

SAINT JOHN'S SEMINARY  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



# CURRENTS

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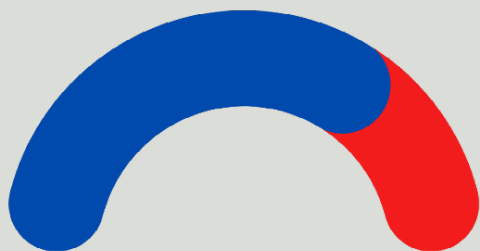
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Cover Image: Saint John's Seminary Seminarians processing for the closing Mass of the Vigil for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC. January, 2022.

# COST TO EDUCATE



25% of a seminarian's education  
is paid for by donors like you.

## Thank You!

In the 2021-22 Academic year, 15 dioceses and religious orders trusted Saint John's Seminary to educate their future priests. Those educated at Saint John's pay the tuition of \$45,000 per year per student, but the cost to educate each resident seminarian is \$60,000 per year. Pope Benedict XVI wrote, "the laity are really co-responsible for the Church's being and acting." The laity play essential parts in the mission of Saint John's Seminary. Lay professors instruct seminarians in philosophy, Church history, the theology of the body, and other topics. Lay alumni train to minister and evangelize in places that the clergy cannot reach. Laity across the region pray daily that the men now in seminary will persevere in their vocations and one day be ordained.

Critically, support from alumni, parents, faculty, staff, and friends gives Saint John's a way to equip our seminarians and students with the knowledge and tools necessary for a lifetime of service to Christ and His Church. The Saint John's Fund does more than just keep the lights on, it lights the way for a transformative educational experience for every seminarian and student.

**\$15,000** Financial gap for  
each seminarian, which has  
to be raised by Saint John's.

**\$45,000** Tuition paid by  
each sending diocese or  
religious order for each  
seminarian.

**\$60,000**

Cost to educate and provide  
room and board for one  
year for each seminarian.



## GREETINGS TO ALL,

I am pleased to present you with this special edition of *Currents* in which all of the articles are from within our student and seminarian community offering you a unique perspective on our mission.

Very Rev. Stephen Salocks,  
Rector

*Currents* is available as a PDF at [www.sjs.edu/currents](http://www.sjs.edu/currents).

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# OUR PLEADING IS FOR MERCY

OUR SEMINARY COMMUNITY JOINED thousands of others at the annual March for Life in Washington D.C. on January 21, 2022.

The great tragedy of abortion can hardly be overstated. It is not only the gravest loss of innocent human life that we have ever seen; it also represents the catastrophic collapse and corruption of the family. Behind the principal loss of the millions of children are millions of mothers and fathers who are marred by the trauma of losing a child. Their suffering extends to the entire nation: nurses, doctors, families, friends, siblings, entire generations lost. We hear the full extent of this harrowing sorrow in the aching words of Scripture:

*A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.*  
-Jeremiah 31:15



Rev. Mr. Patrick O'Connor, and Mr. Johnathan Saniuk serve the closing Mass for the Vigil for Life

Why? What does a group of men—men preparing for celibacy—contribute to this march? What of this agony could we possibly



Saint John's Seminarians gather for a group photo during the March for Life

share? A change in policy that protects these children and their parents from this indescribable pain would be a cause of great joy, but the wound is far deeper than some political agenda.

At the heart of our march is not reproach. There is no condemnation, judgment, or critique. We do not pray for suppression, restriction, or control of women. Though we hope for change, *our pleading is for mercy*: mercy for the children who have died; mercy for their parents, especially their mothers who have so often been the object of neglect, abandonment, or abuse; mercy for the doctors, nurses, and institutions that are blinded to the precious life in the womb that should be carefully and tenderly treasured.

We cry out to the Divine Physician: “For the sake of His sorrowful Passion have Mercy on us and on the whole world.” We pray “Forgive us,” Father, for the lives we have taken and the times we have neglected the cry of all those mothers in need. We seek your aid, Mary; “pray for us sinners,” us fathers who have

forsaken our role as guardians and protectors of our own families. We march toward this Calvary, begging the Father, “Forgive them for they know not what they do.”

These are the prayers in which our hope is grounded. And when even just one prayer is heard, one child is saved, one mother is healed, one doctor is moved, one father converted—our efforts will be justified. There is simply no quantity of time, money, effort, or tears that would ever be equal in value to that answer.

The Crucifixion of our dear Jesus, the spilling of his Precious Blood, and the thirst He expressed with His dying breath, were all for us, His Children. What is the purpose of a man—what is the sacred duty of His priest—if not to spend his whole being in every effort to satisfy so great a Love?



Mr. Marcelo Ferarri  
Second Theology

## THE HEARTBEAT OF PRAYER

O GOD, COME TO MY ASSISTANCE;  
O Lord, make haste to help me...

In the early hours of the morning and the evening, we hear these words being chanted by our whole community. This phrase constitutes the opening invocation of the Liturgy of the Hours, an ancient form of prayer that over my time in formation at Saint John's has become without a doubt my favorite.

Most people, myself included, usually don't learn about the Liturgy of the Hours (also called the Divine Office) until they enter some kind of religious community. Along with the Mass, the Divine Office constitutes the public prayer of the Church. This prayer ensures the sanctification of time, since the Breviary is prayed throughout the day, with specific liturgical "hours" prayed in the morning, during the day, in the evening, and at night. Concerned with interceding for the whole community of the faithful, Holy Mother Church requires her bishops, priests, deacons, and members of most (if not all) religious orders to faithfully celebrate the Divine Office. All of us who will one day be ordained priests will publicly promise at our ordinations to faithfully pray the Liturgy of the Hours "with and for the People of God."

I love praying the Divine Office, and my love for it is one of the clearest signs that God is calling me to be His priest. In the

seminary, we pray the Liturgy of the Hours both communally and individually each day because we are preparing for the time when it will be part of our daily duties as priests to pray "with and for the People of God." Ultimately, this means that we are already praying for others using God's own Word (since the Divine Office is arranged around the Psalms). Every day throughout the world, a heartbeat of liturgical prayer is given up to God by His Mystical Body (the Church) here on Earth.

Each day at Saint John's, we add our voices to that heartbeat of prayer. We also bring to our celebration of the Divine Office all those we are praying for or thinking of: our brother seminarians, those we minister to in our pastoral and parish assignments, our families—indeed, even others we haven't met yet! All those who are a part of the Church are gathered up into that heartbeat of prayer, not just those who offer it up each day.

Saint John Vianney, the patron saint of all parish priests, once said that "the Priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus." Just as Our Lord Jesus Christ intercedes for us with His Father in Heaven, so we intercede for others through the prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours. It is an incredible gift to imitate Our Lord in this way. I am excited to continue to receive that gift throughout my formation here at Saint John's, and (God willing) one day as a priest.



Mr. Alexander Charow  
Second Pre-Theology

## JOIN US IN PRAYER

Our Seminarians keep your intentions in their prayers when they gather daily for Mass, Adoration, and the Liturgy of the Hours. Submit your prayer intentions by scanning the QR code below:



[www.sjs.edu/prayerchain](http://www.sjs.edu/prayerchain)



## GOD STOPS AT NOTHING

IN THE SIXTH CHAPTER OF JOHN, Jesus teaches His disciples about the Eucharist. Reminding them of the manna from heaven from the Exodus journey, He teaches “I am the living bread that came down from Heaven” (Jn 6:51). Both in Exodus and John, the bread coming down to earth from Heaven serves as a reminder that God comes to man. The manna in Exodus points to God while the Bread referred to in John is God Himself. Both show, though, that God desires to sustain His followers while they

As God did with the Israelites with the manna, He does with us through the Bread of Life to an even greater degree. He sustains us through this Eucharist, and desires to make this nourishment available.

In the *Pastoral Care for the Sick* ritual book, which is used for Communion visits and Anointings, the passage from John 6 is given as a suggested reading for Communion Calls. Over this past summer, I was given the blessed opportunity to visit with many home-bound individuals. Often, I would choose this passage as the Gospel reading. I would reflect on the fact that Christ became flesh to dwell on Earth. He, the living bread, came down from Heaven to redeem us. I would then reflect on the fact that He becomes bread to continue to dwell on Earth whenever Mass is celebrated. He, the living bread, comes down from Heaven to sustain us. Lastly, I would reflect on the fact that He becomes bread and allows Himself to be brought from the church to the various living rooms of those who cannot attend Mass, in order to be with them. He comes all the way from Heaven to be with these people amidst their sufferings, trials, and struggles.

are on pilgrimage. In Exodus, the Israelites were on pilgrimage to the Promised Land, while in John, the disciples were on pilgrimage to the Eternal Land, Heaven. We find ourselves in this situation; we are pilgrims while on Earth.

During these visits, I was encouraged by the love the parishioners had for the Eucharist. They looked forward to receiving Him weekly, sometimes describing it as the highlight of their week. These people did not say this

because they had boring lives; they said it because they realized they were coming into contact with the living God! They realized that the infinite God would humble himself, out of love for them, to come under the species of bread and visit their living room. After several months without being able to receive the Eucharist because of the pandemic, they were excited to receive Him again. They were excited to be reminded of His care for them. They were excited to be encouraged and strengthened by His presence. In a time when many family members were keeping distance from them, Jesus would not let distance get in the way.

To conclude, this experience of bringing the Eucharist to many home-bound parishioners served as a reminder that *God stops at nothing* to be with His people and to strengthen and sustain us. He comes down from Heaven to the altar and all the way to people's living rooms, out of His love for His people. This experience has helped me to make sure that I don't take the gift of the Eucharist for granted, but choose instead to look forward to receiving Him more with the same excitement which the parishioners did.



Rev. Mr. Patrick  
O'Connor  
Fourth Theology



## EVERYTHING HAS ITS OWN BEAUTY

ONE OF THE HOBBIES I ENJOY is photography. Between my classes and other responsibilities at Saint John's, I like to spend my time taking photos of the world around me. I believe that everything around us has its own beauty that was given to it by God. I want to record and share these beautiful and meaningful photos with others so that they may also enjoy the wonderful work God has done.

Without many words, a photo itself can tell a delightful story. Photography gives me another view of the life which surrounds us. It is an effective tool to convey meaningful messages about the beauty of the created world and our own experience within that world.

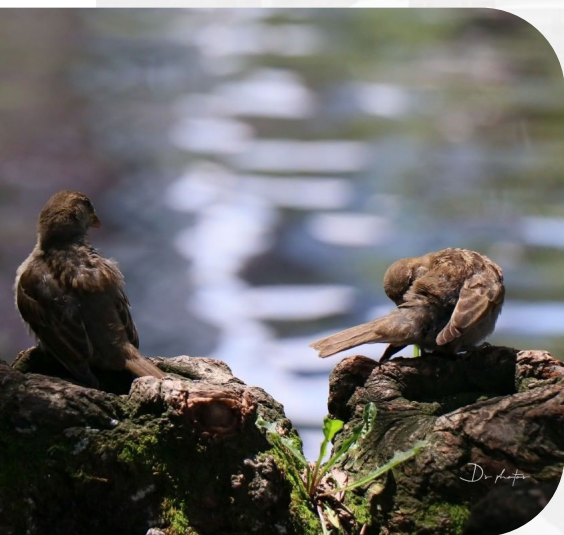
I am interested in taking photos of the natural world such as animals, flowers, the landscape, or the like. Each time, I see such things, I capture a photo of them with an idea that this

beautiful creature is created by God. I thank God for giving me a chance to enjoy it. I have come to a greater appreciation of the gift that God has given us, the gift of the world itself. Saint Bonaventure wrote of Saint Francis of Assisi, "In beautiful things Saint Francis saw Beauty itself, and through His vestiges imprinted on creation he followed his Beloved everywhere, making from all things a ladder by which he could climb up and embrace Him who is utterly desirable."

I also enjoy taking photos of church buildings, their architecture, and the liturgies which take place inside. For my house job at Saint John's, I work in assisting the Mission Advancement Office for which I am responsible for recording events and significant occasions for the community through my photography.

I am especially intentional about this work when I photograph Masses and other liturgies. I call to mind the words of Pope Francis, who said that Mass is not a play or some spectacle, but that "the Mass is experiencing Calvary". Each time I take a photo during a Mass, I remember that it is not more important than the Mass. I try not to distract people as much as I can during the Mass. It helps me to appreciate the Mass and the task I am doing.

Saint Pope John Paul II wrote to artists that beauty is "an invitation to savor life and to dream of the future." Through my lens, I capture the beauty of His creation. That work helps me draw closer to the Lord. I hope I can share that gift with others, too.



**Mr. Dong Pham**  
First Theology



# AN ODE TO WINTER SNOWFALL

EVERY WINTER IN THE NORTHEAST of the United States, snow saunters into our lives and environment. The sun can set one evening on clear roads and rise the next morning on grass, trees, and cars hidden under two feet of cold, bright snow. With the winter comes the snow. Hence, I've come to love all that the snow brings with it: cold weather, winter clothing, but especially the beauty and the artwork snow creates.

The snow brings with it also the expenses of winter tires and clothing, fiddling with thermostats on heaters, and the labor of clearing the snow from sidewalks, roads, and driveways. But the smiles on people's faces as they enjoy the beauty and artistry



the snow leads people to ponder the beauty of all of God's creation. On the surface, snow is white. But under sunlight, its ice crystals reflect every color of creation and magnify its beauty.

I love seeing the joy and happiness on people's faces as they play in the snow. The stillness of the snow is only disturbed by the joy it brings to us through activities and sports we can only enjoy during the winter time: ice hockey, sledding, skiing, and snowboarding. Our own backyards are turned into winter Olympic stadiums. Many people have never entered a hockey stadium or ice-skating rink. But when the cold and snow come, the ponds all turn into hockey arenas and the players outnumber the spectators.

an artist paints a canvas, so too does the snow cover the landscape. Each snowflake is as a brushstroke in the hands of a master artist. Thus, water brings not only life, as it is essential to all living things, but it also brings us joy in the form of snow. The Creator of the universe in His goodness has given us water to sustain our lives. The same water in a different form (snow) reveals to us another hidden beauty of nature, which is accessible to everyone because He desires the joy and happiness of all. So let it snow!

**"The whole earth  
is a living icon of  
the face of God."**

St. John of Damascus

of snow are more important. The snow is a master artist though it bears no degree in design. The snow's beauty parallels the work of great architects, painters, builders, and artists of any kind. Through its beauty, like all art,

It is obvious why a winter scene looks so pure, beautiful and healthy: a perfect snowfall transforms the landscape and bathes everything in joy. Just as



**Rev. Mr. Maxwell  
Chukwudiebere**  
Fourth Theology

# MY JOURNEY TOWARDS THE PRIESTHOOD

EACH TIME THAT I THINK ABOUT my vocation and the journey I have been on through my discernment, I am always led back to the first moment when I responded to God's call. As a child growing up in El Salvador, my parents and I would attend various parish activities together. As I grew older, I started to participate more actively in the life of the parish. When I was nine, I became an altar server. At twelve, I received my first holy communion. After that, I felt a strong desire to know more about God, the Church, the Sacraments, and the priesthood.

At that moment, I felt God's call to serve him in the priesthood and thus give my life to him. The desire to serve God intensified as I grew older. In middle school, I spoke with my parish priest to gain a better understanding of what it means to be a priest and to grow in my understanding of my own vocation. He helped me to begin my discernment. I participated in the vocational discernment gatherings in the Diocese of Chalatenango in El Salvador. These gatherings helped me to learn more about priestly life and ministry. I felt that I was on the right path.

My pastor from my home parish remains an example for me to follow. His support during my early years of discernment was critical as I learned about the life of a diocesan priest. He offered an example of joy, dedication,

and enthusiasm for his priestly vocation. Through the example of the priests I know, I feel identified with the life of a diocesan priest.

In my high school years, I lived and studied in a house of discernment with others who were also discerning vocations to the priesthood. There, I learned more about the life and ministry

**“Let us not tire  
of preaching  
love; it is the  
force that will  
overcome the  
world.”**

St. Oscar Romero

of a priest by assisting the priest at the parish and experiencing community life. I always admired the joy that the pastor showed toward his people, even though he was tired or overwhelmed by parish activities. I have met many priests and bishops who imitate the life of Jesus Christ and so reflect him. I see the image of Jesus Christ especially in El Salvador's Saint Oscar Romero, who preached the Word of God without fear. These examples inspire me to persevere.

In 2019, I moved to the Archdiocese of Boston to be formed at Saint John's Seminary. My experience at Saint John's has unimaginably helped me in my

vocation and my spiritual life. I have learned and grown through intellectual, pastoral, spiritual and human formation. A priest needs to be mature in each of those areas, and so all are important. Finally, I have learned more about diocesan life outside of my country in addition to within it. I have seen the great need for priests within the Church and how people hunger to hear the Word of God and to receive the life-giving sacraments. Alongside prayer and the sacraments, recognizing that need confirms and inspires my priestly vocation.

In my own experience, reading and meditating on the word of God as part of my daily prayer is the key to knowing God and the foundation of my relationship with Him. Praying with scriptures strengthens and confirms my priestly vocation. As my formation continues at Saint John's, I ask that you keep me and all my brother seminarians in your prayers so that one day we may serve you as your priests.



**Mr. David Pineda**  
Second Theology

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# GOD WORKS IN ALL OF US

WHEN IT COMES TO SEMINARY music, I have my hand in a little bit of everything. Organ, schola, karaoke, you name it, I probably do it. Of course, I didn't just pick these up at the seminary; I've been a musician my whole life. But since coming to the seminary, my relationship to music has matured. From when I was little all the way through college, I would often play the piano for hours on end just for the sheer joy of playing. I have less time for leisure playing now, which means that I need to be more intentional about what I choose to play.

As a Saint John's organist, I regularly play to accompany the Liturgy of the Hours. Most of the music is already chosen for me. I find this restriction liberating. I have no anxiety about choosing music that is easy enough for the musicians and enjoyable enough for the audience. Instead, I prepare the music that I am asked to play and play it as well as I can.

The Church, in her rich tradition of Gregorian Chant, also provides us with the music for every Mass on every day of the year: for the Entrance, the Psalm and Alleluia, during the Offertory, and at Communion. These are called the "Proper" for that Mass, although other musical settings are permitted. The wisdom of Holy Mother Church shines through in that she provides music for us. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the most important thing that

happens on the face of the earth. And just as Jesus provides Himself the perfect sacrifice for us to offer to the Father, so the Church provides the very words we are to pray and the very music we are to sing in Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours.

**"Each has received  
a gift, use it to  
serve one another,  
as good stewards of  
God's varied grace."**

1 Peter 4:10

If the Mass is the means by which humanity is sanctified, then the Liturgy of the Hours is the means by which time is sanctified. If praying the Liturgy of the Hours is for the sanctification of time, then singing the Liturgy of the Hours is an even further means of dedicating time to God. Music can be understood as 'ordered sound,' but sound can only exist across time. This is a task that we humbly undertake every day here at Saint John's, and I have the beautiful privilege of frequently exercising a leadership role in this act of worship.

Indeed, I believe this is the way God works in all of us. He gives us the gifts He is calling us to use, and then He provides us the opportunity to offer ourselves entirely to Him by means of these

gifts. This is our act of worship in the Mass: offering ourselves to God with Jesus in the Eucharist. For those who serve at the altar or organize the music, this takes a visible form; for others it consists in the mere intention of offering. Either way, God is speaking to all of us of the way He wants us to offer ourselves to Him. The most important first step, as with music, is learning how to listen.



**Mr. George Bastedo**  
First Theology



## SPORTS SET TONE FOR TIME IN SEMINARY

I LOVE TURDUCKEN.

The discovery was made the last Sunday in January, before mid-February's de Sales Invitational seminary basketball tournament. Transitional deacon Nate Sanders gifted several members of our Saint John's Seminary basketball team with an absolute feast at his parish's rectory, with the bird ... inside a bird ... inside a larger bird ... as the meal's main dish. Shoveling bites into my mouth and flirting with a food-induced coma, I thought, "Thanks be to God we don't have practice tomorrow, for I know not whether I'll be out of this chair by then."



Upon entering the seminary in the fall, I was looking forward to the fraternity of the house and to seeing it develop. As a guy who enjoys a good sweat, I hoped some men in the house would jump to get touches on a soccer ball or trek up a mountain just for the heck of it.

Saint John's has got plenty to fit the bill.

Sports started upon arrival in September. Soccer sessions sprouted up multiple times a week. Intra-seminary scrimmages

on Tuesday afternoons kept us runnin' ragged into early December. Basketball tipped off the first week in November.

The month's marquee event took place on its second Saturday at Sparhawk Academy. The entire seminary came together for the second annual flag football tournament—a blissful day of athletic “prowess” that ended with Team Blue's championship-winning drive for the ages and a trophy transfer from Father David Barnes to his gridiron rival, Father Ryan Connors.

The basketball squad kept practicing on Friday nights. Seminarian Brian Daley and I fit some winter hiking in one weekend, enduring gnarly White Mountain headwinds on our way up Mount Bond. After Christmas break, it was down the street to Chandler Pond for two weeks of hockey with Tim Walsh, Paul Born, Marcelo Ferrari and others before the late-January blizzard put an end to those festivities.

Yet what's been most uplifting about all of these experiences isn't the cardio benefits and improvement of my now-slightly above-average jump shot. It's how the fitness and fraternity so beautifully complement the spiritual journey on which we find ourselves.

After my sore legs take me back from the soccer field and I laugh



with teammates like Hieu Chu, Nguyen Dinh, and Khanh Le, it's so organic to then kneel and adore our Lord in Eucharistic adoration, gushing with gratitude for the blessings He bestows on us. How good is He?

Father Barnes said it well in his impromptu postgame speech back in November at Sparhawk: In six years, each seminarian will take dozens of courses about philosophy, theology, and the like. But it'll likely be those experiences with our brothers outside the classroom walls that will linger vividly in our minds for years to come.

I don't know if I'll be holding a basketball trophy when you read this. But after half a year in these hallowed halls, I've already got a bank of memories—and the taste for turducken—for which to give thanks to God.



Mr. Joseph Jasinski  
First Pre-Theology



## HEART SPEAKS TO HEART

I'VE BEEN A TEACHER FOR ABOUT a decade now - middle school exclusively for seven of those ten years. If I had a nickel for every time I was asked "When will I ever use this?" by a student, I'm certain I'd be a billionaire. It's a common question in our time: we value the things that we think are useful. Although it is important to learn practical things, I'd say there's a danger in viewing education on a purely practical level, that is, in looking at knowledge based on what kind of immediate value it has in our daily lives.

As a student in the Master of Theological Studies (MTS) Program, I've learned to appreciate that knowledge is worth having on its own because it is the key to the Beloved. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says to us that He is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). This means that when we pursue the truth, we pursue Christ, the Beloved. Ultimately, that's what my theological education has done for me, it has led me closer to the Beloved, to Christ, my God and

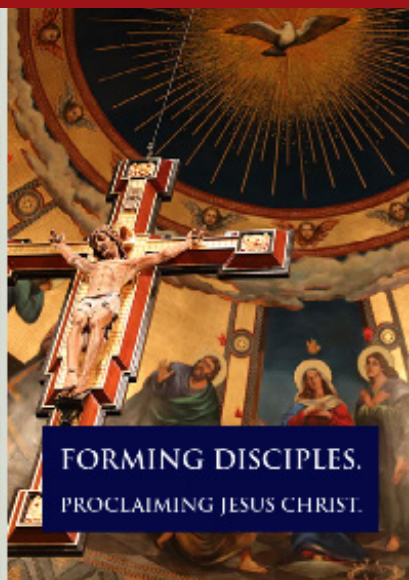
my all. What higher value could there be than that? The work was, at times, quite challenging, especially because I was trying to balance both a graduate education and a full-time job. Somewhere in the back of my mind I also knew that I didn't technically need to go through the MTS Program because I already had a Master's degree in Education and, at least on paper, was more than qualified for my career. But my decision to go through the program was about more than just that. There were times I found myself trying to write a paper, staring blankly at an empty document, not for lack of ideas but because of simple awe in the God Who became Man. Could my words ever really be enough in the light of such a mystery? Or would they seem just to be straw?

So, if I had to answer that question of practicality - of what the point of my theological education was, its value, or of why someone else should consider the program, I'd say simply this: my theological

education has inspired genuine awe. It has turned into a flame that little spark of love for our God and His Church that we all carry, even if we don't realize it. I'm immensely grateful to all my professors for their hard work, patience, and perseverance, especially during the difficulties of the pandemic, and for this great opportunity provided by the Master of Arts in Ministry (MAM) and MTS Degree Programs at Saint John's. What will I do next? I'm not sure what the answer to that question is just yet, but, to borrow a quote penned by St. Thomas More to his daughter Margaret shortly before his martyrdom, "Nothing can come but what God wills. And I am very sure that whatever that be... it shall indeed be the best." *Deo gratias.*



**Mr. Matthew Giles**  
MTS  
Class of 2022



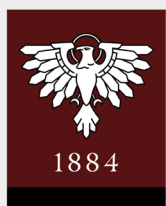
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PROCLAIMING JESUS CHRIST.



For more information about our Lay Formation Program, visit [www.sjs.edu/LayFormation](http://www.sjs.edu/LayFormation)



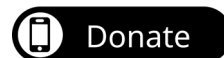
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