



WINTER • 2023

PROPAEDEUTIC
YEAR
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SAINT JOHN'S
BASKETBALL
TEAM
PG. 7

FAITH INTO
ACTION
PG. 9

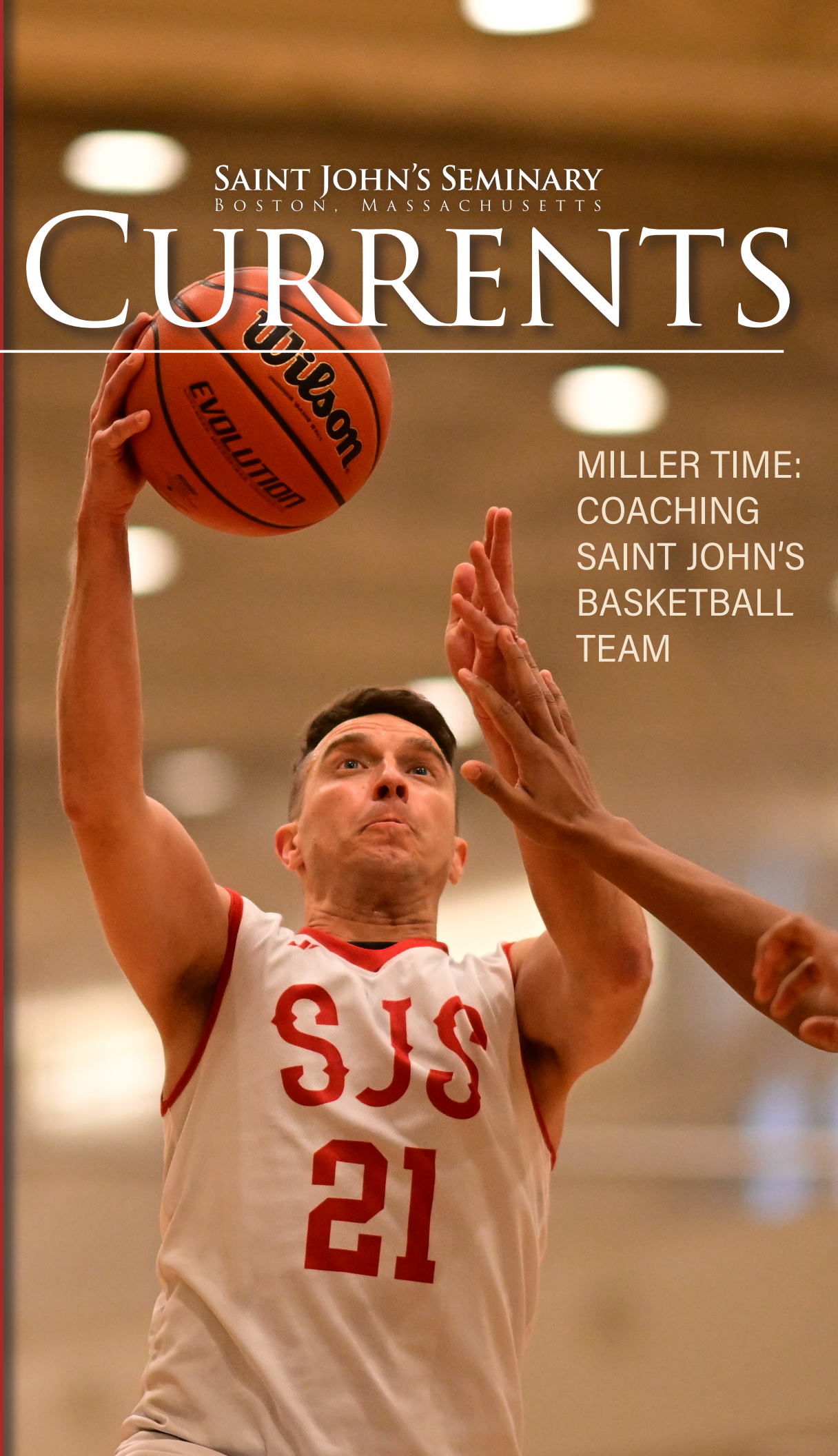
LESSONS AND
CAROLS
PG. 10

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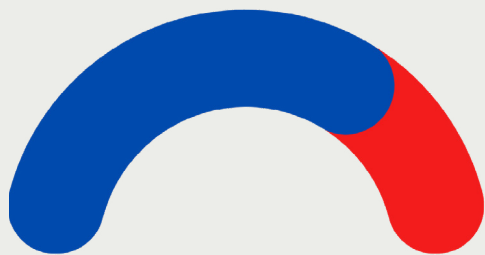
SAINT JOHN'S SEMINARY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

CURRENTS

MILLER TIME:
COACHING
SAINT JOHN'S
BASKETBALL
TEAM



COST TO EDUCATE



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

Thank You!

In the 2022-23 Academic year, 14 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 seminarian, 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.

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SAINT JOHN'S INTRODUCES THE PROPAEDEUTIC YEAR

Saint John's Seminary introduces men who are discerning priesthood to the depths and richness of Catholic culture through the Propaedeutic Year.

Propaedeutic: preparatory study or instruction
pro·pae·deu·tic
/prōpē 'doodik/

Following the *Program of Priestly Formation* (6th Edition) description of the propaedeutic stage, Saint John's offers a robust year of discernment where participants begin to develop "a life of prayer, study, fraternity, and appropriate docility to formation."

The propaedeutic year is a year of discernment for men who feel called to the priesthood, before they enter the rigorous studies of seminary formation.

In general the program provides:

- Introduction to spiritual direction, *lectio divina*, and daily lessons in spiritual practice.
- A community of daily prayer and worship distinct from the broader program of priestly formation at Saint John's.
- Seminar-style classes with a view toward supplementing the seminarian's general education, honing study skills, and fostering a love of learning.

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In the following pages of this newsletter you will gain insight into why the year was established by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and what the experience was like for a faculty member who has already experienced such a year in his own formation.

The program will be launched in August 2023 and will become part of the framework of formation at Saint John's Seminary moving forward.



THE PROPAEDEUTIC YEAR: ITS PLAN AND PURPOSE

In every age of the Church's history, new challenges to living and sharing the Gospel have confronted the faithful. Our time and place are no exception. Such challenges can appear daunting. They can cause us to grumble and even pine for simpler times. These attitudes get us nowhere. However, when we begin to see our challenges under the graced light of Divine Providence, we perceive them for what they are: an invitation from Christ to enter into His life more profoundly.

For every generation of His followers, the Lord raises up priests to guide and strengthen them so that they may persevere and flourish in their life of discipleship. Priests, therefore, must be keenly aware of the unique trials of the time and place that the Lord has given them to exercise their ministry. In order to equip their people to face these challenges, those who have heard Christ's call to the priesthood must first be equipped themselves. All of what we do here at Saint John's Seminary aims at equipping seminarians to equip others.

In order to help our seminarians better meet the needs of the faithful, the Holy See and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have added an introductory intensive year, the Propaedeutic

Year, focused on spiritual and human growth to the program of priestly formation. Before diving into the realm of philosophical and theological study, men preparing for the priesthood must first come to know in a real and personal way the One from whom all wisdom flows. Prayer is the heart of the propaedeutic year. Turning so intently toward the Lord can't help but shed light on who we are in His loving gaze. To know the Lord so deeply is also to know the human heart He desires to have as His home. This is the second focus of the year: growing in self-knowledge, integrity, and the capacity for friendship and communion that is so essential to the ministry and life of priests.

By spending their first year in priestly formation immersed in prayer and fraternity, our future priests will be even better equipped to help their people cut through the isolating distractions and anxieties that burden our society. They will be even better prepared to build up the next generation of Catholics to be a light to their unique time and place.

Fr. Thomas Macdonald
Vice Rector
Saint John's Seminary



IMPLEMENTING THE PROPAEDEUTIC YEAR AT SAINT JOHN'S

The Propaedeutic Stage “is a time of vocational discernment, undertaken within community life, and a ‘start’ to the following stages of initial formation.” Ratio, 60

Saint John's Seminary is pleased to begin our new level of formation in August 2023. The Propaedeutic Stage is the first of four stages of Formation. “It is a time of vocational discernment,

undertaken within community life, and a ‘start’ to the following stages of initial formation.” (Ratio, 60) The principal objective is to provide spiritual and human formation. “Its objective is to provide a solid basis for the spiritual life and to nurture a greater self-awareness for personal growth.” (Ratio, 59)

Gospel living comes from an authentic life lived in the mystery of Christ. The principal objective of this stage is “to provide a solid basis for the spiritual life and to nurture a greater self-awareness for personal growth” (Ratio, 56). This is a time of discernment before beginning the full-time studies at the Seminary. It is a time of preparation and a deepening of one's baptismal call. Understanding

oneself and one's relationship with the Lord is the focus of this year. The primary end is to answer the call of discipleship. The four dimensions of formation—human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral—are to be integrated within each stage.

The Propaedeutic Year is a deep dive into the human and spiritual dimensions. Formation Conferences will consist of input with integration and reflection of the topic. Human Formation Conferences and Spiritual Formation Conferences will alternate weeks so that the men receive a balance of input from these key dimensions of formation.

There will be additional input given by others who specialize in the fields of Human Formation, Personal Growth, Discernment of Vocation and Spirituality as well as other complementary topics pertaining to this level of formation—integrating the four dimensions of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral—where appropriate.

Classes, Seminars and Conferences that will be offered: *Introduction to the Old and New Testament, Introduction to Spiritual Direction, Catechism of the Catholic Church, Life of Christ, Living in Community, Discernment, Family of Origin, Conflict Resolution, Good Communication Practices, Devotions, Preferential Option for the Poor, Lectio Divina, Healthy Living and Self-Care, Time Management, Liturgy, Proper use of Technology and Social Media.*

Two Faculty Priests (Fr. Michael MacInnis and Fr. Cristiano Barbosa) are the Propaedeutic Formators and will oversee the Program and all its details. Assisting the two formators will be two adjunct formators who will offer formational insight, input and expertise throughout the year. These adjunct formators are Dr. Vincent Lynch and Colonel Mike Manning. Each week one of them will present on Human, Spiritual, Psychological, and Developmental topics and will lead the processing and integrating the material—drawing on the seminarians' reflections, questions and assimilation of key concepts.

The Propaedeutic Year will begin in the same fashion as the proper Saint John's Seminary Formation Program with an initial Orientation at the end of August followed by an Opening Retreat.

Fraternal Living: The men will live in a dedicated wing within the Seminary. At this initial stage of formation there is a great emphasis on fraternal bonds being fostered. They will share a fraternal life of prayer, study, ministry, and recreation. The men will have scheduled Masses, Holy Hour and communal liturgical prayer in a dedicated Chapel.

Ministry will be varied, drawing on opportunities of service to those on the margins: the poor, the immigrant, the elderly, the homeless in Boston and the surrounding communities. These opportunities of service will highlight our interconnectedness to our suffering brothers and sisters. The desire is to foster a heart like the Lord's—a Good Shepherd's heart.

There will be regular weekly group processing and debriefing of formational materials and ministry experiences; connecting the Gospel message of discipleship with their lived experiences. The year is meant to be one of discovery, discernment, and a deepening of one's commitment to follow the Lord more authentically and freely.

The men will meet with their Spiritual Director every other week. The Director of Spiritual Formation, in dialogue with the Propaedeutic Formators, will assign an in-residence Spiritual Director.

Summer Integration Program

The Seminary Formators will run the Summer Integration Program at Saint Anselm's in New Hampshire as the concluding formative aspect of the Propaedeutic Year. The Program will begin with an 8-day Retreat. This will be an immersion in a retreat-like environment with Human and Spiritual Formation input and will synthesize the formation received thus far and will be preparatory for the next stage in formation. Seminary Formators in collaboration with the community of Saint Anselm's will oversee the eight-week program.

Fr. Michael MacInnis

Director of Human Formation
Saint John's Seminary



PRAY²⁷ for SAINT JOHN'S SEMINARY

On the 27th of each month, join Catholics across the region in reciting a prayer for the continued success of Saint John's Seminary.

JOIN TOGETHER IN PRAYER by scanning the QR code or by visiting www.sjs.edu/27



SCAN ME



Taste and See:

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WEBINAR

with Kasey Kimball,
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Boston College



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EXPERIENCING THE PROPAEDEUTIC YEAR

In the Great Jubilee Year of 2000, I was admitted into the Propaedeutic Seminary of the Diocese of Bauru, in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. There was great enthusiasm in the Church, and Brazilian seminaries were flourishing. I was 23 years old, just about to finish my sixth year of training as a psychologist, when I decided to respond to the Lord's call and begin my journey in the formation process for the priesthood.

It was a time of joy, discovery, and discernment. We were a group of about 20 seminarians beginning the propaedeutic year, learning to be and to live as a community in that seminary. Due to my past experience in my home parish youth group and college fraternal groups, I did not have much difficulty adapting to the new routine of prayer and community life. I already had a life of prayer, attending retreats and daily Mass, frequent confession, and reciting the Rosary.

At the time I was a bit older than the majority of my fellow seminarians who had just finished High School or were finishing it. I also had special permission to continue working in my last year of clinical/therapeutic training as a professional psychologist while being fully involved in the seminary formation program. During that propaedeutic year, I learned how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours and to make frequent visits to the chapel as part of my daily routine. I was introduced to the different practices of the spiritual life of the Church such as mental prayer, contemplation, and *Lectio Divina*. I became acquainted with the writings of the Catholic spiritual masters St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and St. Ignatius of Loyola. Academically, I attended some

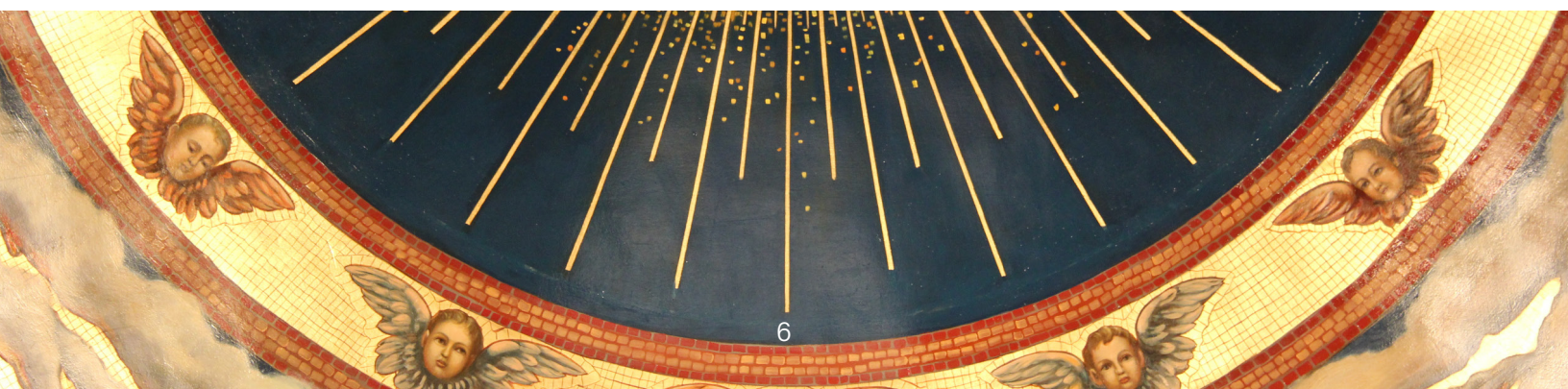
introductory courses for Philosophical studies at the local Catholic University (USC – Universidade do Sagrado Coração de Jesus).

We had weekly formation talks led by the rector, the spiritual director, and other priests of the diocese about various themes of priestly life and ministry. At the same time, there was an emphasis on human formation directed by the rector and two professional psychologists. We had to participate in weekly group processing sessions with one of the psychologists and also had the opportunity to see them privately in individual therapy.

As the rector of the propaedeutic program was also the vocational director of the diocese, we had the opportunity to accompany him in his work by visiting the many parishes of that local Church, meeting with the youth, and raising awareness about the importance of considering a priestly vocation. Those were important occasions to both strengthen my vocational certainty and to become better acquainted with the diocese and its clergy.

For me the propaedeutic year was an important time of transition between the secular life of work and the following stages of the formation process for the priesthood. This formation stage helped me to grow in my vocational discernment and certainty about the future ordained ministry, and it strengthened my desire to serve and to love Christ and His Church.

Fr. Cristiano Barbosa
Professor of Theology
Saint John's Seminary





MILLER TIME: COACHING THE SAINT JOHN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

I did not know what to expect when I walked into the Mount Alvernia gym on a Friday night in October 2021. The Sunday afternoon prior, I was asked to coach the Saint John's Seminary basketball team. Two of my great passions, our Church and basketball colliding, in a unique way. Upon walking into the gym, I heard basketballs bouncing, laughter, and conversation. So far, it sounded like any other basketball gymnasium. The dozen or so seminarians introduced themselves and warmly welcomed me to practice.

Deacon Nathaniel Sanders (now Father Sanders) and Deacon Peter Schirripa called the team to mid-court for a prayer. Deacon Peter graciously introduced me as "Coach Pat." The next few weeks and months would be an experience I will never forget. As the team worked to prepare for the national seminary tournament at St. Frances de Sales in Milwaukee, WI, in February, I started to see the priesthood in a new way.

New relationships were formed and strengthened during the Friday night practices, Turducken dinner (compliments of Father Sanders), and movie night (30 for 30: Survive and Advance). The warmth and joy beaming from the guys were contagious. I began to bring my sons to Friday night practices, and they immensely enjoyed being around the team. Everything was shaping up for a unique, exciting, and holy week in Milwaukee.

Departing for the airport the Friday morning of the St. Francis de Sales Seminary Basketball Tournament weekend, I again did not know what to expect as a married, lay man traveling across the country with priests and seminarians, staying at a seminary, and being joined by fifteen other seminary teams from across the country. I had no frame of reference. The following 48 hours were a gift from God that drew me closer to Him, from the flight to Chicago, the van ride to Milwaukee, a pitstop at Wisconsin staple, Culver's (thank you Andrew Bailey), the tournament itself, Sunday Mass.

The Sunday of the tournament was an important day for me. Fifty-four days earlier, my cousin asked me to join her in a 54-day novena. I prayed the last



day of my first 54-day novena in my dorm room at the seminary. On that same Sunday morning, I attended my first Traditional Latin Mass, celebrated by an Our Lady of Guadalupe priest (and coach). The graces to follow could fill a book, and I will not attempt to describe them here.

Our team finished the weekend with a 2-2 record, a respectable showing that represented Saint John Seminary well. The real reward of the weekend was the camaraderie and brotherhood of the participants. While the competition was fierce, the seminarians never lost sight of what united them. Our team did not make the big stage in the Miller Gymnasium on Saturday night. We circled the court with the other seminarians, staff, priests, and fans to enjoy some great basketball. Watching the championship game from the sideline was an excellent motivator for the team. Our star point guard, Joe Jasinski, stared toward midcourt with a contagious intensity. I knew at that moment this year's SJS team was determined to play in the Saturday night showcase, not watch from the stands.

I am eternally thankful to the seminarians who have included me in their journey. The work of evangelization can happen from the pulpit, the hardwood of a basketball court or anywhere else we encounter our fellow man. Do not despair; signs of hope are everywhere. God willing, we have men at Saint John's Seminary and at seminaries across the country who will be great witnesses to our Lord and Savior. Some of these men can even sink a jump shot.



Patrick Nee, aka Coach Pat
Partner
Boston Retirement Group

FORMATION

AT SAINT JOHN'S SEMINARY PUTS FAITH INTO ACTION

Faith in action. Theory in practice. These two phrases sum up my philosophy on my own spiritual life, (faith in action) and my own teaching pedagogy (theory in practice), which was developed as a faculty and administrator at Northeastern University, home of experiential education. Both phrases apply to the four pillars of formation at Saint John's seminary formation for laypersons: Academic formation, spiritual formation, human formation, and apostolic/pastoral formation, which is what attracted me to the Master of Art in Ministry (M.A.M.) program.

These four pillars, although often thought of separately, are interconnected and symbiotic, forming a well-round ministry. The academic formation was challenging, engaging, and relevant. Spiritual formation helped me grow in holiness, and prayer and formed a closer relationship between me and Jesus. I was able to learn more about myself and develop a deeper understanding of my strengths and limitations, and how to leverage them in my ministry. By engaging in church life and ministry through pastoral formation, I was given the opportunity to learn through putting theory into practice.

The apostolic formation, for me, was the most impactful. I had the opportunity to do field work both at my parish and at

Emerson Hospital in Concord, MA. Those that know me, know I hate hospitals and am very uncomfortable around sick people or people dying (e.g., I don't know what to do or how to act). The opportunity to minister in the entire hospital, to not only Catholics, but people of various different faith lives, challenged and helped me mature in both human and spiritual formation. I was also able to lean on academic formation to provide knowledge in a pastoral way to patients. As a matter of fact, there is one patient, let's call him Bud, that was in his early 90s and had just been diagnosed with cancer. I spent hours with Bud, who was a protestant and discussed our faiths, lives, and death. His positive outlook, candor, and willingness to pray together with stick with me forever.

The education I received in these four pillars impacted me as a person and has made me a more effective minister and Deacon. The experiential aspect of the program brought the four pillars together and prepared me for the benefits and challenges of ministry. But more importantly, and beyond that, it truly helped me grow in holiness and strengthen my relationship with Christ.



Jared Auclair, Ph.D., M.A.M. '22,
Vice Provost Research Economic Development
Northeastern University

LESSONS AND CAROLS AT ST. JOHN'S SEMINARY: FORMED IN THE BEAUTY OF THE WORD

It is impossible to forget one's first time visiting the chapel at Saint John's Seminary. Words do not do it justice; it is ineffably beautiful, and passing through its doors after meandering through the orderly but spare corridors that lead through the rest of the building always makes me feel as though I have walked into a small patch of heaven-in-breaking on earth. It was humbling to proclaim the word of God at the Festival of Lessons and Carols in such a glorious setting, and in the presence of the communion of saints - both the ones in heaven as they adorn the walls and ceilings of the chapel, and those in our local church as they gathered in the choir.

I have attended Lessons and Carols at other places before; it is one of my favorite Advent traditions. However, the Lessons and Carols at Saint John's are in a class of their own. The music is extraordinary, yet it never feels performative. The event is neither entertainment nor a demonstration of the artistic prowess of the musicians; it is the worship of God, rendering beautiful liturgy to Him as our offering of praise. That the seminary welcomes the community into this event helps us, the laity, to experience our partnership with their work as the People of God and the Body of Christ, united together in adoring the Lord.

In this way, the Festival of Lessons and Carols manifests the mission of Saint John's. It is clear that the seminarians, through their loving preparation for and participation in the festival, are being formed as future priests not only by their studies but also by their immersion in an environment which aspires to truth, goodness, and beauty. What is more, the gifts and talents these seminarians bring to their work are being nurtured not to call attention to themselves, but rather to lead others in glorifying the Lord. In a world where, at times, there seems to be so much darkness, for my family to have the great blessing of witnessing the seminary in action at this beautiful event gave me tremendous hope for our



Church. If the priesthood is in the hands of men who can give glory to God in such a magnificent way, then it is in good hands indeed - and we will all be blessed by their labor and love of the Lord.

Karen Celano
Principal
Lumen Verum Academy



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