

SOCIETY of OUR LADY
of the Most Holy Trinity

gray robes

SPRING 2023





*Peter said, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water."
Jesus said, "Come."*



Matthew 14:28-29

GRAY ROBES FORMATION PROGRAM

SACRED HEART MAJOR SEMINARY IN DETROIT, MI

Theology IV: Dcn. David Snow (MO)
Theology III: Br. Joseph Spears (KY)
Philosophy II: Br. Gregory Rice (PA)
Philosophy I: Br. Andrew Collart (GA)

PERMANENT BROTHERHOOD IN MISSION

Year IV

Br. Andrew Rowedder (MD) - Detroit, MI

Year III

Br. Adam Schmitzer (OH) - Detroit, MI

NOVIATE IN CORPUS CHRISTI

Fr. Daniel Gallagher (DC)
Nicholas Judge (MD)

ASPIRANCY IN BELIZE

Rocky Garcia (TX)

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Dear Friends and Benefactors of SOLT,

It is with great expectation and anticipation that we prepare this issue of the Gray Robes for you. In six short weeks there will be a buzz around Holy Redeemer Church as we welcome visitors to celebrate with us three encouraging and exciting moments.

On Friday April 14th, two of our brothers—Br. Adam Schmitzer and Br. Joseph Spears—will profess their perpetual promises at an evening Mass. This step, in a sense, confirms the work of God in these men, bringing discernment to its fulfillment and grafting them to the mission that God has entrusted to SOLT in the Church and in the world.

The following day, Saturday April 15th, Br. Joseph will be ordained to the diaconate at Sacred Heart Major Seminary. This marks a major milestone of the Lord's work in Br. Joseph's life towards incorporating him into His one holy priesthood. At the same time, the diaconate is not merely a step in the process, but is itself a goal, an "end": a sacramental moment that is not moved through, but rather takes root and lives on into priesthood. It is the first of three degrees of ordination where Br. Joseph is united with Jesus in his diakonia or service. From henceforth, all his good works will be imbued with a unique "flavor" of the Lord himself, who seeks out the lost and forsaken. Br. Joseph will join Jesus kneeling at the Last Supper to wash the feet and serve the needs of others, to be united to Jesus' self-sacrificing act of service in free self-immolation on the cross.

Finally, on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 16th, Br. Joseph will deliver his first homily, in English and Spanish, and begin to know the Lord's own nourishing of His people through the Proclamation of the Word. Although it is to some degree nerve-wracking, preaching as one chosen and sent by Jesus in the most personalized way possible is a unique mode of intimacy with Jesus, wherein He shares His joy at making His Father known and seeing His children be healed, fed, and strengthened.

We humbly ask for your prayers for these men and all our men in formation, as we too intercede and ask the Lord to bless you in the role you have played in their journeys.

Peace and blessings,



Eww, That Smell

BR. ANDREW ROWEDDER, SOLT

No, this is not about the cafeteria staff playing that Lynyrd Skynyrd song. But we definitely echoed some of its verses after we encountered a foul smell in the cafeteria one Friday morning some weeks ago. As I walked into the cafeteria that morning, the smell hit me. What could it be? Did we somehow miss food that had begun to rot under a table or cart?

We all have encountered bad smells in our physical lives, but they can exist in our spiritual lives too. For example, an unfriendly or unkind attitude or a repugnant mistake, fault, or sin. When we encounter these “stenches,” our first reaction may be to lose our peace by placing blame on someone or something else, or to over-focus on our own faults. We may blame it on our personality, the way we were raised, or some external influence. We may swear never to do such and such a thing again, and then feel worse if we break that promise. We may take to extremes and forget to do the basics: a simple examination of conscience; a return to the core truths that God loves us and He wants us to remember His love and

receive Him; that each of us has different gifts; that we can return to the light that gives us life.

Back in the cafeteria, we handled the situation well by asking if we all smelled it and considering different possibilities for the source. No one exploded into a fury, tearing open the floor boards and drywall. One person moved a solid shelf to look under it, convinced that the source of the smell must lay there, but to no avail. And the stench intensified as the day went on. Eventually, one of the cafeteria staff members located the smell—watery cheesy broccoli left in the warmer on the very shelf that we had already searched. Not one of us had done the basic check, cleaning out each warmer at the end of the previous day.

So often, our spiritual senses are not as attuned as our physical senses. We recognize problems and blessings in the spiritual life, but only after they have clearly been thought through and manifested in our lives. May the Lord bless us with the time, patience, and peace to discover and clean out any stenches our souls may be polluting ourselves, our family, and our friends with.

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Above: Br. Andrew Rowedder and co-worker Maria preparing lunches for Holy Redeemer students; Br. Andrew Rowedder with Holy Redeemer students during lunch.

Approaching the Altar

BR. JOSEPH SPEARS, SOLT



Br. Joseph (front row 2nd from left) with his seminary classmates at the March for Life Mass in Washington DC.

Children often have a way of asking simple, straightforward questions that adults tend not to notice or consider very significant. A few weeks ago, I was helping train and prepare some boys to serve at the altar for Mass. Each of them was eager to learn and they continually had their hands up in order to ask questions. “Why is the church so big? Why is it so beautiful? What is this used for? What is in that room?” Nearing the end of these explanations, one of the boys raised his hand and asked, “Why do we fold our hands like this at Mass?” He showed me his hands placed next to each other and pointed upwards.

It took me a moment to consider his question and how to reply to it. It was simple, direct, and obviously deserved an answer. However, while the answer to his question is simple, it is also difficult to put into words its full significance. The folding of hands seems such an obvious posture of prayer, but how many people ever wonder or become conscious of the truth it expresses about our

relationship to God? The reason why an altar server and others who fold their hands during times of prayer is that it is a posture of total entrustment. Centuries ago, a servant or vassal would place his hands in between the hands of his lord and wrap a cord around them in order to signify his entrustment and complete reliance on his master. It was a way of saying, “I commend my life into your hands because you will care for me in my service to you.” In other words, for an altar server or any Christian, this posture can be an act of prayerful trust.

As I come closer to approaching the altar as an ordained deacon, this idea has become more significant for me. A posture of total entrustment in the Lord is what a deacon is called to live out, yet it is equally the call of every disciple. Folded hands may seem insignificant but one’s posture and actions are always displaying a greater or lesser receptivity and willingness to serve the Lord in all areas, especially the small ones.

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To the Shelter of All Goodness

BR. GREGORY RICE, SOLT

A bicycle ride through the city streets of downtown Detroit can provide a suddenly refreshing perspective on life in a religious house of formation. The sidewalks are populated by a thousand different sets of eyes, all with the exact same ultimate vocation resting behind them. "And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled'" (Luke 14:23). A spin along the concrete under towering buildings and past crowded stores can make me realize the joy I have in being so close to the place of true rest. Through its catechism program, the parish extends an invitation to those city streets, inviting His little ones to find shelter in the home of all goodness.

A recent Catholic philosopher has said that the heart of all philosophic and human questioning lies in the question, "Am I loved?" That is, after every question is answered, the human person still lacks what is essential to him if he does not know that God is love. This is the basic news that the children who come to the parish's catechism program thirst to have echoing in their hearts and minds. Like all the places where SOLT serves, Detroit is a city with many difficulties and one which offers many

false idols to its people. For children growing up there, love can become questionable amidst all of the human fallenness. The catechism program boasts 600 students coming from the public schools and many of them from difficult backgrounds, living in largely low-income urban areas. For many of them, the catechism program is the only place where it is clearly proclaimed what the calling of their heart is truly for: love, which is a person, Jesus Christ.

As the brothers and I served in the program this semester, and while not every encounter has flashed with the clear recognition of faith, for each of us there have been more seeds of hope than can be counted. We return from this retreat to our daily rhythm of prayer as a house, and these seeds are prayed into sprouting. It is the beauty of a vocation as a friend of the Bridegroom, to go out to the highways and seek to fill His house, by means hidden as well as visible. This coming spring, I hope to take many more bike rides as the weather warms, energized by stops for espresso and a budding hope to plant new seeds.

Above: Br. Gregory leading his Confirmation class in activities during the Holy Redeemer confirmation retreat.

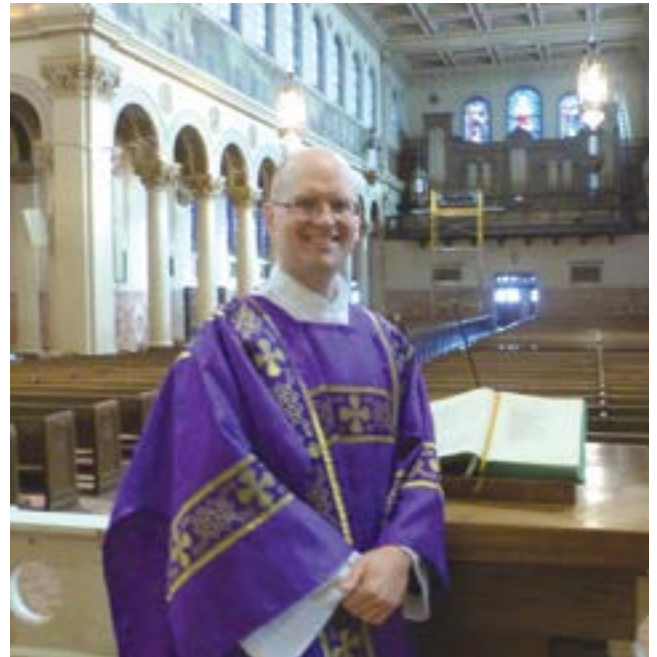
The Greatest Adventure

DCN. DAVID SNOW, SOLT

When I was a child, my family had an animated VHS series called *The Greatest Adventure: Stories from the Bible*. It was wonderful, recounting the journey of two young modern-day archaeologists and their friend who discover a portal that transports them back in time to ancient Israel where they witness firsthand the most important events of Salvation History. As they experience Joshua fighting the battle of Jericho, David slaying Goliath, Esther saving Israel from extermination in Persia, and Jesus being born in Bethlehem, among many other stories, they are enthralled, excited, sorrowful, joyful, and even moved to tears. Above all, they come to a more profound appreciation of what God has done for us. As children, we watched this series a lot, and the episodes were so well made that many of them are seared into my memory to this day. I still occasionally watch them on YouTube, and I have come to realize that this childhood experience played a huge part in helping me fall in love with sacred scripture.

Today, as a deacon and minister of God's word, I happily find myself in the shoes of the characters from that series. Whether I'm praying, studying the Bible, reading it for fun, or preparing a homily, I sit down and do my best to open my heart and let God speak to me. At various times I get fired up with zeal, rejoice in God's works, or feel great sorrow for my sins. Sometimes the Word of God is so beautiful that it moves me to tears. On other occasions, I feel nothing, so I think about the objective message that God is trying to deliver in the story or passage. Some days, the journey feels better than others, but it is always an adventure, and even from those young years of my life, I have been part of it. Indeed, one of the greatest blessings in my life has been discovering and living my own adventure within the adventure of God's eternal plan.

And the journey continues. One of my seminary professors likes to say that when you put down your favorite book, the story stops, but when you put down the Bible, the adventure continues all around you. Though I am nearing the end of my formation for the priesthood, I thank God for all he has done in my life and look forward in hope to the new adventure he has in store.



Dcn. David at the ambo after Mass in Holy Redeemer Church.



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Seeking Communion

BR. ANDREW COLLART, SOLT

This January, I attended the SEEK Conference in St. Louis, presented by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS). Br. Gregory and I joined other SOLT members from various missions to host a booth and meet students traveling to the conference from across the country! In addition to the college students, there were 24 bishops and 300 priests as well as many seminarians, religious brothers and sisters, and lay missionaries: 17,000 total attendees! It was truly an experience of the universality of the Church.

SEEK was very encouraging for me coming after my first semester of seminary. As a new seminarian, the previous months had been an intense time to learn to be faithful to my responsibilities when each day does not necessarily bring an exciting new cocktail of experiences. The seminarian must learn to be “trustworthy in very small matters”

(Luke 16:10). Good as this is, one can lose perspective of the beauty of the Church within the nitty-gritty routines of life. However, at SEEK, the Holy Spirit’s dynamic presence within so many people in the Church was very palpable! I was re-encouraged in my own vocation and reminded of the foundation of my call to love Christ’s Church.

This experience evoked what I imagine Heaven will be like once time has been gathered together into eternity and we are reunited in communion with those we love from our whole life. At SEEK, I met so many new people eager to follow Jesus, but I also encountered fellow seminarians, childhood friends, alumni from my college days, former SOLT missionary volunteers, and many others reemerging from my past! Many of these meetings were unexpected, though not surprising—each

one a confirmation that we are striving, in our own ways, to be busy about God’s work.

I also tasted heaven in the daily liturgy. During the conference, the highlight of every day for me was gathering with the thousands for daily Mass. The procession of clergy alone took nearly 20 minutes! These liturgies lasted about two hours and were sublime tastes of ecclesial and eucharistic communion with the Church. Any experience of genuine liturgical communion on earth is a participation in and foretaste of heaven when all the “communions” that have ever been will be present as a “now.” Fr. Flanagan, our SOLT founder, used to teach his spiritual children to “live from communion to communion.” When life’s travails bear upon you, harden not your heart, but SEEK to reenter the communion of God.

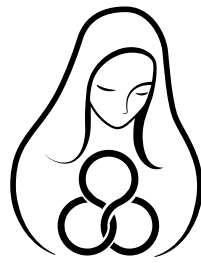


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Above: Br. Gregory (far right) and Br. Andrew Collart (2nd from right) reconnecting with friends, family, and former SOLT Missionary Volunteers at the SEEK conference in St. Louis; Br. Andrew Collart shows off his baking skills with a fresh batch of soft pretzels.



Br. Uriel and Br. Adam, enjoying the Holy Redeemer Confirmation retreat.



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The SOLT brothers at Lake Michigan (L to R: Dcn. David, Br. Andrew Collart, Br. Andrew Rowedder, Br. Gregory, Br. Adam).

*On the front cover:
Br. Joseph being installed as an
Acolyte at Sacred Heart Major Seminary
by Archbishop Leonard Blair.*



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