

# THE DISCIPLE

A SEMI-ANNUAL PUBLICATION OF THE SEMINARIANS OF  
SAINT JOHN VIANNEY COLLEGE SEMINARY, MIAMI

WITHOUT ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING



ST. JOHN VIANNEY  
COLLEGE SEMINARY  
& GRADUATE SCHOOL





## > CORPUS CHRISTI CATHOLIC CHURCH

For their annual humanities conference, the seminarians visited a Baroque-style church, the design of which is inspired by the Catholic architectural tradition of South America. The seminarians encountered the treasures of Holy Mother Church as they venerated sacred art, relics of the saints, and beautiful architecture.



# The Disciple

A SEMIANNUAL PUBLICATION OF THE  
SEMINARIANS OF SAINT JOHN VIANNEY  
COLLEGE SEMINARY, MIAMI, FL

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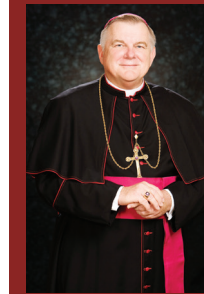
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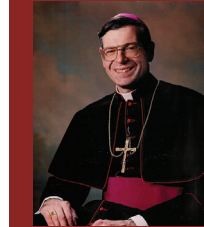
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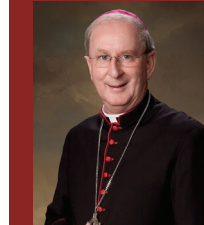
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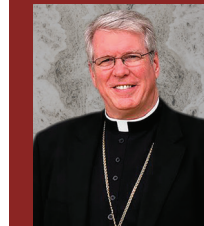
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# Rector's Message

## Saved in Hope

Dear Friends,

This semester started full steam ahead and it has not let up. I don't know if it is my advanced age or the sense of urgency, but time seems to pass ever so swiftly.

We have completed Mid-Term Exams and have begun the season of Lent. This year, thanks be to God, the seminarians will be able to go to their dioceses for Holy Week and Easter, which is something they were not able to do for the past two years during the pandemic.

You will probably receive this publication during the Easter season. This year, Easter takes on a special significance as we experience new horizons and are filled with renewed hope.

In the Gospel we read that on that first Easter Morning, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb while it was still dark. She went to the tomb of Jesus who healed her, taught her, and accorded her the respect and love she never felt worthy of receiving.

The Easter story begins in the darkness of the early morning. This is how our discovery of the risen Christ always begins... in darkness.

For many, this time may be a time of darkness not only because of the pandemic, but also because of life. Perhaps some have received terrible news from a physician... or maybe someone has suddenly lost their job... or someone has lost a dear one... or someone's hope was crucified. This darkness can be overwhelming.

No one is ready to encounter Easter until he or she has spent time in the early morning darkness where hope cannot be seen. In such darkness, Easter is the last thing we are expecting. And that is why Easter often terrifies us. We dread the darkness, but we fear what lies beyond it even more.

Sometimes the darkness we know is preferable to what we do not know; we have learned to "function" and exist in the darkness; we find distorted solace in the fact that darkness means that nothing more can disappoint us...or hurt us. Easter's first light illuminates those dark places we have become used to; it focuses our vision and attention on what we have never seen before...it dares us to imagine possibilities beyond our limited understanding of what is possible.

Easter is not about bunnies, colored eggs, bonnets, peeps, or girls in bright dresses.

EASTER IS ABOUT MORE HOPE THAN WE CAN HANDLE!

Easter calls us out of darkness that shrouds our lives and into the light of possibility, healing, and re-creation. Through His rising from the dead, Christ enables us to integrate His mysteries and teachings into our hearts: His love, compassion, generosity, humility, and selflessness that ultimately triumphs over hatred, prejudice, despair, greed, and death.

The empty tomb is the sign of perfect hope and evidence that in Christ all things are possible. Through this sign, we know that our lives are meaningful and that we can become the people God created us to be.

Let us pray for wisdom and strength so that we may not fear the first light of Easter morning. Let us instead embrace the light of Christ and the hope it promises of the Risen One who is forever in our midst to shatter the darkness in our lives. Then, we too can go and share that light with others.

May the light, joy, and peace of the Easter Mystery we celebrate invigorate you and your dear families now and always.

**Reverend Monsignor Pablo A. Navarro**  
**Rector-President**







# The King and the Queen

## The Relationship Between Philosophy and Theology

Erich Vazquez  
Pre-Theology II  
Archdiocese of Miami

*“What does philosophy have to do with theology?”*

This is a question that people ask me when they find out I am currently studying philosophy at St. John Vianney College Seminary. While this question has a complex answer, it is still an important question which addresses not only the academic relationship between philosophy and theology, but also the way in which Mother Church desires her priests to be formed.

The Greek word *philosophia* means “the love of wisdom.” To love means to be committed to and enveloped by the object that is loved. A philosopher, then, is to love wisdom as one loves a spouse: completely and with total fidelity. This love is ignited in the moment when a philosopher is ‘captured’ by the beauty of wisdom and submits to it. Now, to love also means to know the object that is loved; therefore, a philosopher ought to know what wisdom is in order to pursue it. According to Aristotle, wisdom is the knowledge of first principles. It is the knowledge of the foundation of reality itself and the knowledge of what is ultimately true because truth is that which corresponds with reality.<sup>1</sup>

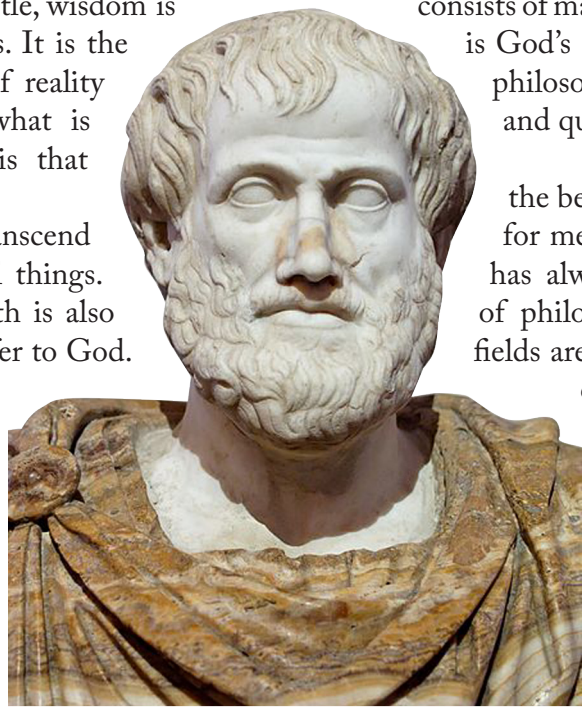
Truth must necessarily transcend all things because it sustains all things. This understanding of what truth is also what people mean when they refer to God. To study philosophy, therefore, means to love wisdom and therefore love God because God is wisdom itself and the foundation of all reality. That being said, it is important to note that the great Catholic philosopher Peter Kreeft once said that philosophy does not

claim to possess wisdom but only to pursue it. Kreeft writes: “Philosophy is human, not divine. Therefore, it is fallible. It seeks wisdom, implying that it does not yet possess it. Truth is divine; the love of it is human.”<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, philosophy is the study of reality as a whole and of everything that is sustained in existence by God. Philosophy, therefore, is the foundation of all other fields of study, including what are known as the “hard sciences” and the “soft sciences”.

For this reason, philosophy was referred to as the “king of the sciences” in the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> However, every king needs a queen, and the only field of study suited for such a role is theology. While philosophy is the love of wisdom which flows from God, who is Ultimate Truth, theology actually possesses this wisdom as its source is God’s revelation. Philosophy consists of man’s pursuit of God while theology is God’s self revelation to man. Therefore, philosophy and theology are the king and queen of all the sciences.

Because Mother Church desires the best for her children, and especially for men studying for Holy Orders, she has always been the greatest patroness of philosophy and theology. These two fields are not opposed to one another but complementary. Faith, the tool used to study theology, and reason, the tool used to study philosophy have harmony with one another and mutually enrich each other. Therefore, faith is neither subrational (below reason), nor irrational (against reason), but rather



<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 1141b

<sup>2</sup> Peter Kreeft, *Philosophy 101 by Socrates: An Introduction to Philosophy via Plato’s Apology* (Ignatius Press: San Francisco 2002), 78.

<sup>3</sup> The word ‘science’ in this context refers to any field of knowledge. This is according to the Latin word *scientia* which means knowledge.



supra-rational (above reason). First Vatican Council explained this concept very well:

*“Even if faith is superior to reason there can never be a true divergence between faith and reason, since the same God who reveals the mysteries and bestows the gift of faith has also placed in the human spirit the light of reason. This God could not deny himself, nor could the truth ever contradict the truth”<sup>4</sup>*

Sadly, in the current era of post-modernity in which we find ourselves, the Church’s teaching on this matter has been ignored by the world and even, I dare to say, by most Catholics. As members of the Catholic Church, we must reclaim an awareness of the relationship of faith and reason as well as that of philosophy and theology so that we may be equipped to respond to what Archbishop Wenski calls “a secularism that wants to exile God from our consciousness and marginalize those who persist in believing.”<sup>5</sup> What, then, is my response to the question

“What does philosophy have to do with theology?”

**“Everything.”**

*“Even if faith is superior to reason there can never be a true divergence between faith and reason, since the same God who reveals the mysteries and bestows the gift of faith has also placed in the human spirit the light of reason. This God could not deny himself, nor could the truth ever contradict the truth”*

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<sup>5</sup> Florida Catholic, Archbishop Wenski’s Homily Oct. 9 2021 Opening of the Synod Mass. [https://www.thefloridacatholic.org/dioceses/miami/time-to-listen-to-each-other/article\\_671fc97c-303d-11ec-9d65-3b14598b865f.html](https://www.thefloridacatholic.org/dioceses/miami/time-to-listen-to-each-other/article_671fc97c-303d-11ec-9d65-3b14598b865f.html)



# Discípulo Misionero

Juan Pablo Mora Duran

Philosophia III  
Diócesis de Atlanta



**"Yahvé dijo a Abram: «Deja tu país, a los de tu raza y a la familia de tu padre, y anda a la tierra que yo te mostraré. Haré de ti una gran nación y te bendeciré; voy a engrandecer tu nombre, y tú serás una bendición.» (Génesis 12: 1-2)**

Mi vida e historia vocacional puedo verla reflejada en este pasaje bíblico, por ello antes de contar sobre mí, quise que presidiera este escrito. Soy Juan Pablo Mora Durán, tengo 30 años y soy de la aldea Agua Caliente de la ciudad de La Grita, estado Táchira- Venezuela. En mi proceso de formación sacerdotal pertenezco a la Arquidiócesis de Atlanta y actualmente estudio Inglés en el Colegio Seminario San Juan Vianney.

Mi proceso vocacional comenzó cuando era yo pequeño, recuerdo que, junto a mi hermano mellizo, jugaba a celebrar la Santa Misa. Un día él era el sacerdote y otro día yo, y así jugábamos frente a una pequeña capilla que había frente a la casa en el campo. A la vez leíamos un libro que se llamaba 100 Historias Sagradas. En este libro se narraba las historias más destacadas de la Biblia. Recuerdo con mucha emoción cuando realicé la primera comunión a los 10 años porque fue un punto de inflexión en mi proceso. Para mí recibir a Jesús en la Eucaristía ha sido una de las experiencias más hermosas de mi vida. Yo deseaba ser acólito, pero la vida de mi familia cambió debido a que tuvimos que cambiarnos de casa en dos oportunidades y ya me quedaba un poco lejos ir a la Iglesia para la Santa Misa.

A los doce años mi vida cambió nuevamente con la muerte de mi Papá, fue un momento muy doloroso, sin embargo, este momento fue decisivo para que yo me

cuestionara sobre el sentido de la vida y que quería hacer yo con mi vida. Luego me acerqué a la Iglesia con la muerte del Papa San Juan Pablo II. Porque mi mamá algo preocupada por mi cambio de actitud frente a la vida, me invitó a que fuera a la Iglesia. Así fue como un 08 de abril de 2005 comencé como acólito en mi Parroquia Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles.

Cuando tenía diecisiete años, al terminar mi bachillerato ingresé en el Seminario Santo Tomás de Aquino de la Diócesis de San Cristóbal junto a mi hermano mellizo Pedro Antonio. Allí estuve durante 7 años en el proceso de discernimiento y formación sacerdotal. Durante mi tiempo en el Seminario realicé diferentes experiencias de misión en las comunidades del Táchira, entre ellas dos experiencias de un año cada una; la primera en el Diario Católico (Periódico Diocesano Católico) y la segunda en la Parroquia Santa Ana. Luego debido a la situación que atravesaba mi país y también a la necesidad de redescubrir el llamado que Dios me hace, decidí retirarme del Seminario, emprender un camino de conocerme y trabajar para ayudar económicamente a mi familia, quién vive en Venezuela.

Fue en este tiempo cuando me fui a vivir en la ciudad de Florencia, al sur de Colombia en una Fundación Católica llamada, KANAFa, Kampamento para las Naciones Formando en el Amor. Durante cuatro años estuve allí trabajando en campamentos y retiros con Jóvenes. Estando allí, escuché en una canción el pasaje bíblico que coloqué al inicio de este escrito y redescubriría la llamada de Dios en mi vida, luego de la ordenación sacerdotal de



mi hermano el 24 enero de 2020. Sentía como Dios me invitaba a comenzar una nueva historia en mi proceso vocacional. Una historia donde me permitiera confiar plenamente en Él para que yo viniera a este país para continuar mi proceso vocacional y de formación sacerdotal. Estando en Florencia, supe de la Arquidiócesis de Atlanta. Realicé el proceso correspondiente para que ellos pudieran conocerme y una vez aceptado por la Arquidiócesis para el programa de formación sacerdotal de extranjeros, llegué a Estados Unidos el 25 de diciembre de 2020.

Un hecho que fue muy decisivo en mi crecimiento espiritual y personal fue el haber participado en las jornadas mundiales de Jóvenes con el Papa Francisco; Rio de Janeiro 2013 y Panamá 2019. Justamente en ellas descubría la universalidad de la Iglesia. Es casi indescriptible para mí decir lo que fue esta experiencia en Brasil junto a más de dos millones de personas. No importaba mi pasado, no anhelaba el futuro, sólo importaba que junto a la gran cantidad de personas allí reunidas redescubría mi valor como persona y como la misión a la que Dios me invitaba iba más allá de un espacio geográfico al que amo. Así, a través de estos signos, Dios me llamó a salir de mi tierra y llegar a este país para dar mi vida por la evangelización y misión en la Iglesia Católica que necesita muchos pastores según el Corazón de

Jesús. Para esto, estudiamos en el seminario, para configurar nuestro corazón dejándonos moldear por la gracia de Dios e imitar a Jesús, el Buen Pastor.

Para mí, ser misionero en Estados Unidos es un gran reto porque es un país multicultural, un país con diversas realidades sociales, económicas y religiosas, un país que necesita testigos valientes del evangelio — testigos sin miedo a entregar la vida para que muchos conozcan del amor de Dios. — Mi experiencia ha sido conocer e integrarme a la Arquidiócesis de Atlanta, al Colegio Seminario San Juan Vianney, la Parroquia Católica All Saints en Atlanta durante mi asignación de verano 2021 al igual compartir con mis compañeros de clase en Georgia State University y en la Parroquia san Luis de la Arquidiócesis de Miami me han llevado a conocer la realidad de la Iglesia Católica en este país, una realidad marcada por el compromiso de todos los católicos. Es increíble como ser católico no es solo un título sino un estilo de vida. Un compromiso por vivir en la presencia de Dios.

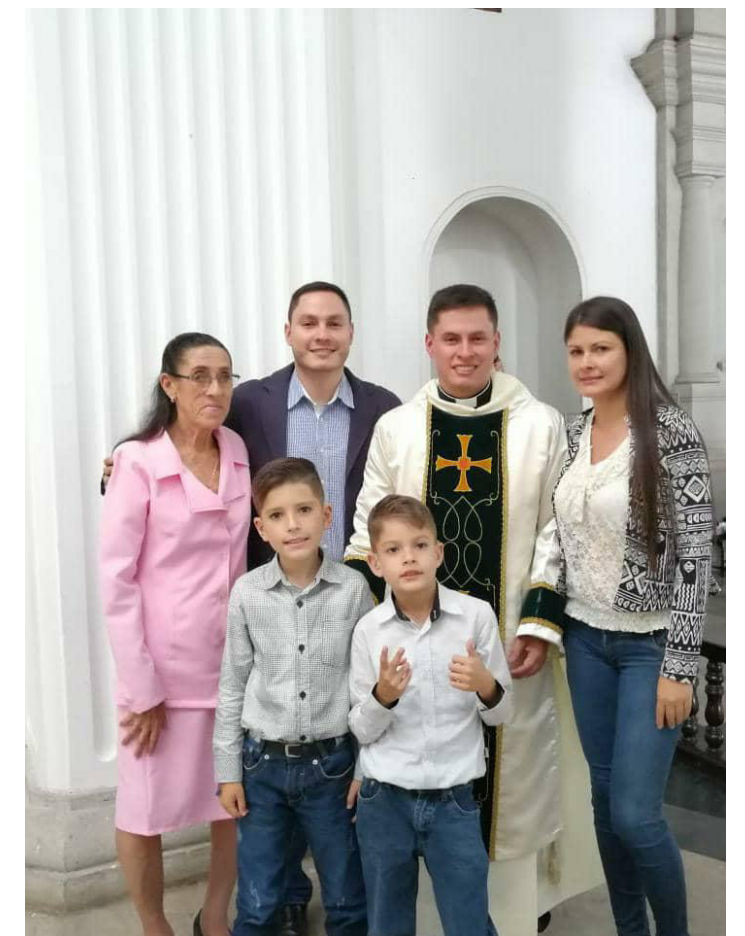
He disfrutado al ayudar en las diferentes celebraciones eucarísticas, enseñar en la catequesis y ser testigo de Jesús donde me encuentre. En este tiempo pues, más que enseñar, he sido yo el que aprende más y más, no sólo del idioma y de mí, sino que también aprendo de como poder llegar a tantas

personas y sus culturas y poder sembrar la semilla del evangelio para que ella crezca en las nuevas generaciones.

Siendo este escrito sólo una pincelada de mi historia, pudiese resumirla de la siguiente manera: Dios me llamó a abandonar mi tierra, mi familia, mis amigos y mis anhelos para ser misionero de su amor. Resuena en mi corazón las palabras de Dios cuando le dice a Abraham: Te bendeciré. Todo el proceso que Dios me ha permitido pasar ha sido muchas veces un desierto y otras un valle, donde sólo puedo decir como expresa el Salmo 23 (22): “El Señor es mi Pastor nada me faltará”. Confío en él, en su gracia me abandono para que pueda ser yo un sacerdote feliz entregado sólo a trabajar por el Reino de los Cielos.



**"Yahvé dijo a Abram:  
«Deja tu país, a los de tu  
raza y a la familia de tu  
padre, y anda a la tierra  
que yo te mostraré. Haré  
de ti una gran nación  
y te bendeciré; voy a  
engrandecer tu nombre,  
y tú serás una bendición."  
- Génesis 12: 1-2**





# Vocation Awareness Weekend







# Marchando Por Los Que No Pueden

Christopher Morales  
Philosophia I  
Diócesis de San Agustín



He tenido una estrecha conexión con la causa pro-vida durante bastante tiempo. Fui a una escuela secundaria pública en St. Johns, Florida (Creekside High School), allí pude continuar y crecer en mi amor por la lucha por la vida. En el segundo año en Creekside, había usado una camisa una vez a la semana que decía: "Soy Pro-Vida, Cambio de opinión". El Sr. Kyle Stephens, un maestro de Creekside, se me acercó un día y me pidió que creara un club pro-vida. Al día siguiente, redacté una propuesta y presenté la idea a mi director, y después de responder a algunas preguntas que tenía, aprobó el club. El Club Creekside Choose Life se inició oficialmente, el primer club pro-vida en una escuela pública en el norte de Florida y yo fui el fundador y presidente. Cuando empezamos, recibimos comentarios muy negativos en nuestra cuenta de redes sociales públicas. Algunos de estos comentarios fueron tan odiosos y espantosos que no puedo repetirlos. Me entristeció profundamente ver estos comentarios, pero solo se sumó a mi amor por los no nacidos. También recibimos una efusión de apoyo de muchas personas que calentaron mi corazón. Los principales comentarios no ofensivos recibidos en nuestras publicaciones de apertura fueron en las líneas de "odias a las mujeres", o "¿por qué un hombre dirige

un club sobre mujeres!?" A la primera declaración, nuestra respuesta fue "no odiamos a las mujeres, y de hecho estamos defendiendo a las futuras mujeres en el vientre materno." Mi respuesta a la segunda afirmación fue, "se necesitan dos para bailar tango", básicamente diciendo que se necesita un hombre y una mujer para hacer un hijo, y creo que ambos son igualmente responsables de ese hijo. A pesar de los intentos de los comentaristas pro aborto, la asistencia a nuestro club se duplicó con creces desde nuestra primera reunión hasta la segunda debido a la gran publicidad en toda la escuela desde nuestra cuenta de redes sociales. El club lo ha estado haciendo tan bien, que la escuela secundaria del otro lado de la calle comenzó su propio club pro-vida el año pasado. El club había llamado la atención del obispo Felipe Estévez, así como de la oficina de vida y dignidad humana de la diócesis de San Agustín. Me dieron el honor de ser un orador invitado en la Marcha por la Vida de la Diócesis de San Agustín de 2021. En mi discurso en la marcha, había hablado de la inconstitucionalidad del aborto. Yo había señalado que, irónicamente, la misma enmienda que la corte suprema usó en Roe v. Wade, es la misma enmienda



que debemos usar para poner fin a Roe v. Wade (Enmienda 14). La enmienda 14 garantiza los derechos a: la vida, la libertad y la propiedad, ¡el primero y más importante de los cuales es la vida! Incluso la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos de las Naciones Unidas garantiza el derecho a la vida. Antes de la revolución sexual de los años 60, todos, sin importar en qué lado del pasillo religioso o político estuviera, sabíamos que la vida comienza en la concepción, y oro para que todos puedan abrir sus corazones y realizar el regalo y el milagro de la vida y realizar que toda la vida comienza en la concepción. Al concluir mi último año, me sentí muy honrado al recibir el Premio Defensor de la Vida de la Diócesis de San Agustín. Estoy orgulloso de informar, el Club Creekside Choose Life sigue siendo fuerte!

En enero de este año, diez de nuestros seminaristas y nuestro administrador, el Padre Luis Rivero, tuvieron el privilegio de asistir a la Marcha Anual por la Vida en Washington DC. Esta fue una experiencia muy fructífera para que nuestros hombres disfrutaran de este hermoso evento en fraternidad unos con otros. Mientras estábamos en la capital de nuestra nación, pudimos asistir a la Misa por la Vida en la Basílica del Santuario Nacional de la Inmaculada Concepción. Fue realmente increíble estar en esta misa con miles de católicos celebrando la vida. El día de la marcha fue verdaderamente



especial, comenzamos con una misa privada celebrada por Fr. Rivero. Luego fuimos al National Mall, donde comenzó la marcha con muchos oradores, incluido el padre. ¡Mike Schmitz! Una vez terminadas las conversaciones, comenzamos nuestra marcha desde el Monumento a Washington por Constitution Ave. a la Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos. Al día siguiente, pudimos participar en el santo sacrificio de la Misa en el Santuario de San Juan Pablo II, celebrada por Fr. Rivero.

Este año es el más importante para la causa pro-vida. En junio de 2022, se espera que la Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos emita su decisión sobre Dobbs v. Jackson. Si Dobbs gana este caso, revocará de manera efectiva Roe v. Wade, y esto permitiría que se aprobara una importante legislación pro-vida a nivel estatal, ¡incluso podrían ocurrir prohibiciones directas al aborto! Pido a todos que recen para que los Jueces de la Corte Suprema permitan que sus corazones se abran y pongan fin a la atrocidad del aborto. También les pido que oren por los políticos pro aborto para que



## Marchando Por Los Que No Pueden

puedan tener un cambio de corazón, especialmente por los legisladores en Nueva York que permiten el aborto hasta horas antes del nacimiento y por los legisladores en Maryland que han propuesto abortos después del nacimiento.

No habríamos podido realizar esta maravillosa peregrinación sin el generoso apoyo de nuestros patrocinadores. Me gustaría agradecer personalmente al Consejo Estatal de Caballeros de Colón de Florida por su apoyo financiero y espiritual a nuestros hombres a lo largo de los años, y especialmente por su apoyo para este viaje. También me gustaría agradecer al Serra Club de Miami por sus contribuciones financieras y espirituales a lo largo de los años y este viaje. Estábamos muy contentos de unirnos a cientos de miles de otros en la lucha continua por la vida de todos los bebés no nacidos, ya sean concebidos en amor o en violación, ya que todos son hijos de Dios. Apoya a cada ser humano desde la concepción hasta la muerte natural. Por favor, apoye la lucha por la vida haciendo cosas que pueden parecer poco, pero que pueden salvar innumerables vidas; rece un rosario fuera de una clínica de aborto, done a movimientos pro-vida, escriba a sus congresistas y senadores locales (estatales y federales), asista a eventos pro-vida y una vez más rece por todos los bebés no nacidos a través de la intercesión de Nuestra Señora de La Leche y Santa Gianna Beretta Molla. Mi lucha por la vida acaba de comenzar, ¡no puedo esperar a ver lo que el Señor tiene reservado para mi ministerio pro-vida en el futuro!

¡Nuestra Señora de La Leche, Ruega por Nosotros!  
¡Santa Gianna Beretta Molla, Ruega por Nosotros!









# Discernment through Liturgical Beauty

Andrew Lands

*Philosophy II  
Diocese of St. Augustine*



I first became interested in the Sacred Liturgy at the Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche in St. Augustine Florida. Growing up, my family and I practiced the Baptist faith, and on occasion my mother would take my siblings and I to the shrine to pray and reflect in silence. As a child I didn't understand this. Why was my mother introducing us to the Catholic Church? I felt that she was giving us small hints... but what could a thirteen-year-old know about what his mother was up to? One day, my mother randomly asked us to go to Mass with her, which was very unusual because she had never proposed such a thing before. When we arrived at the parish, I was astounded by what I encountered: a beautiful sanctuary, silence, worshippers praying reverently, and a focus on the Lord's presence in the tabernacle. I had never been exposed to an atmosphere of such sanctity. I was so moved by this initial encounter and it has remained in my memory ever since. When Mass was being celebrated, so many thoughts and questions arose in my mind. Why is the priest praying over bread and wine? Why did he kiss the altar? Why did he kneel before that gold box in the back? My thirteen-year-old self was confused, yet deeply intrigued.

I departed from the church puzzled and astonished as I desired to know more. A few months later, on Divine Mercy Sunday, my family and I received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine, which became

our home parish that day. Later on, my mother and I began attending Mass daily and I became increasingly captivated by the beauty of the Sacred Liturgy.

I remember being so focused on the priest and altar servers as I watched how they acted during the Mass. I was very interested in understanding why they moved in particular ways. Eventually, the ministry of altar serving came to my mind. After receiving some liturgical training from Father Jeff Johnston, a priest of the cathedral, I began altar serving.

As I served throughout my teenage years, I remember asking the priests: why, why, why! I was consumed by the mystery of the Eucharist and I wanted to know all about it. I began serving more frequently and I felt peace in each liturgy I served in. However, I also felt that God was calling me to be in that place in particular. After a few more months of altar serving, I was asked by Fr. Tom Willis, the previous rector of the cathedral, to serve as a sacristan. As you can imagine, I was thrilled! The ministry of sacristan opened so many doors and expanded the scope of my discernment. I could not only learn more about the Sacred Liturgy but also get to know the priests and parishioners of my community. The position of sacristan is a big responsibility at the cathedral. For example, on some days you must open the church at 6:00 A.M. and on other days you must make preparations for particular liturgies that will be celebrated that day. Because I was serving at a cathedral, I had to prepare for the Sacraments of





Saint Augustine Catholic / Fran Ruchalski

it is an act of union with the heavenly hosts which is oriented towards the glorification of God. This is why celebrating the liturgy correctly is so crucial; by this we, the Body of Christ, encounter our Head in the Eucharist who directs all of our actions towards Himself so that we may glorify and revere His ultimate being. The proper celebration of the Sacred Liturgy leads us to a deeper union with Christ through the sanctity and reverence which it demands by its very nature. This union

ultimately leads to union with the Father and a marriage between heaven and earth.

During my time as sacristan, I prepared for several liturgies which were celebrated by the bishop of my Diocese, Bishop Felipe de Jesus Estevez. Ever since we first met, Bishop Estevez, has always

*“To celebrate the Eucharist means to enter into the openness of a glorification of God that embraces both heaven and earth, an openness effected by the cross and resurrection. Mankind’s movement toward Christ meets Christ’s movement toward men. He wants to unite mankind and bring about the one Church, the one divine assembly, of all men.” - Pope Benedict XVI*

Confirmation and Holy Orders, the Rite of Election, and the Chrism Mass. The position of sacristan requires leadership skills, which took time for me to develop. What intrigued me the most about this position was the notion of servant leadership. It was a service to both the people and to God. It was in this ministry that I was blessed with many new relationships; I was able to meet countless parishioners who treated me as family and I began to develop relationships with the priests I served. These relationships inspired me to continue serving in the Sacred Liturgy. It was also during this time of ministry that I was inspired by Fr. Tom Willis’ love and passion for the Sacred Liturgy. There were many different liturgies at the cathedral for which Father Tom served as Master of Ceremonies, and sometimes I would serve as well. I was impressed by his comprehensive knowledge of the Sacred Liturgy and his diligence and precision in directing liturgical actions. He exemplified what it means to be a master of the Sacred Liturgy and expressed this through his reverence and piety while serving. The same can be said about Fr. Jeff Johnston, who has always fostered my interest in the Sacred Liturgy. Through both of these priests and the Sacred Liturgy itself, my passion for Catholicism grew and I sensed a deep peace as I united myself to the Lord. When the Sacred Liturgy is celebrated correctly and prayerfully, it is unlike any other experience; in reality,



invested in my interest in the Sacred Liturgy. When I was sixteen years old, he began asking me to serve as Master of Ceremonies in various different liturgies within the diocese. It was by serving as Master of Ceremonies that I was exposed to many communities of my diocese as well as different ethnic and cultural groups. Through this encounter with the people of God, I realized how badly the Church needs holy, diligent, and hard-working priests. It was also during this time that I began praying *lectio divina* during my Holy Hours. One day, I stumbled upon a powerful saying of Christ: “The laborers are few, but the harvest is plentiful” (Matthew 9:35). Could God have been any more clear with me? After serving several communities in my diocese and observing the need for more priests, I came across this verse while praying before the Blessed Sacrament. This chain of events shifted my attention to discerning the priesthood, a vocation which I felt God was calling me to. After many months of discernment amidst my service at the cathedral, I applied to the seminary.

After two years of seminary formation, the Lord has continually blessed me by allowing me to serve Him in the Sacred Liturgy. During this past Holy Week, I was given more opportunities to serve than I had ever received before. I was asked to serve as Master of Ceremonies for the Chrism Mass with Diego Vasquez, another seminarian from St. Vincent

De Paul Regional Seminary. This appointment gave me the opportunity to express and practice all that I had learned about the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. As the Chrism Mass was concluding and the recessional hymn was being sung, I could not help but to smile and to contemplate the beauty of the Mass and how it glorified God. It was this, the art of celebrating the liturgy, which astounded me. I was captured by every precise movement and every gentle and reverent act which took place. The Chrism Mass required many hours of careful preparation using the liturgical rubrics and yet it was one of the most grace-filled moments I’ve ever experienced in serving.

I am filled with gratitude for all of the priests, parishioners, and family members who have helped me be the man I am today. I am most thankful for Bishop Estevez and for his guidance and continual support. Without any of the people mentioned in my article, my journey would not have been possible. Thanks be to God for his abundant blessings!









# The Splendor of Sacred Music



**Spencer Grant**

*Philosophy IV  
Diocese of St. Petersburg*

Once heard a parishioner question the purpose of singing in the Sacred Liturgy. The Our Father had been sung at Mass that day, after which this person asked: “I just don’t understand it—it’s a prayer not a song; why do we bother singing it?” At first thought, this question is not completely outlandish. After all, we would receive strange looks from our family members if we suddenly burst out chanting or singing hymns during our private prayer. So why do we bother singing? Why do Catholics sing in the Sacred Liturgy?

Personally, I love to sing, and my family can attest to this. Since that magical moment of my life in which I discovered I could hold a tune, there have been many instances of my dad banging on my door because I was singing in my bedroom as if I were performing in a sold-out theatre. Even now my brothers in the seminary frequently find me performing a concert in an empty refectory and I sheepishly stop and wait for them to leave so I can continue to entertain my non-existent audience. I am not singing to entertain anybody, and I do not enjoy an audience, even when they enjoy my singing. It is through singing that I am able to express myself best. No matter what I may be feeling—anxiety, heartbreak, joy, excitement—singing allows me to truly experience my emotions and release them in such a powerful and explosive way. However, I do not believe this is peculiar to me alone. Think of those times when, regardless of the quality of your singing, you bonded with friends by belting your favorite song in the car. If a man wants to woo the girl he loves, he



pulls out a guitar and sings some Elvis Presley songs so he can win her over.

This is the impact singing has on human beings and why, from an anthropocentric view, it is essential for worship. Singing invokes emotions and insights that would otherwise be unreachable by reciting lyrics. Nothing can express joy more profoundly than singing as Psalm 126 illustrates:

*Then was our mouth filled with laughter,  
on our lips there were songs. . .  
. . . they come back, they come back, full of song.*

When beauty is perceived in music, it reverberates in the depths of our souls because it unites us to the Divine Beauty. This reality allows us to shift from an anthropocentric view to a theocentric view.

Singing is difficult. Let me rephrase—beautiful singing is difficult. It requires muscle control, breath control, and the ability to release tension to exert force with your voice. In short: singing beautifully is hard work. However, it is work oriented toward human brilliance and perfection. So, why would we withhold this gift from our most brilliant and most perfect God? This is one of the greatest means by which we

can worship the Lord. For this reason, the Church has given us standards for music used in the Sacred Liturgy. In accordance with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and with the approval of Pope Paul VI, The Sacred Congregation of Rites promulgated *Musicae Sacram*, a 1967 document which serves as an instruction on music in the Sacred Liturgy. The document states the following:

*Indeed, through this form, prayer is expressed in a more attractive way, the mystery of the liturgy, with its hierarchical and community nature, is more openly shown, the unity of hearts is more profoundly achieved by the union of voices, minds are more easily raised to heavenly things by the beauty of the sacred rites, and the whole celebration more clearly prefigures that heavenly liturgy which is enacted in the holy city of Jerusalem. Pastors of souls will therefore do all they can to achieve this form of celebration.*

Music has been an integral part of Catholic worship since the era of the early Church and is rooted in the musical tradition of Ancient Judaism which Jesus Himself belonged to. In fact, the Gospels mention that Christ read the Jewish Scriptures in the synagogues. It is believed that Christ chanted them in a style remarkably similar to the way we chant the Scriptures in the Sacred Liturgy.



Not just any music should be used in our liturgies, however. Music has a powerful ability to transport us away from whatever setting we find ourselves in. A Beach Boys song can instantly transport us to our favorite summer spot. A particular song can bring a loved one to mind no matter how far they are from us physically. Sacred music allows us to transcend earthly existence and fills our minds with holy thoughts. Therefore, sacred music must be precisely that—sacred. When secular music is used in the Sacred Liturgy, it is easily noticeable. At best it is off the mark, and at worst a complete distraction and spectacle. For this reason, the Church has put forth mandates regarding music in the Sacred Liturgy. These include a preference for Gregorian Chant, sacred polyphony, and the use of the organ, all of which and more were taught by the Second Vatican Council in the sixth chapter of the constitution titled *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. These beautiful elements distinguish sacred music from secular music and lift the human soul to unimaginable heights. They have a character that is completely unlike pop music. They contain objective beauty that can melt even the hardest of hearts.

The Church has made clear that music must be the object of serious and contemplative consideration. What reason could we give to not give our absolute best in worship of God?





# The Intellectual Life



# Inter-Seminary Day





# Faith of the Ecclesia Domestica

Stephen Parker

Pre-Theology II  
Diocese of St. Augustine



*“You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?” -Rite of Baptism for Infants*

Growing up in a Catholic household, I sometimes took my faith for granted. My sisters and I were raised in an environment in which we attended Mass daily, regularly utilized the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and were taught to strive to learn about the Catholic Faith. Consequently, the Catholic Faith served as a lens through which I viewed my own life and the world around me. In the midst of any trial, I could always trust in my relationship with God, grounded in the knowledge of the Catholic Faith, to point me in the right direction.

However, as I progressed through college and the working world, I began to see some of my friends and peers fall away from the Faith we had all been taught as true. In addition, I also noticed that the culture I was living in was being directed away from the Faith and formulated around a rejection of the teachings of the Catholic Church in regards to morality and truth. From these experiences, I began to question what exactly had been discovered, what arguments had convinced my friends and the culture to oppose the Catholic worldview with which we grew up.

When exploring the proposed arguments, I found them rather unconvincing from a reasonable or scientific perspective. They all seemed to fall short when examined against the teachings of the Catholic Church, various arguments of St. Thomas Aquinas and Catholic apologists, and the vision proposed by popes of my lifetime. In trying to discern what was leading me to a conclusion so different from that of the world around me, I began to realize that it wasn't that those around me had encountered an argument that compromised the Faith, but rather,



that they had not been convicted of the Faith in the first place. So, what was so different for me who, in the midst of my investigations into challenges to the Faith, had only found reasons and arguments for further faith and trust in the Catholic Church? The short answer, I came to discover, was my parents.

As I have grown older, I increasingly appreciate the foundations of Faith that my parents laid for our entire family. My mother would always note that their goal as parents was to lead us to Heaven, and it was evident in their actions. They not only communicated what the Church taught, but also witnessed in their example how to direct our lives fully and lovingly to the Lord. Through my parents' example, I witnessed what it meant to live out a life fully directed towards God. Their disposition to prayer and a relationship



with the Lord was a model that my siblings and I witnessed, practiced, and inherited. To this day, I remember our entire family kneeling around my parents' bed praying our night prayers before going to bed. It was not an individual model, but rather a family model that was set, a model not based on a single person's way, but one that attempted to match the image of the namesake of the parish we grew up in: The Holy Family. My parents also sought to provide us with knowledge and understanding to support these practices. During our childhood, they would read a Catholic book to us each night, take us to conferences where we could deepen our knowledge of the Faith, bring us to Rome during Easter time, and provide us with and teach us how to use the tools of the Faith (e.g., the Bible, rosaries, books). They equipped us to not only appreciate the Faith, but also to practice it.

This foundation was also apparent in my parents' own role models: my grandparents. In addition to my parents, I could witness my grandparents sitting across the aisle from my family at daily Mass, praying their daily afternoon rosary together, and communicating through their relationship a love that was reflective of the Trinity. I could see the extension of my parents who had shown me an attentiveness to the Sacraments and an eagerness to learn more about the Faith while teaching us, their children, along



with them. I was blessed to not only have loving members of my family to lead and guide me, but also visions of saints striving for their eternal reward.

**Altogether, my family created an environment for me to strive in my faith and my vocation.** From a young age, I could sense the importance of my Faith and the necessity to fulfill the vocation that the Lord had intended for my life. This openness to faith made the vision of the priesthood extremely accessible, and I remember being drawn to the priest's actions in the Mass, especially during the consecration of the Eucharist. My parents were extremely supportive of my sisters and me in our discerning and striving towards our vocations, whatever they may be. While we were attending college and entering the working world, they often encouraged us to pursue our vocations according to God's Will. They were supportive of my relationships and open to conversations about the priesthood. When the time came to tell them that after five years in the workforce I was considering applying to the priesthood, my family was the least surprised of anyone. Their constant support and dialogue have always been the backbone of my faith, professional journey, and vocation.

**My family is the reason why I am here today.** In my family, I could see the reflection of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph seen in Nazareth long ago: a family united in Faith that extended from the altar in the church to the domestic church at home. I cannot imagine having a better family to guide, encourage, and launch me in my own personal faith. My faith will always be grounded in the foundational Faith my parents and grandparents shared and witnessed to my sisters and me in our youth.

It is that foundation that I have been able to build upon and will ultimately share with others to lead them, as I was led, **closer to Christ.**





# Work and Play





# The Sacred Liturgy







# The Apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima

Adam Perez  
Philosophy I  
Archdiocese of Miami

Between May 13th and October 17th of the year 1917, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to three Portuguese children on six different occasions. She appeared to the children in Fatima, Portugal, a city which remained faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Mary promised that the world would have peace and that many souls would obtain Heaven if her requests were met. She said that God would punish the world by means of war, hunger, and persecutions of the Church and the Holy Father unless the world repented of its sin and heeded God's commands.

In order for us to understand the apparitions at Fatima, we must reflect on how they took place. In the spring of 1916, during WWI, Lucia (age 9) and her cousins Francisco (age 8) and Jacinta (age 6) came out of a cave after hiding in it during a rainstorm. After the rain ended, they played in a grassy plain. Afterwards, they stopped to eat lunch and pray the Rosary. Suddenly, the light of the sun began to intensify, and a bright light fell upon them. A figure of a young man emerged from the sun's rays who introduced himself as an angel of peace. He asked the children to pray with him and told them to not be afraid. The angel then bowed low to the ground, and the children imitated him. The angel asked the children to repeat a prayer he gave them, which was to be prayed in reparation for the sins of the world and in supplication for God's mercy upon sinners. Finally, the angel requested that the children continue to pray, and then he departed. These angelic appearances took place to prepare the children for the Marian apparition that was to come.

Once again, the angel of peace appeared in order to remind the children to pray, make sacrifices, and offer all they do in reparation for sins and the conversion of all sinners. The angel reminded the children that by doing this, many sins would be forgiven and their country would be spared from the incoming tribulations. Before departing, the angel said that he was the guardian angel of Portugal. After this, the children began offering their food to hungry children, abstaining from drinking for periods of time,

and bowing to the ground while repeating the prayer the angel had taught them.

During the angel's third and final appearance, the children were praying in a field when the angel presented the Eucharist to them. The Eucharistic host was dripping blood which fell into a chalice. The angel prayed a prayer of reparation for the sins of the world and gave the Eucharist to the children. The children began repeating the prayer in reparation for all the Eucharistic sacrilege of the world.

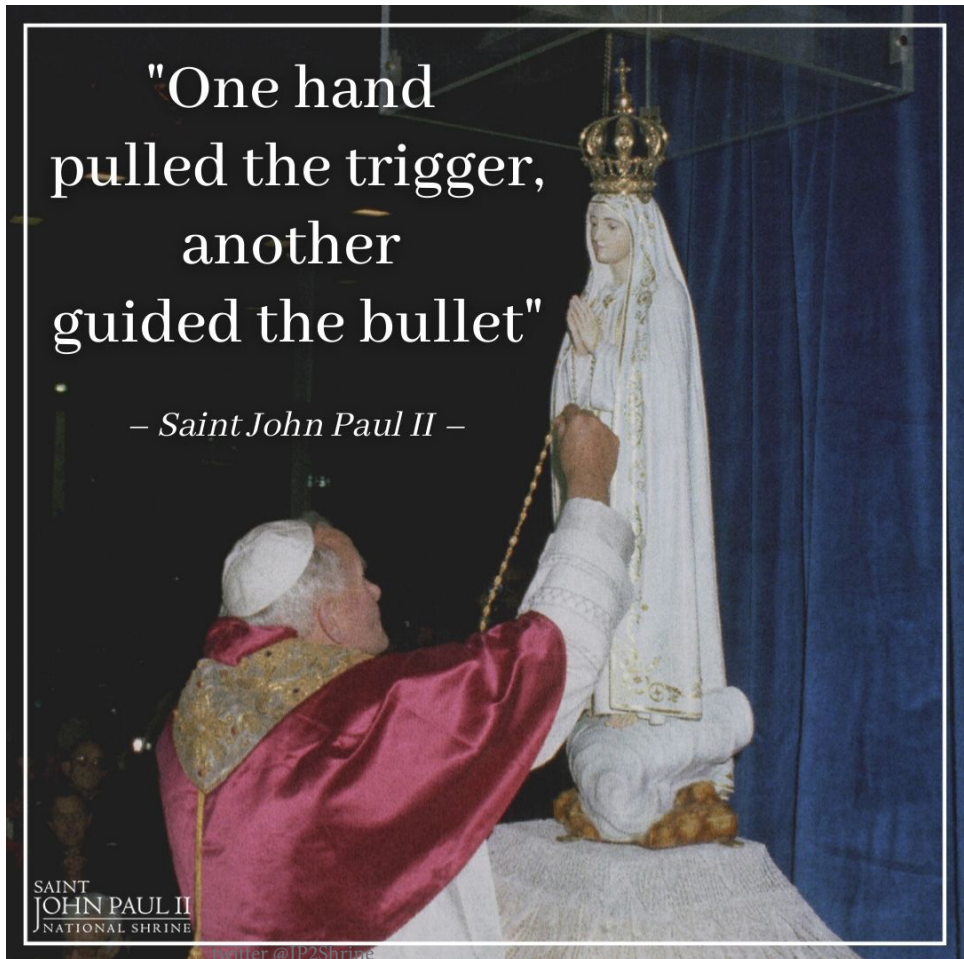
On Sunday, May 13th, 1917, the children were pasturing their flocks when suddenly a great light flashed before their eyes. After a second flash they beheld Mary, who was dressed in white and was more brilliant and spectacular than the sun. Mary told the children not to fear. Lucia asked Mary where she was from. Mary replied by saying that she was from Heaven and that she wanted the three of them to return to the place they were at on the thirteenth day of each month for six months in order that she might reveal her identity and message to them. Mary said that the three of them will go to Heaven, and that Francisco will make it to Heaven after praying many rosaries.

Mary asked the children if they wished to endure suffering in order to make reparation for sinners and told them they would have to suffer a lot. The children accepted this burden, and Mary consoled them by telling them that the grace of God will assist them and comfort them. Mary offered her heart to them, which shone with intense light. Before departing, Mary reminded the children to pray the Rosary every day for world peace and the end of the war (WWI).

During the second apparition (June 13th), Mary appeared to the children while they were among fifty other people, although they could not see her. Mary reminded the children to pray the Rosary daily. Lucia asked if she could go to heaven, but Mary replied that her cousins would be going to Heaven soon while she would remain on Earth for a long time. Mary then said that God desired that there be a devotion to her Immaculate Heart. She assured the children

that all who devote themselves to her Immaculate Heart will be loved by God and will be as flowers which adorn his throne. Then, she opened her hands and showed them her suffering heart which was impaled by thorns. Her heart was in agony because of the sins of the world. She desired that reparation be made to console her grieving heart.

During the third apparition (July 13th), Mary once again appeared to remind the children to continue praying for the end of the war. Lucia asked Mary to reveal her identity and to perform a miracle so the other people who were present may believe. Mary promised that she would perform a miracle in October and heal those who prayed the Rosary. Mary asked that sacrifices be made for the sinners and their conversion. Then Mary revealed the first of three secrets she would share with the children: a terrifying and horrific vision of Hell. The children saw demons and lost souls amidst indescribable horrors. Mary then told the children that devotion to her Immaculate Heart is necessary for salvation of all people and the end of the war. Mary warned the children about future persecutions which will be foreshadowed by lights in the sky. Mary then revealed the second secret: the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart and the dedication of the first Saturday of every month to her would prevent these persecutions from happening. By heeding these requests, peace will be restored, Russia's errors will not spread, and the Holy Father will be spared of suffering. If the request is not heeded, Russia's errors will spread and the Church will be persecuted; wars will begin and nations will be annihilated. Mary promised, however, that her Immaculate Heart would triumph in the end and that an era of peace would follow if these tribulations were to happen. She also said that Portugal will always remain faithful to the Catholic Church. Mary also gave the world the "Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins..." prayer which is recited at the end of each decade of the Rosary. Lastly, Mary said that these two secrets must not yet



be revealed to the world.

During the fourth apparition (August 13th), a large crowd was present at the site where the apparitions took place before. The children, however, were not there because Arturo Santes, the mayor, prevented them from going. He threatened the children with painful death in order that they may reveal the secrets. Despite this, the children remained silent. Six days later, Mary appeared to the children and promised to perform a miracle on the thirteenth day of the following month. She told them: **"Pray very much and sacrifice for sinners, as many souls go to hell because there is no one to pray for them."**

Before the fifth apparition (September 13th), a very large crowd had gathered. Mary once again appeared and reminded the children to pray the Rosary for the end of the war. She promised that in October the Lord will come with Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of Carmel, and St. Joseph to bless the world; for God was pleased with the sacrifices made for the salvation of souls.

During the sixth apparition, on the morning of October 13th, 1917, rain poured down upon



## BEHOLD THY MOTHER

thousands of people who were waiting to see the miracle. Lucia's mother feared for the life of her daughter, but Lucia assured her that she would be safe. As Lucia began to see Our Lady come, the children's faces assumed an otherworldly expression of delicate love. Mary arrived and requested that a chapel be built in honor of her in the place they were at. She also revealed her identity: Our Lady of the Rosary. She then promised that the war would end and that the soldiers would return. Once again, she reminded them that everyone must amend their lives and seek God's mercy. **"They must not offend Our Lord anymore, as He is already too much offended."**

Suddenly, Mary ascended into the sky and opened her hands to reveal a brilliant light which brightened the sun. As she continued to ascend, the clouds quickly dispersed and the sky became clear. The sun became as pale as the moon. To the left of the sun stood St. Joseph with the child Jesus in his arms. Together with Jesus, he blessed the world three times with his right hand by making the Sign of the Cross. Mary stood in all her brilliance to the right of the sun in her blue and white robes as Our Lady of the Rosary. Lucia was privileged to gaze upon the Lord, who was dressed in red as the Divine Redeemer. Next him was Our Lady of Sorrows, who was dressed in purple and no longer had a sword in her heart. Finally, Mary appeared again in all her glorious brightness as Our

Lady of Carmel dressed in brown.

The thousands of people in attendance were in awe of what they saw. The sun did not burn up, yet it had intense color. Then, the sun became colorless and danced in the sky. It moved in circles until it seemed to loosen itself from the sky and began falling towards the people. All were crippled with fear and began praying and crying for mercy. Then, the sun returned to its proper place. Amazingly, everything was dry even despite the fact that it rained earlier.

Lucia later became a nun. In 1929, she received another vision: a vision of the glory of the Holy Trinity. During this vision, Mary told Sr. Lucia to reveal the second secret to the Pope in order that Russia may be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart. The Lord expected this to be done quickly, but the bishops did not make haste. In 1931, the Lord appeared to Lucia and expressed His displeasure over the bishops' delay and said that they would fall into misfortune.

On March 25th, 1984, St. Pope John Paul II consecrated the entire world and "in a special way... those individuals and nations which particularly need to be entrusted and consecrated" to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In this prayer, Russia was named indirectly. Sr. Lucia, however, later said that Heaven accepted this consecration.

Let us all learn from the humility of these small children who accepted great burdens from God with child-like trust. May we who are strengthened by the same grace of God which aided the children accept the small burdens which God places in our lives. May we grow in self-sacrificial love for God and the world. In difficulties, let us ask the Lord and Our Lady for strength as we pray the Rosary daily for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart.



Photographer: ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO | FC



instagram.com/Franciscus



Vatican Media, CNA



# VOCATION STORIES



**BR. BRIAN SULLIVAN**

*Philosophy IV  
Order of Friars Minor*

I first felt the call to be a Franciscan when I was a junior in high school. I attended St. Anthony High School in Long Island, NY, and I was taught by the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn. One of them had me do a report on St. Francis. The night before the report was due, I went to the public library to find a book on St. Francis. Not knowing anything about the saint, I picked out the first book I could find: *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi A.K.A. The Fioretti*. I returned home to skim through the book and obtain as little information as possible. I ended up staying up till 4 A.M. reading intently. I was absolutely captivated by the radical life of the saint, and so began a devotion that has stayed with me to this day.

Being on fire for Christ through the example of St. Francis, I did what any 18 year old kid would do: I put it far away in the back of my soul and concentrated on music, partying, and dating. Being successful at these things, I continued pursuing them through out my twenties and eventually I fell away from the Church completely. I am Irish-Catholic, which means that my Catholic roots run deep. I later returned to the Church, but not without a fierce struggle. My saving grace throughout that time was my love for St. Francis which remained with me as I always held him close to my heart.

Since I was 15 years old, I was playing music in clubs and bars, which I did until my late thirties. I spent twenty years practicing jazz drumming,

and although I made a humble living, it allowed me to travel the world and play in 12 different countries. During this time I fell in love with a woman whom I dated for two years and eventually married. Although I loved her, it was a very difficult marriage, and for many reasons it didn't work out. The biggest issue we had was the fact that God was not the center of our union.

During this time I was hired to play music for a presbyterian church in my neighborhood. For five years I worshipped the Lord with that community and immersed myself in the Scriptures. I wanted to fall in love with the Bible again and know my Catholic faith more deeply as I heard many doctrines at that church which didn't gel with my own beliefs. It was out of love for Our Lady that I later began attending daily mass again. She brought me right to her Son and has sustained me in the Sacred Liturgy ever since. Renewed in my faith and struggling through a marital crisis, what had been buried in my heart for so long began to rise up again. When we separated and began an annulment process, I knew that I had to pursue my dream which nagged me throughout my adult life: to wear the habit of St. Francis.

I went on a 'come and see' weekend with the Capuchins in the Bronx and I have never looked back since that time. That was nine years ago, and I'm eternally grateful for having found my true calling. I used to think that people were just being nice when they would talk about my late vocation and say, "You'll be good in ministry because you have experience in the world". I've come to find that this is true. As I prepare for priestly ordination, it is my hope that I can serve others and feel close to them because I understand what it feels like to endure through the struggles of the modern world.

# SEMINARY SNAPSHOT



Christopher Morales, pictured leading the Stations of the Cross during Lent above, is a seminarian for the Diocese of St. Augustine.

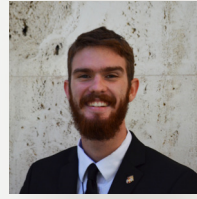


# SEMINARIANS

## PHILOSOPHY I



Juan Jesús Alonso  
*Archdiocese of Atlanta*



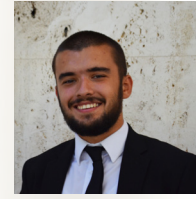
Stephen Hardin  
*Diocese of St. Augustine*



Daniel Maher  
*Diocese of St. Augustine*



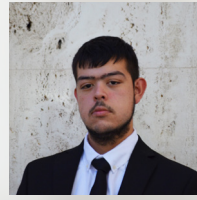
Christopher Morales  
*Diocese of St. Augustine*



Carlos Rodriguez  
*Neocatechumenal Way/  
Archdiocese of Miami*



Paul Giao Van Nguyen  
*Archdiocese of Atlanta*



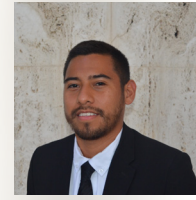
Miguel Orellana  
*Neocatechumenal Way/  
Archdiocese of Miami*



Adam Perez  
*Archdiocese of Miami*



Miguel Larios  
*Neocatechumenal Way/  
Archdiocese of Miami*

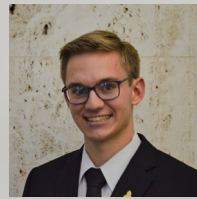


Mario Hernandez  
*Neocatechumenal Way/  
Archdiocese of Miami*

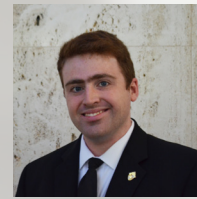
## PHILOSOPHY II



Andres Cordero  
*Diocese of Venice*



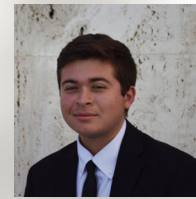
Joseph Frey  
*Diocese of Orlando*



George Gilbert  
*Diocese of St. Augustine*



Andrew Lands  
*Diocese of St. Augustine*



Luca Lopez  
*Neocatechumenal Way/  
Archdiocese of Miami*



Emmanuel Magallenes  
*Neocatechumenal Way/  
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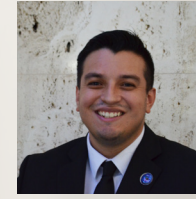


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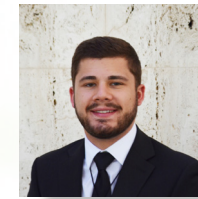
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# Missionary Disciple

Juan Pablo Mora Duran

Philosophy III  
Diocese of Atlanta



**"The Lord said to Abram: Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."**

## Genesis 12: 1-2

My life and vocation story is reflected in the biblical passage above. My name is Juan Pablo Mora Durán. I am thirty years old and I am from the village of Agua Caliente in the city of La Grita, Táchira, Venezuela. I belong to the Archdiocese of Atlanta and I am currently studying English at St. John Vianney Seminary College. My discernment journey began when I was little. I remember pretending to celebrate the Holy Mass with my twin brother when I was young. One day, he was the priest and the next day I was. We would play in front of a small chapel by our house in the countryside. We would read a book called 100 Sacred Stories, which told of the most salient stories of the Bible. I fondly remember my First Communion when I was ten years old because it was a turning point in my entire life and vocational journey. To finally receive Jesus in the Eucharist was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life. I wanted to be an acolyte (altar server), but my family moved twice when I was young, making it difficult to reach the church that was far away.

My life changed significantly when my dad passed away. I was just twelve years old when it happened, and I can still recall the painful moment. This decisive moment in my life made me question the meaning of life as well

as the purpose of my own life. This event coincided with the death of St. Pope John Paul II, the man I was named after. My mother became somewhat worried about my changing attitude towards life and invited me to go to church with her that day. Just five days later, on April 8, 2005, I began to serve as an acolyte in my parish, Our Lady of the Angels.

At the end of high school, at the age of seventeen, I entered the Santo Tomás de Aquino Seminary of the Diocese of San Cristóbal with my twin brother Pedro Antonio. For seven years, I was in the process of discernment and priestly formation. During my time in the seminary, I had various missionary experiences in the communities of Táchira, including two one-year periods of service at the Diario Católico (the Catholic Diocesan Newspaper) and in the Parish of Santa Ana. At that time, due to the ongoing strife in my country and the need I felt to rediscover what God was calling me to, I withdrew from the seminary and embarked on a path of self-knowledge as I worked to support my family.

It was at this time that I went to live in the city of Florence in southern Colombia. I joined a Catholic Foundation called KANAF (Kampamento for the Nations Forming in Love). For four years, I worked at camps and retreats with the youth. While I was there, I remember hearing a song with the biblical passage I placed at the beginning of this article. Through this event, and witnessing my brother's priestly ordination on January 24, 2020, I began to rediscover what God was calling me to do. This time, however, I felt that God was calling me to begin a different chapter in



my vocational story, a chapter which would deepen my trust in Him as I was led to the United States to continue priestly formation.

It was while I was in Florence that I first encountered the Archdiocese of Atlanta. I began a process of correspondence with them, and then they accepted me for their Program of Priestly Formation for Foreigners. I arrived in the United States on Christmas, December 25, 2020.

One of the most decisive moments of spiritual and personal growth for me was having the opportunity to participate in two World Youth Days with Pope Francis: Rio de Janeiro in 2013 and Panama in 2019. It was precisely in these experiences that I discovered the universality of the Church. It is nearly impossible for me to describe the experience I had in Brazil where over two million people gathered. In the midst of these celebrations, my past did not matter anymore. I no longer longed for the future, but instead longed to be present to people gathered there. I was inspired to rediscover my true value as a person in Christ and discern that the mission God was calling me to. In this moment of discovery, I could sense God calling me to leave my homeland and come to the United States to give my life for evangelization in a Church which was desperately in need of pastors modeled after the Heart of Christ.

This is why we are formed in seminary: to allow our hearts to be shaped by and configured to the grace of God so that we may imitate Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

For me, being a missionary in the United States presents a great challenge because it is a multicultural country: a country with diverse social, economic, and religious realities in need of courageous witnesses of the gospel – fearless witnesses who give their lives so that many may come to know of the love of God. It has been a wonderful to slowly integrate into the Archdiocese of Atlanta, St. John Vianney Seminary College, and All Saints Catholic Parish in Atlanta. I have also enjoyed sharing the message of God's love with my classmates at Georgia State University and St. Louis Parish of the Archdiocese of Miami. All these experiences have led me to experience the reality of the Catholic Church in this country, which is marked by a total commitment to Catholicism. It is amazing to see that in the United States, 'Catholic' is not just a title but a lifestyle... a commitment to living in the presence of God.

I have enjoyed serving in various Eucharistic celebrations, catechizing, and being a witness of Jesus wherever I am. During this time, I am learning how to reach out to so many people and cultures. I am learning how to sow the seed of the Gospel so that

it may grow in the hearts of the future generations of Catholics. While I have only given you a small glimpse into my life, this story can be summed up in this way: God called me to leave my homeland, my family, my friends, and my desires to be a missionary of His Love. God's words resound in my heart in the same way they did in Abraham's God said to him, "I will bless you." This whole process that God has allowed me to experience can be described as a valley or desert, where I can only pray the words of Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." I trust in God. I trust that by the help of His grace, I may continue to abandon myself so that, one day, I may be a happy priest firmly dedicated to working for the Kingdom of Heaven.



**"The Lord said to Abram: Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."**

**Genesis 12: 1-2**







### The Server As Sign

"Signs and symbols are very important in the liturgy. The server is a visible sign, an instrument through whom God acts. We may even say that the priest and server are God's "actors". Through words and actions (such as a procession), through objects we use (incense, candles, etc.), through ritual actions (genuflecting, bowing, etc.), God gives the message of his love. He causes it to become real in the people present at Mass. A server may be part of a sacred sign-for example, when walking in a procession-or helping the people to see and understand other sacred signs, by assisting the priest at the altar." - Bishop Peter J. Elliot, Ceremonies Explained for Servers





# Marching for Those Who Can't

Christopher Morales  
Philosophy I  
Diocese of St. Augustine



I have had a close connection to the pro-life cause for quite a while now. I went to Creekside High School, a public high school in St. Johns, Florida. There I was able to grow in my love for the fight for life. In my sophomore year at Creekside, I wore a shirt once a week that said, “I’m Pro-Life: Change My Mind.” Mr. Kyle Stephens, a teacher at Creekside, approached me one day and asked me to start a pro-life club. The next day, I created a proposal and presented the idea to my principal. After answering a few questions he asked me, I received full approval for establishing the club. With that, the first public school pro-life club in North Florida, the Creekside Choose Life Club, was officially founded with myself as its founder and president. Upon establishing the club, we received many negative comments on our public social media account. Some of these comments were so hateful and gruesome that I cannot bear to repeat them. The main non-offensive comments received on our first several posts were along the lines of, “You hate women,” or, “Why is a man running a club about women!?” To the first comment, our response was, “We don’t hate women, and, in fact, we are standing up for future women in the womb.” My answer to the second comment was, “It takes two

to tango,” which emphasized that both a man and a woman are necessary to create a child and that both of them are equally responsible for that child. I was deeply saddened upon seeing those comments, but it only added to my love for the unborn. Fortunately, we received an outpouring of support from many people which warmed my heart. Despite the pro-abortion resistance we faced, our club attendance had more than doubled in size by the time we had our second meeting thanks to the publicity we received through our social media account. Our club has continued to do so well that another public high school across the street from Creekside started their own pro-life club this past year. Our club even caught the attention of Bishop Felipe Estévez, the bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine, as well as that of the Office of Human Life and Dignity of the Diocese of St. Augustine.

This past year, I was honored to speak as a guest speaker at the 2021 Diocese of St. Augustine March for Life. In my speech, I spoke about the unconstitutionality of abortion. I pointed out the irony of the fact that the 14th Amendment, the amendment the Supreme Court cited in *Roe v. Wade*, is the same amendment that we must invoke



to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. The 14th Amendment guarantees the rights to life, liberty, and property, the first and most important of which is life! Even the United Nations’ Universal Declaration on Human Rights guarantees the right to life. Before the sexual revolution of the 1960s, most of the public, no matter what side of the religious or political spectrum you were on, agreed that life began at conception. I pray that everyone will open their hearts and realize what an amazing gift and miracle life is. I also pray that all may understand that life begins at conception! At the conclusion of my senior year, I was very honored to receive the Diocese of St. Augustine Defender of Life Award. I am proud to report that to this day, the Creekside Choose Life Club is going strong!

In January, ten seminarians, along with our administrator Fr. Luis Rivero, got the privilege to attend the annual March for Life in Washington, DC. This was a very fruitful opportunity for these seminarians to enjoy this beautiful event in fraternity with one another. While in our nation’s capital, we were able to attend the Mass for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. It was truly breathtaking to attend Mass alongside thousands of other Catholics who were also celebrating life. The day of the march itself was truly special. The day began with the celebration of the Mass by Fr. Rivero. We then went to the National

Mall, where we attended the pre-march rally and saw many speakers including Fr. Mike Schmitz! After the talks, we began marching to the United States Supreme Court Building. This incredible trip ended the next day when we attended the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which was celebrated by Fr. Rivero at the Shrine of St. Pope John Paul II. There we were also able to venerate a capsule containing the blood of St. Pope John Paul II. This year is the most important year for the pro-life cause. In June 2022, the United States Supreme Court is expected to make their decision on *Dobbs v. Jackson*. If the court rules in favor of *Dobbs*, *Roe v. Wade* will effectively be overturned and states will be able to pass more expansive pro-life legislation. This opens up the possibility of states banning abortion all together. I ask everyone to pray for the Supreme Court Justices so that they may defend the dignity of life and be faithful to the Constitution. I also ask everyone to pray for the conversion of pro-abortion politicians, and especially for the lawmakers in New York who allow abortions





## Marching for Those Who Can't

until the very hour of birth and lawmakers in Maryland who have proposed post-birth infanticide.

Our amazing pilgrimage to Washington D.C. would not have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors. I would like to personally thank the Knights of Columbus Florida State Council for their continued financial and spiritual support of our seminarians throughout the years, and especially for sponsoring this particular trip. I would also like to thank the Serra Club of Miami for their financial and spiritual contributions throughout the years and for making this trip possible. We were overjoyed to join the hundreds of thousands of people who fight for the lives of all unborn babies and recognize them as children of God whether they were conceived in love or through rape. As Catholics, we are responsible for treating the sanctity and dignity of every human person from their conception to their natural death. Please support the fight for life by doing seemingly trivial yet impactful acts which save countless lives: prayin the Rosary outside abortion clinics, donating to pro-life movements, writing to your local congressmen and senators (state and federal), attending pro-life events, and praying for all unborn babies by invoking the intercession of Our Lady of La Leche and St. Gianna Beretta Molla.

My fight for life has only just begun, and I cannot wait to see what the Lord has in store for my pro-life ministry in the future!

Our Lady of La Leche, Pray for Us!  
St. Gianna Beretta Molla, Pray for Us!











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