trips to Mexico, Jerusalem and Rome provide once-in-a-lifetime opportunities for formation outside the classroom.

Otherwise known as “J-Term,” this is a unique time to visit countries that draw our future priests deeper into the Church’s mission and into ever closer relationship with the Lord. Traveling with brother seminarians and strengthening fraternal bonds are treasured side benefits.

But current seminarians have grown used to change. Formation during a global pandemic requires ongoing creativity from the faculty and formators and flexibility from the seminarians. So, 35 men in Theology III and IV tucked away their passports and prepared for a J-Term experience right here in Minnesota.

The focus of the Rome experience is the study of the Church’s mission. Site visits typically include meetings with Vatican offices as well as religious and lay movements that focus on evangelization. It is a unique way to see how the Universal Church lives out the Great Commission around the world. Course requirements also include class discussion and written reflections.

Here in Minnesota, the seminarians found the Church’s mission alive during their visits to local religious and lay apostolates with a heart for evangelization, including Catholic Charities, Sharing and Caring Hands, the Missionary Sisters of St. Peter Claver, Cana Family Institute, Women in the New Evangelization (WINE), Friends of Dorothy Day, and Opus Dei, to name a few. Small group discussions focused on how as future priests the men can collaborate with these organizations or others like them to advance the Gospel message within their own parishes and dioceses.

“Our goal was to replicate the Rome experience locally,” said Father John Gallas, formator and J-Term instructor. “We want the men to see how the apostolates in our own archdiocese are changing the world in many beautiful ways. As ordained priests, they will be able to collaborate with these important missions in the future.”

Supplemental reading for the course included Pope Paul VI’s *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (*Proclaiming the Gospel*), St. John Paul II’s *Redemptoris Missio* (*The Mission of the Redeemer*), and other selected texts. In the context of site visits, seminarians were asked to reflect in a final paper on the practical application of the experiences and readings to pastoral situations in their home dioceses.

Plans are underway for J-Term 2022 with Theology III and IV seminarians traveling to the Holy Land together and Theology II returning to Mexico. God willing, J-Term 2023 promises a return to normal.

PROFESSIONAL NOTES

Dr. William Stevenson, associate professor of Dogmatic Theology, presented “The Sources of Catholic Teaching” for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis’ four-part, virtual “Faith and Culture Series.” He also participated in the panel discussion that followed along with Archbishop Bernard Hebda and lay participants from the archdiocese.

Rev. Kevin Zilverberg, assistant professor of Sacred Scripture, published an article in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, the journal of theology and canon law of the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium: “The Question of the Necessity of Non-Christian Parents’ Consent for the Validity of Infant Baptism in Catholic Theology from the Thirteenth to the Eighteenth Century,” ETL 97/1 (2021), 61–84.

He also translated into English a lecture by Spanish biblical scholar Rev. Natalio Fernández Marcos, S.J.: “Stephen Pisano: The Friendly Face of the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*.” The translation ran as subtitles during the live presentation of The Stephen Pisano Memorial Lecture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, on Oct. 28, 2020.

At the invitation of religious sisters and priests of the Institute of the Incarnate Word, Father Zilverberg gave his own lecture, in which he introduced the study of the Old Latin Bible to students of Ancient Greek. He gave the lecture in Spanish, at Fossanova Abbey, in Priverno (Lazio), Italy, on Jan. 21, 2021.

Rev. Jon Vander Ploeg, assistant director of Spiritual Formation, presented a talk entitled “Our Original Identity as Sons and Daughters of God” for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis’ Healing and Hope Retreat in October. The five-part virtual retreat also included a presentation by **Paul Ruff**, assistant director of Human Formation and director of Counseling Services, entitled “Identifying our Personal Wounds: Places of Darkness; Openings for Resilience and Grace.”



Rev. Jon Vander Ploeg

IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Roland J. Antus, Class of 1962
Rev. Richard Beyer, Class of 1981
Dcn. Jerome D. Ciresi, Class of 1964
Msgr. Thomas M. Donahoe, Class of 1954
Rev. Patrick E. Griffin, Class of 1967
Rev. Joseph L. Hauer, Class of 1981
Rev. James R. Himmelsbach, Class of 1977

Mr. John Imgrund, Class of 1951
Rev. Thomas F. Kelly, Class of 1956
Hon. John William “Bill” Schindler, Class of 1956
Mr. Robert E. Spethmann, Class of 1957
Rev. Milton M. Suess, Class of 1963
Rev. Stephen J. Tallman, Class of 1959
Rev. Raymond L. Valerio, Class of 1959

TO ENDOW OR NOT TO ENDOW

Generally speaking, endowments are beneficial for an institution. They provide long-term dependable resources for programs. They create legacy gift opportunities for benefactors. They can serve as a financial mooring to hold an institution to its mission and core values. They enable an institution to attract and retain renowned scholars and directors. In short, when endowments are established well, they are a blessing for an institution, the benefactors who support it, and the communities the institution serves.

There are situations, however, when endowments can have the opposite effect. Being overly dependent on endowed funds can be detrimental to an organization. A completely endowed institution can become “philanthropically lazy” and cease to engage external stakeholders. Then, when there is a need for counsel or financial support beyond what the endowment provides, the organization finds itself in trouble.

If an organization does not have proper fiduciary oversight and protection, endowed funds can also be misused by either spending down the principle or by spending the income stream improperly. To mitigate this risk, a benefactor should make sure the institution issues annual reports on the endowment, is audited by an independent accredited CPA firm, and has trusted and knowledgeable oversight from a board of directors. Some use a community foundation to assist with the management of their endowment. Organizations, as in the case of the seminary, may still retain ownership. Or they may transfer ownership of the corpus to the foundation. In this case, the foundation owns and invests the fund while the organization continues to be the beneficiary of the endowed fund.

Finally, there are certain times when endowing a program simply does not make sense. If a program is too narrow it can tie the institution to an effort that detracts from its mission. Similarly, if the activity the endowment supports is no longer needed, the organization can find itself in a difficult spot with the benefactor who created the endowment.

Successful endowments are created by benefactors and institutions partnering together to advance and sustain a core program. When done thoughtfully and prayerfully in the context of an overall strategic plan, one that includes proper oversight and protection, an endowment becomes a powerful vehicle that benefits the communities and organizations it serves.

The Saint Paul Seminary and its Board of Trustees are blessed to partner with our generous donors, the Catholic Community Foundation, and an independent accounting firm to ensure that our endowment is well managed so we can advance our mission of forming joyful, Catholic leaders.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas R. Ryan". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Thomas R. Ryan
Vice President for Institutional Advancement

WHAT IS THE HILL SOCIETY?

The Hill Society is a legacy society of donors, living and deceased, who have included The Saint Paul Seminary in their estate or who have made a gift of \$5,000 or more to the seminary's endowment. More than 420 individuals and organizations are members of the Hill Society.

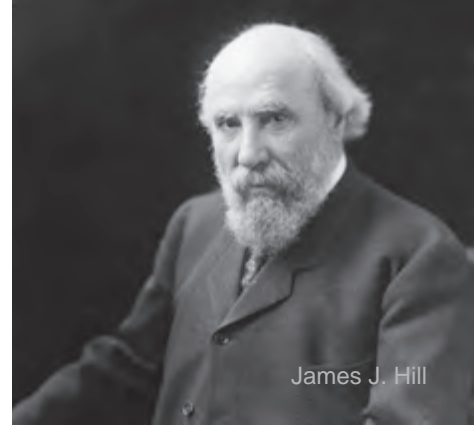
THE FOUNDING GIFT.

In 1890, James J. and Mary Mehegan Hill, gave a gift of \$500,000 to establish The Saint Paul Seminary and ensure that the future of the priesthood was secure for generations to come. That generous gift built and sustained a seminary that has formed more than 3,000 priests to serve the Church throughout the Midwest and around the world.

A LITTLE MORE HISTORY...

In the late 19th century, there was a huge shortage of priests to meet the growing needs of the immigrants streaming into the Upper Midwest. Upon his death, William Finn, a veteran of the Civil War, gifted a beautiful parcel of property on the banks of the Mississippi River to the Church. Archbishop John Ireland used this gift of land to start The Saint Paul Seminary.

Next came a gift that made news throughout the nation: Hill, a Methodist railroad tycoon, paid for the entire construction of the seminary and established an endowment fund to ensure its stability for years to come.



James J. Hill



Mary Hill

To learn more about the Hill Society or including the seminary in your estate plans please contact Tom Ryan: trryan@stthomas.edu or (651) 962-5056

Seminary Estate Gifts and Endowment by the Numbers

- \$45K** – Average Estate Gift to The Saint Paul Seminary
- \$350K** – Average Received Annually from Unrestricted Wills & Bequests
- \$2M** – Highest Estate Gift Received to Date
- \$1M** – Annual Endowment Draw
- 14%** – Percentage of Annual Budget Supported by Endowment

Recognition of Gifts to Endowment

- \$5K** – Qualifies for Hill Society Membership
- \$50K** – Seminarian Assigned to Pray through the Year for Benefactor
- \$100K** – Qualifies for a Named Endowed Fund

Impact of Gifts to Endowment

- \$375K** – Covers Half the Cost to Educate a Seminarian in Perpetuity
 - \$750K** – Covers Full Cost to Educate a Seminarian in Perpetuity
 - \$1M** – Designated gifts to the endowment at this level can support a variety of seminary programs. Examples include the Rome Studies Program and the Jerome Quinn Biblical Studies Endowment.
- OR GREATER**




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To learn more, visit: careasy.org/nonprofit/the-saint-paul-seminary

Or contact Nancy Johnson for information about how donating your vehicle supports The Saint Paul Seminary's mission of providing integrated Catholic formation for those called to serve as priests, deacons or lay leaders in their local Church.

**nhjohnson@stthomas.edu or
(651) 962-5967**



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