



SOCIETY of OUR LADY
of the Most Holy Trinity

gray robes

SPRING 2022





Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive for evermore.



Revelation 1:17-18

GRAY ROBES FORMATION PROGRAM

SACRED HEART MAJOR SEMINARY IN DETROIT, MI

Theology III: Br. David Snow (MO)

Theology II: Br. Joseph Spears (KY)

Philosophy I: Br. Gregory Rice (PA)

PERMANENT BROTHERHOOD IN MISSION

Year V

Br. Uriel López (Mexico) - Detroit, MI

Year III

Br. Andrew Rowedder (MD) - Detroit, MI

Year II

Br. Adam Schmitzer (OH) - Detroit, MI

NOVIATE IN CORPUS CHRISTI

Andrew Collart (GA)

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Dear Friends and Benefactors of SOLT,

Uncertainty and change seem to be the marks of our times. As I pen this letter for this edition of the Gray Robes, Russia has initiated an attack on the Ukraine, the unfolding of which has undoubtedly captured the attention of us all.

It is into that backdrop that the risen Lord walks triumphant, himself unchanging. Jesus faced and faces the drama of sin and death and stares it down into submission; the divine Messiah confronts and conquers all that which afflicts the human condition. It is precisely in our insecurity and questioning that the fixedness and immutability of the One who has sought us carries such a weighty significance.

The Fathers of the Church in speaking of the incarnation of Christ would sometimes remark that in being born in our condition, Jesus arrived behind enemy lines. He snuck into our camp, hidden from the enemy, took our side, and began the revolution from within.

At the SOLT House of Studies, Jesus continues his redemption and revolution of hearts through the training of his disciples; he teaches his way of humility and trust to these chosen men. We look forward to the celebration of a diaconate ordination at the end of April, an encouraging sign of the Kingdom. Br. David Snow will, in one weekend, profess his perpetual promises, be ordained a deacon, and proclaim and preach the Word of God at his first Sunday Mass!

I hope you not only enjoy but absorb as well the good works in and of the SOLT Brothers in formation. They are a sign of hope in their daily "yes" and their courageous self-denial for the One who has triumphed.

God's blessings to you,



Finding My Balance

BR. GREGORY RICE

If you can make it safely down Route 94 through the weaving traffic, the procession of billboards, and just past the exit for the seminary, you will reach the door of one of Detroit's hidden treasures. Much of my instruction in this first year here has been at the seminary, but some of the most poignant lessons have come outside of it. Pierce through a rough exterior, and you will find a warm center. At the Adams-Butzel Recreation Center, you will be greeted by bright faces and warm smiles, and shockingly, for \$10 a year, you will be allowed to use the ice rink.

Venturing out onto the ice the first time, I felt the truth of something our formator, Fr. Mark, once told me with his characteristic penchant for relatability: "Beginnings are hard." It looked so easy, so natural for others. Why, for me, did it consist of baby-stepping around the rink like Bill Murray in *What About Bob?*

Sometimes small efforts lead to existential questions. As I approached the thirty-minute mark, still waddling

my first lap, I felt waves of doubt and frustration arise, tapping questioningly at more basic senses of security in my life. I found myself completely inept and had no choice but to focus on baby steps, looking for the Paraclete, the helper, to arrive to my aid.

In many ways, skating has been like my time here in formation. Thanks be to God, the Paraclete always arrives both from within and without. I've slowly begun to get accustomed to the ice and learned that if I give a little push, I'll get a little glide. My core temperature rises, my limbs loosen up, and I am buoyed by the presence of my brothers who beckon me along the narrow path. Sometimes, as others spin effortlessly around me, we will collide because I lack the skill to adjust. (At other times, in a spirit of jocularly during a hockey game, a brother might dash me into the boards.) The protective environment of formation allows for the ice to be kept smooth so that a new skater such as myself can gradually gain strength in his legs.

I have not gotten far, and frequently, completely untouched by any causal explanation, I will sprawl on the ice. When I went home for winter break, I had an overripe black eye from one such incident. My sister, Sister Christine, on the other hand, was unblemished and beaming in her white veil. I felt this to be an emblematic contrast. I am grateful for the patience of God and my community as, with a hand from Mary, I learn bit by bit to keep my balance.

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Above left: Br. Adam playing hockey with Sacred Heart seminarians. Above right: Br. Gregory prepares for the hockey game.

Hope in the Face of Death

BR. JOSEPH SPEARS



Br. Joseph serving at Most Holy Redeemer Parish in Detroit.

“If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.”

1 Corinthians 15:19

These words of St. Paul have been on my mind steadily over the past month or so. But there was one weekend that really brought this verse to the forefront of my thought and prayer.

That weekend, two funerals occurred here at our parish in Detroit. While it is not entirely uncommon to have two funerals here on a weekend, these two hit closer to home because both were for young men whose deaths were sudden and tragic. One was about eighteen years old, and the other was in his thirties. The man in his thirties was a husband and father of three. I had met him a couple of times and had the opportunity to get to know him and his family. He was a quiet but strong man who loved his wife and kids dearly. I had the privilege of serving at his funeral Mass. Watching the parish community come together in support of his family was incredibly moving.

This led me to think and pray more about the idea of hope as St. Paul describes it in 1 Corinthians 15:19. During the Mass, I prayed and tried to put myself in the position of his family, his wife, his kids, his mom, and ask myself: What kind of hope do I have? What is it rooted in? St. Paul's words have given me a sobering consolation that if my hope is only for this present life and world, then I am most to be pitied. At first glance, this might not seem like consolation. However, what was significant about the man's funeral was an abiding sense of hope that still remained in his family and friends. They all wept and mourned for him, but they also took

Christ's words seriously that their beloved relative and friend will be raised on the last day.

Hope is a primary characteristic of Christians because we do not only hope for the things of this world—as nice or fun as they might be—but we are called to live in the world with the hope of a future resurrection and life. St. Paul's words go straight to the heart of the need for true Christian hope that goes beyond this world. Serving at this man's funeral and seeing the faith and hope of his friends and family has increased my hope for heaven and my desire to strive for it each day.



The Significance of Insignificant Things

BR. ANDREW ROWEDDER

“Br. Andrew, are we still going to have practice?”

“Um... No, why? Do you guys want to have practice?”

“Yes, we like practice.” After losing the last game of the season and taking the team photo, this was the conversation I had with three of the players.

Our season ended with a record of 4-6. Like most teams we had our ups and downs. The beginning was rough, losing the first three games of the season by an average of twenty points. Due to the pandemic and coming from a non-basketball background, most of the players had never played an organized basketball game or even watched a full one on TV. We gradually learned the hard way the basic rules of double dribbles, traveling, and back-court violations. We finally had a breakthrough with our first victory of the season. Some called it a miracle as we squeaked out a home win with a blockbuster score of 4-2! You should have seen their faces as the clock ran out. You really should have. Then we won two more games!

Over the course of the season, I saw players who had joined the team just to mess around with their friends become little students of the game, asking clarifying questions and looking hungrily for a rebound. Another player,

who was afraid of the ball all season, began to go for loose balls with both hands. We also won a fantastic close game in overtime with a three pointer by Ezekiel, our quickest player, with only a minute left on the clock. Up to this point, we had built momentum by an accumulation of seemingly insignificant gains. A team with little, through very small improvements, had gained an unimaginable position.

After such exciting wins and thrilling moments, we lost perspective. We went into halftime down 20-0 against a big school the following game. No one likes to lose. Instead of focusing on the little things, we started to blame one another.

Coaching this season, I realized the importance of helping the players focus on the little things. It is about learning to temper emotions of frustration over missed calls, playing hard when being down a few players, and lastly, leaving all of your energy out on the court even when the chips are down. What if we brought some of this attitude toward our pursuit of holiness and of God? What if we really focused on the little things like receiving the Eucharist well, daily personal prayer, and living for others? This season I found a deeper significance of all those seemingly insignificant things.

Above: Br. Andrew serving lunch to Holy Redeemer students; Br. Andrew on the court; Br. Andrew and several of his basketball players smile for a photo during lunch.

Marching for Freedom

BR. DAVID SNOW

I looked around and, along with my fellow seminarians, found myself in a sea of hats, coats, scarves, and signs—marchers for life headed up Capitol Hill for the forty-ninth year. The weather was cold, the walk

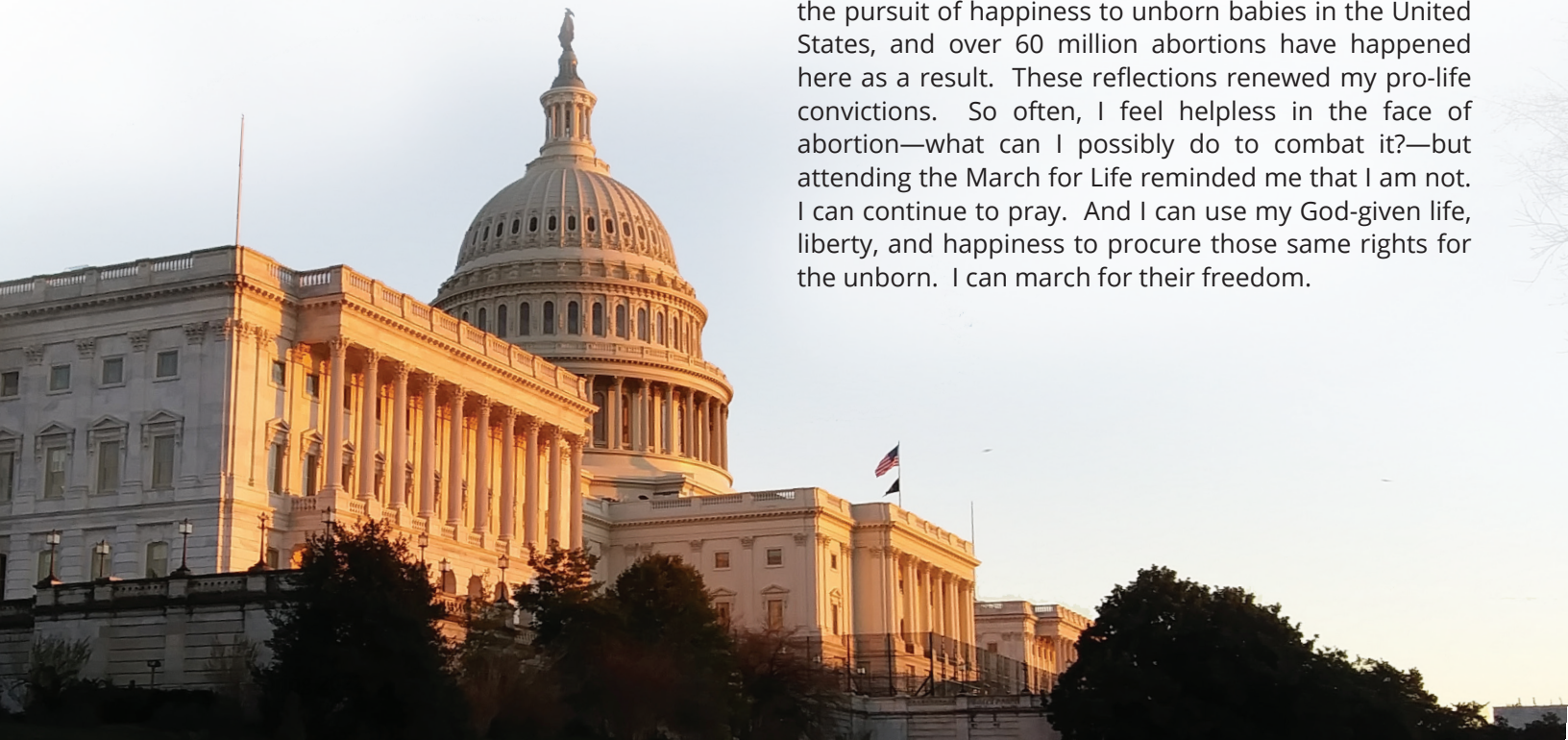
was long, but the air was filled with hope; spirits were high. I had never been part of a big protest before. I knew, however, of many demonstrations throughout history that had ended in horrible violence. I also knew that the March for Life is not like that; it is very peaceful. My impression was confirmed about halfway up the hill when I heard singing wafting up from the crowd around me: “Salve Regina, Mater Misericordiae...”—the “Hail Holy Queen” being chanted in Latin. I joined the song and, with my fellow seminarians, continued to the Capitol, praying that the Supreme Court will overturn *Roe v. Wade*, making this the last national March for Life.

The next morning, our group from Sacred Heart Major Seminary did a different kind of march; we toured Arlington National Cemetery. As we walked the grounds, I was stunned by their expansiveness—plot after plot of land, gravestone after gravestone, memorial after memorial as far as the eye could see. These were men and women who had served our country, many of whom had made the ultimate sacrifice to protect the freedoms we enjoy. I prayed for the repose of their souls, thanked them for their sacrifice, and thanked God for the blessings of living in this land.

In the following days, I reflected on my experiences in Washington. I realized anew that thousands, perhaps millions of brave men and women have died defending our right to live in freedom. Yet our current laws permitting abortion do not honor that sacrifice. They do not grant the God-given, inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to unborn babies in the United States, and over 60 million abortions have happened here as a result. These reflections renewed my pro-life convictions. So often, I feel helpless in the face of abortion—what can I possibly do to combat it?—but attending the March for Life reminded me that I am not. I can continue to pray. And I can use my God-given life, liberty, and happiness to procure those same rights for the unborn. I can march for their freedom.



Br. David (front with blue hat) and his fellow seminarians in front of the Supreme Court building after the March for Life.





Mission: Miami!

BR. ADAM SCHMITZER

One February morning, all eyes were on a big winter storm rolling into Detroit. That whole day the temperature started to drop, and that night the steady rain that had been pooling on the ground turned into a mess of sloppy slush, then into a bed of ice, and then disappeared under a cushion of snow. Children were singing the Lord's praises for two whole days of no school until the cleanup finally got started—plowing, shoveling, and salting with frozen fingers in the freezing winds. I almost felt a little guilty as I stepped onto a plane to spend the weekend in Miami!

"Seek-2022" was my destination, an annual conference of college students sponsored by a university campus ministry called FOCUS. These students came together to

pray, grow in their faith, and enjoy each other's company, and SOLT was present to celebrate with them and to encourage vocations to our community. We had a booth set up with all our information, and I was feeling ready with a friendly hello and a wooing explanation of our mission for any curious passersby. That's when I got a surprise.

"Hey Brother Adam, do you want to be part of the vocations panel set up on the main stage to share with everyone about your calling to religious life?" Sr. Mary Elizabeth asked suddenly.

"Sure," I said tentatively, thinking how nice the weather in Detroit is this time of year.

As the conversation came to an end, I started thinking about what message

I wanted to give from the panel. It didn't take long. In fact, God had already given me the answer the day I left Detroit. Having gone to confession that morning, I was asked by the priest to spend some time with God thinking about something I was grateful for in my life. Immediately, my call to live as a religious had come to mind, an invitation I received years ago through reading the story of the rich young man (Mark 10:17-21). That began my pursuit of God, which has brought into my life untold satisfaction, joy, challenge, and peace, gifts of a God good beyond compare and completely worthy of surrender!

Hopefully, that was the message I left with the students in sunny Miami, and I hope I've done the same for you through this article. God bless.



As the conversation came to an end, I started thinking about what message I wanted to give from the panel.

Above (left to right): Sr. Mary Elizabeth, Sr. Maryam Caritas, Fr. Beau, Br. Andrew, and Br. Adam at Seek-22 in Miami.



Br. David, Sr. Mary Lauren, and Br. Andrew go for a walk in the snow!



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Left to right: Br. David, Br. Uriel, Br. Gregory, Br. Joseph, Br. Andrew, and Br. Adam at Most Holy Redeemer Parish in Detroit.

On the front cover: Br. David (far left with blue hat) and fellow Sacred Heart seminarians at the March for Life in Washington DC.



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