



# *The* PARACLETE

Edition 17 - 2023

**Confirm your calling**  
(2 Peter 1:10)



## Highlights

"Every one of my efforts strengthened me to renounce the world and move forward in my discernment — like stepping stones, they eventually led me to the seminary."

Godwin James  
Seminararian (Propaedeutic Stage)

"Active and intentional discernment takes work. It is not something that will just happen ... It is an ongoing process that will last a lifetime."

Dylan Asmus  
Seminararian (Discipleship Stage)

"In moving towards a space of radical openness towards God, I began down a path that would change how I see God at work in and around my life."

William Brennan  
Seminararian (Configuration Stage)

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Cover: Pope Francis meets  
seminary pilgrims at a  
Papal Audience in Rome  
Picture: Vatican Media

# Editorial

Gabriel Guillaume | *Editor*



## Confirm your calling (2 Peter 1:10)

I can say with great confidence that in the seminary, the seed bed for vocations, absolutely nothing takes place that does not support, nourish, water, fertilise and confirm a seminarian's sense of vocational calling. Even those moments of questioning, doubts and fears, or spiritual dryness, which naturally do occur, these too are opportune experiences to discern and confirm if one is suitable for ordained ministry.

I have two hopes for this year's edition of *The Paraclete*. The first, is that you will receive an insight into some of the blessed moments and experiences that have strengthened and confirmed our vocation which we at Holy Spirit Seminary have been graced with over the last year.

But it is not just us, the seminarians, who are called to confirm our calling, rather all of us must do that. So, my second hope, dear reader, is that you will be inspired to be more faithful and attentive to the ways in which the Holy Spirit calls you to confirm, nourish, deepen and live out your vocation. Whether you are in the religious life or lay life, married or single, you are called to continually confirm the vocation that God has ordained for you since the beginning of time.

As a community we pray, therefore, that this edition may be but a simple instrument to enkindle within you a greater desire for a relationship with the Holy Spirit who will lead you to make the efforts needed for you to grow more in holiness and sanctity.

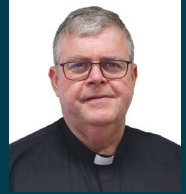
I thank those who have contributed to this edition, my Associate Editor, Dylan Asmus (below), and all those who support the work of the seminary through their prayers and donations.

*Fiat*



# From the Rector

Very Reverend Neil Muir



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*The seminary program of formation is meant to be one that is rigorous and challenging whilst at the same time nurturing and Christ-centred*



Pope Francis warmly greets Seminary Rector Fr Neil Muir at a Papal Audience  
Picture: Vatican Media

Please excuse me for opening with a cliché, but “a picture tells a thousand stories”. Looking back on last year’s seminary journey that was certainly my experience, especially with our pilgrimage to Rome in December. The photos capture, for me, a time of growth, learning and further discernment.

The seminary environment and program of formation is meant to be one that is rigorous and challenging whilst at the same time nurturing and Christ-centred.

The four dimensions of human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation are not separate elements but are meant to be integrated in a holistic experience for each seminarian discerning his vocation and call to ordained ministry. That involves firstly discovering and confirming more deeply the vocation of baptism and Christian discipleship.

This year four men have entered our community, three from the Archdiocese of Brisbane and, for the first time in our 82-year history, one man from the Archdiocese of Adelaide. I thank them for having the courage and faith to take this initial step into a deeper discernment of Christ’s call for their life.

Whilst each is on an individual journey of discernment, they are communally connected to each other and, through prayer and mutual support, also with the wider Church which they may serve as future priests.

Please pray for these young men and for the seminary formators who seek to support them.

## SUPPORT A SEMINARIAN

**Jesus left His Church** the gift of the **priesthood** to ensure the **faith was spread** and the **sacraments were brought forth** to **nourish** and **bring life to His people**.



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# Discernment takes effort



Archbishop Mark Coleridge and Dylan

If you were ever asked to give advice to someone entering the seminary, it would be hard to think of better words than these of 2 Peter 1:10: “confirm your calling”.

In my seminary entrance interview with Archbishop Coleridge, he said something that has remained with me since: “No one ever wastes their time going to the seminary. Even if you leave, you’ll be a better husband, father and man for it.”

This does not mean that someone could turn up, make no effort and leave after six years as prime marriage material, but it does mean that the seminary is so much more than just a training ground for future priests.

If the Church wanted merely a training space for priests, then the program could be wrapped up in possibly a few months – you teach them how to celebrate Mass and perform the other Sacraments, then set them loose into the parishes.

But that isn’t what the Church wants. The Church wants its priests to be properly formed as men of God, to be given the opportunities to test their vocational calling, develop their prayer life, learn what it means to be a pastor and to be intellectually grounded. None of these things can come without a serious, intentional effort and a strong desire to commit to exploring a vocation.

Active and intentional discernment takes work. It is not something that will just happen. Discernment does not

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*Discernment does not come upon a seminarian one day while he is staring out the window. It is an ongoing process that will last him a lifetime*

come upon a seminarian one day while he is staring out the window. It is an ongoing process that will last him a lifetime, for constant discernment, growth and formation are not going to cease when the bishop lays hands on that man during his ordination.

This effort begins before someone even enters the seminary as he discerns an initial calling to the priesthood and as to whether or not this is where his heart is leading him.

No one enters the seminary without first spending hours in prayer, or without seriously asking himself a variety of questions that are unique to each man. Ideally, this process should not be a journey taken alone, for true discernment involves others: your friends, family and local parish.



Dylan Asmus | *Seminarian*

The seminary is not just a place of learning and spiritual education. Anyone can get a degree in theology and even a master's degree does not make one suitable for ordination.

Conversely, one cannot simply sit in the seminary oratory for half a decade discerning his vocation. Discernment and formation go hand in hand.

A seminarian must actively discern by committing to the seminary formation program that will form him into a suitable candidate for the priesthood.

Without any real effort seminarians will merely be "waterless springs and mists driven by a gale" (2 Peter 2:17) waiting in vain for answers to questions and a confirmation of their calling which will never come.

When a seminarian grows and discerns it does not necessarily mean that he is on the path to ordination, in fact the opposite can be true, and he might realise that while he feels the universal call to holiness his vocation lies elsewhere.

"As face mirrors face in water, so the heart reflects the person" (Proverbs 27:19), so as he discerns, the ripples of the water disappear and he begins to see with more clarity the path that God has placed upon his heart. Then, once he has vision of this, he can begin to pour out from his heart to the community he is to serve all the blessings that God bestowed upon him during his time in formation.

As you will read in the articles that follow, the seminary is not a place for the certain nor is it an all or nothing affair. It is a place filled with individuals, who in their own way, are making many efforts to confirm where our Blessed Lord is calling them.

These are men of prayer, study, work and genuine humanity. You will see in the photos men who love to laugh, enjoy life, and who openly embrace all that this journey of formation has to offer, for it is with great joy that they hope to one day say, with hearts blessed by God with true discernment, "I will go in unto the altar of my God" (Psalm 43:4).



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# Postcard from Rome



**S**eminarians and staff were blessed and privileged in December last year to embark on a two-week pilgrimage to Rome.

In our first week in the “Eternal City”, as it is often called, we attended a General Audience and met Pope Francis for a photo opportunity. Our visit later took us to the four papal basilicas: St John Lateran, St Peter’s, St Paul Outside the Walls and St Mary Major.

We also spent a day in Pompei, went on a Scavi Tour down into the necropolis of St Peter’s, spent a retreat-like weekend in Assisi and had a walkthrough of the Catacombs of Santa Priscilla, also called the Regina Catacombarum for its great number of tombs, approximately 44,000.

But the purpose of this article is not simply to list more of the places we visited and to speak about all the wonderful sites or the visual theology, because one could easily gain that information from



Seminary pilgrims inside the Colosseum

Celebrating Mass at the tomb of St Francis in the Basilica of St Francis of Assisi

our seminary Facebook page (@hssqld). Rather, I would like to share with you a story of metanoia that took place in the innermost sanctuary of one seminarian’s soul — my soul.

Although I speak here only of my own experience, let this article serve as a testament to the incomprehensible amount of grace that we all received from this blessed experience to walk in the footsteps of many saints and to confirm our vocation. There is much that our primary formator, the Holy Spirit, was working in us over the course of our pilgrimage. It will surely take us much time to unpack how God used this time to extend His Kingdom within



Gabriel Guillaume | *Seminarian*

us so that we can be more efficient as His labourers in gathering the plentiful harvest of souls.

For some time, I have felt within myself a deep craving for freedom. A craving that has been scratching away at the walls of an inner cell wherein it has been imprisoned. For most of my teenage years I wrestled with this craving believing that it was a desire for the freedom to sin and to do as I please. So I fought it and imprisoned it but, in so doing, I would be tempted into believing the sinister lie that the demands of Jesus were too much and so a sinful life equalled a free life.

Feeling restless and at war with myself, I was confused at which Gabriel was the true Gabriel. Was it he who desired a life of sin, free to do as he please, or he who desired to remain steadfast to his Catholic faith and take up the call to priesthood that was beginning to take root?

I have then spent many evenings in the seminary,



Gabriel and the Daughters of Divine Zeal, Corato, at a statue of Luisa Piccarreta, scholar and mystic, also known as Little Daughter of the Divine Will

A stunning view of the Hermitage of Carceri developed around a grotto to where St Francis of Assisi would retreat and pray



out of here, not show up to prayer, leave behind my studies and not have all those other strings of seminary life restricting me, then surely, I'll be free.

Now, the temptation I faced was to believe that a free life is one without any responsibilities, without any structure or discipline. But in the words of the Venerable Fulton J. Sheen, "Freedom does not mean that right to do whatever we please, but rather to do as we ought." I knew this to be true and that I was called to remain in the seminary, so what really did this craving for freedom mean?

from the top of the Australian Catholic University hill, watching planes take off from Brisbane Airport thinking that the freedom I sought was to escape this path that God had placed me on. I thought that if I could just hop on one of those planes and get

There were two main revelations for me on this pilgrimage wherein I felt as if I was revealing me to myself and was given the key to, ironically, free this craving for freedom from its imprisonment.

# Postcard from Rome



Firstly, at Assisi, I understood the type of freedom that poverty gifts a person. Heeding the call of Christ, St Francis and St Clare left everything of this world behind – family, riches, relationships, social status – but gained true freedom. Seeing Francis’s stone bed in his hermitage and the small room in the convent attached to the San Damiano Church, no bigger than my seminary bedroom where St Clare and 49 other sisters would sleep, moved me to such tremendous awe.

Dr Maeve Louise Heaney, our Director of Theological Formation in Ministry, sang for us a beautiful song titled "Lady Poverty" by John Michael Talbot & Terry Talbot on our final day in Assisi, which aptly addressed my feelings, with phrases like: "Lady Poverty love me tonight ... Lady Poverty enter my door ... Give me the riches of my Lord". Here, my desire to leave all things behind found its fulfilment. To let go of everything, not for the reason of seeking fun and running away from responsibilities, but for utter detachment from all things mundane so as to be enriched by God and to be completely and utterly His. Truly, what more could I want?

What followed was an experience in the Church of St Agnes Outside the Walls when we returned to Rome for our final week. This church is the only one in Rome



Gabriel and BJ about to buy a huge croissant in the city of Perugia, capital of the Umbria region

Minje and Bradley take selfies outside the Colosseum

where Jesus is not depicted as the central figure of the apse. Instead, it is St Agnes, a 14-year-old martyr from the fourth century. Our wonderful guide, Dr David Dawson Vasquez, spoke to us about how St Agnes had become so conformed to Christ in her suffering





and death that she now stands as Christ, in His person, presiding over the holy liturgy. Praying by her tomb, I asked St Agnes to intercede for me that I might be conformed to Christ just like she was, and suddenly there it hit me.

My craving for true freedom was pointing to an ever-growing yearning of mine to be totally conformed to Christ, and to allow God's will to fully reign in me. It now made sense why I saw poverty, suffering and martyrdom as equalling freedom. It was not because those actions seemed extraordinarily impossible to follow, not at all, but that the example of these saints, of all our saints, shows us lives lived (to the best that they could) in accordance with God's ordained will. Which is, as it is for me and for you, to be perfect like our Heavenly Father (Matthew 5:48).

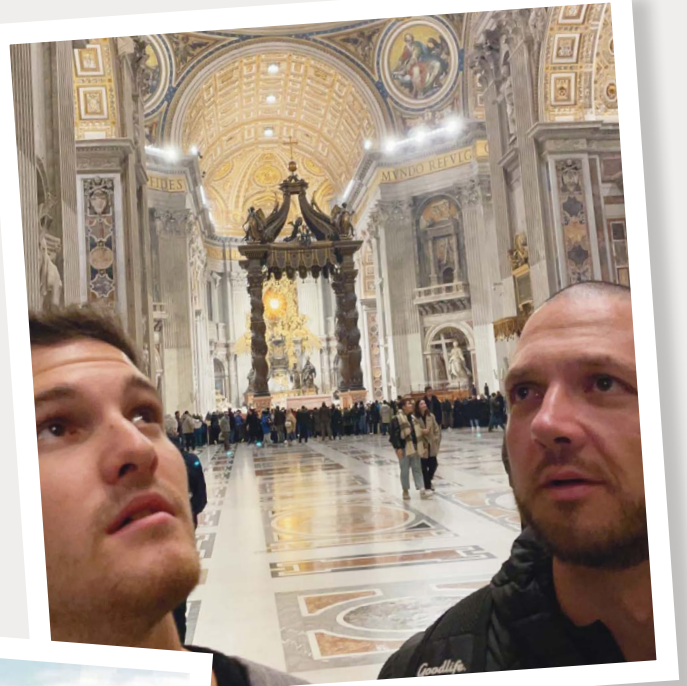
In the full context of St Peter's discussion on confirming one's calling and election, he makes a remarkable statement: St Peter says that God's "divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life" (2 Peter 1:3). This craving for freedom isn't my desire, it is Jesus' desire for me that was planted in my soul at an early age to help me grow in sanctity.

Yes, it has taken me many years to realise this, but that is the process of maturity, and by coming to the seminary this maturation has only been furthered. This pilgrimage was a fitting example of that.

So, it is clear, only in His will is my freedom and, in the years of formation ahead, I shall make every effort to unpack, confirm and actualise what this means for my life and my vocation.

To those who generously donated to make this pilgrimage possible, those members of staff who worked tirelessly to plan our itinerary, and to the many people who kept us continually in their prayers, we sincerely thank you. If it were not for you, the formation we gained on this pilgrimage would not have been possible.

Please be assured of our prayers for you too, and know



BJ and Isaac admire the beauty of St Peter's Basilica



Peter finds a stray cat living in the ruins of Pompeii

that in every church we visited and in all of our steps on pilgrimage we brought you with us and presented you and your loved ones to the Heavenly Father. I invite you to claim these graces so that you too can continue to grow in sanctity and in your desire to do always the will of the Father.



# Paul Jensen



**Bradley Davies met with Paul Jensen, the seminary's newly appointed Director of Pastoral Studies, to discuss his journey of discernment, confirmation of vocation and the hopes he has in his new role.**

**T**ell me a little about yourself.

My family of origin migrated to Darwin at Papua New Guinea's independence in 1974 when I was nine. We experienced Darwin, prior to Cyclone Tracy on Christmas Eve of that same year, as an alien space. Consequently, my younger brother and I found being migrants very dislocating and, as a result, have empathy for migrants, refugees and those seeking asylum. My family lost everything in Cyclone Tracy further exacerbating dislocation, and I recall being the beneficiary of Australian generosity for nine months after one of Australia's worst natural disasters. This genuine concern and hospitality touched me and provided balm to our experience of alienation.

**H**ow has having a background in psychology helped you in your ministry?

Psychology has provided me an empirical rather than theological lens through which to assess and respond to human behaviour. Psychology renders more psychopathological rather than moral aetiologies for human behaviour, which can be helpful when an individual's behaviour is clearly psychopathological. However, psychology can then unwittingly diminish an individual's personal agency and responsibility. It works best for me when both lenses are in dialogue and a priori assumptions are acknowledged with humility.

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*My advice to those seeking to confirm these more specific vocational calls is to enter into honest dialogue and discernment with the Church*

**W**hat are your hopes as Director of Pastoral Studies?

At this stage, my hope is to enjoy this steep learning curve and listen deeply so as to understand the current state of pastoral formation at the seminary. Eventually, I hope to enhance the seminary's pastoral formation framework in an intentional and collaborative manner with seminary staff, seminarians and the province.

**H**ow have you sought to confirm your calling over the years, first as a Uniting Church minister, and now as you prepare for the permanent diaconate?

Over the years I've tuned my ears to better hear the Holy Spirit. As a younger man those nudges, which led me into marriage and then ministry in the Uniting Church, were visceral. Now I experience those types of nudges less frequently but more gently. Regardless, I have joined in discernment with the Church to either



confirm or disconfirm those nudges and how best to respond. In truth, the nudges might not be the promptings of the Holy Spirit, hence why we need the community of faith to join us in discernment.

**What are you most looking forward to in the ministry of a permanent deacon?**

While the ministry of deacon has been characterised as one of charity and service, assuming the Church confirms my vocation, I hope to occupy the space of diaconal ministry which I define as boundary rider and interlocutor between Church and world. I then hope to live out of that dialogical space in the ministry of deacon across a range of contexts including that of Director of Pastoral Studies.

**What are some of your interests outside of ministry?**

I enjoy physically active and solitary sports like mountain bike riding and surfing. As an introvert, I get into “the zone” more effectively when on my own and personally challenged. I also get a great deal of

pleasure from cooking, particularly Thai, Indian, Italian and French cuisines.

**Finally, Paul, what is some advice that you could give those reading this edition about how, or what to do, to confirm God’s call for their life?**

The Vatican II Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, and subsequent papal encyclicals make it clear that as baptised Christians, whether ordained or lay, we are all called to holiness and to be missionary disciples. How we live out that holiness and missionary discipleship is through more specific vocational calls like marriage or ordination.

My advice to those seeking to confirm these more specific vocational calls is to enter into honest dialogue and discernment with the Church. Talk with friends, family and your priest and engage with vocational formation processes like marriage preparation and seminary education. Over time, we can hear confirmation or disconfirmation more clearly if we enter these processes honestly, openly and humbly.



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**North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services Limited (NWQICSS)** is a not-for-profit company limited.

The operation has been running for some years being established by Good Shepherd Parish, Mount Isa to provide direct relief and support to Indigenous people of the region, through innovative and sustainable programs and activities.

NWQICSS has services for most vulnerable people in areas of life in Doomadgee, Boulia and Mount Isa.

Our vision is to give Indigenous people pride, belief, self-understanding, independence and a real chance to enjoy a full and meaningful life in North West Queensland.

**The Indigenous profile of NWQICSS Communities**

- Population of North West Queensland is 25% Indigenous.
- Employment of at least 80% of employees are Indigenous.
- Health & Education – Ngukuthati Child and Family Centre.
- Homelessness – Riverbed programme and Diversion from Custody Centre.
- Criminal Justice – with Men’s & Women’s Groups associated with the Murri Court, Prisons, Magistrate Courts and for DV Courts & Youth.
- Youth Services in Mount Isa for disengaged youth delivering educational, cultural and diversionary programmes through case management.
- Doomadgee services – Court, Men’s Group and Women’s Shelter.
- Boulia service – Community service for the Boulia Community.



(Top) Propaedeutic seminarians Valentine Ohaneje, Harold Conrod, Charles Nguyen and Godwin James learn how to altar serve at St Stephen's Cathedral, Brisbane

(Right) Seminarians Peter Doherty and BJ Perrett at their Australian Catholic University graduation. BJ was awarded the University Medal for achieving the highest grade point average out of all students in his bachelor's degree, and Peter, the Executive Dean's Award for Academic Excellence



(Below) Brisbane Auxiliary Bishop Ken Howell ordains Isaac Falzon to the transitional diaconate at the seminary's Chapel of the Holy Spirit

(Bottom) Bishops of Queensland on their annual visit to Holy Spirit Seminary





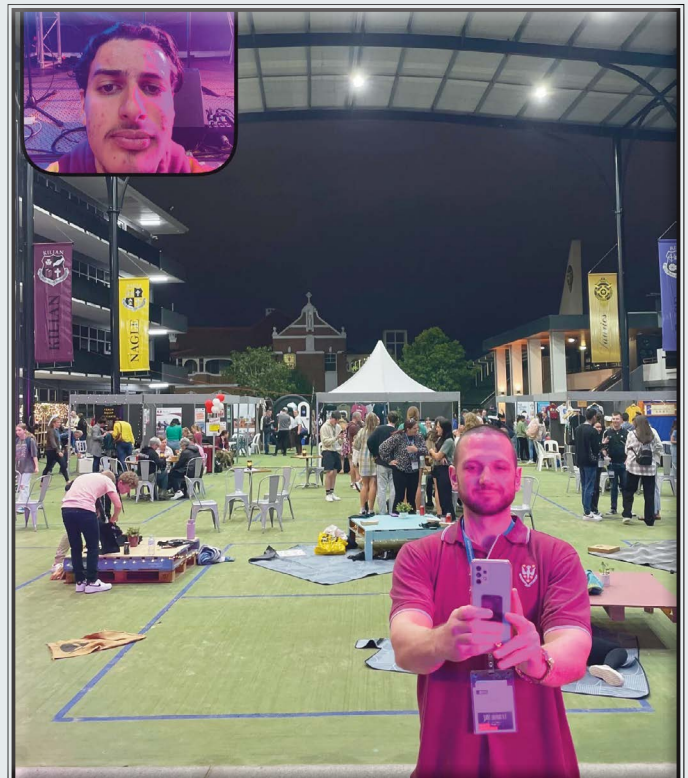
(Top) Seminarians Minje Kim (second left), Gerard Lai (back right) and Isaac Falzon (seated third from right) enjoy a celebration in their honour before their diaconal ordination



(Left) Seminarian Bradley Davies records a podcast for Fr Paul Kelly, Associate Pastor at Surfers Paradise Parish, during his pastoral placement year

(Bottom left) Participants respond to the 2022 Xavier School of Mission's week-long workshop themed, "Theology of Mission: All in? When Mission is our Lens"

(Bottom right) Isaac Falzon and Gabriel Guillaume share their experiences as seminarians on social media platforms at the 2022 Ignite Conference held in Brisbane



# Building maturity

Grant Sutherland | *Seminarian*



**H**uman Formation is a term that is used, as readers of this magazine are sure to know, to refer to one of the four critical dimensions of seminary training. Though it is used with constancy and confidence, at least in talk concerning seminary training, it strikes me, even as one who is in the process of undertaking it, as curiously hard to define.

If, as Saint John Paul II has said, human formation is the “basis of all priestly formation” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 43), it might be something that ought to be abundantly clear, so I thought. Not just so that formation can be effective, but also so that any who seek confirmation for a vocational calling can know for what they are being called.

A temptation I find when seeking to define human formation is to define it by negation, i.e., by saying what it is not rather than what it is. This is usually because the human person, who is the subject of human formation, is conceptually a terribly broad and complicated subject, more so at least than the spiritual life, academics or pastoral skills. This is due to the sheer scope and diversity of activities that could be considered formative for the human person; too many to number.

To honour this scope in comparison to the other dimensions, human formation could therefore variously be defined as: all formation that is not spiritual, intellectual or pastoral by nature.

However, while this may not technically be wrong for one interested in its undertaking, a negative definition of human formation is nonetheless unsatisfactory. For without a particular character or quality of its own, those who would otherwise be called to undertake human formation can find no identity with its aims because there does not appear to be any. They can therefore find no way to confirm a vocational call to a life with human formation as its basis because human formation has no real meaning.

What is necessary, therefore, is a positive definition for human formation that would posit a real goal in the mind of the one to be formed and their formators and what they ought to aspire to. I argue that what human formation concerns is what has traditionally been called prudence but may aptly be called maturity. Briefly, maturity concerns how one makes decisions and for what reason.

Given all the same options, the prudent and mature man chooses the proper option that the immature man cannot see. This skill of evaluation, of counsel and of decision is not automatic but something that is learned and taught through the dimension of human formation.

If this is a suitable positive definition, rather than being



Grant regards St Joseph as his model for developing an authentic and mature masculinity

the catch-all for those formative activities that fall outside of the other categories, human formation truly becomes the basis through which all the other formative categories are mediated.

Without human formation, one cannot maturely or, with proper discernment, undertake the project of spiritual, pastoral or intellectual formation. Maturity becomes the measure by which one understands just what they are called into by pursuing a priestly vocation.

The usefulness of these skills is not of course limited to the future priest but properly extends to every field where maturity and prudence are valued, such as in a family or the religious life.

Seminary education has the added privilege of being a very intentional place of maturity because a seminarian’s human formation is bolstered by some of the most foundational traditions that have the ability to build maturity: living and growing in a tight-knit community of brothers, continually assuming liturgical and ministerial responsibilities, the practice of true hospitality and the like.

To understand and practise maturity is integral to confirming one’s call to the priestly vocation and this is why it is integral to seminary formation.

# Overcoming challenges

Sang Duc Bui | *Seminarian*

**A**s taught by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, humans are born of God and oriented towards God; therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we use our time on this earth to grow in our understanding of who God is and who we are (CCC, 27).

Naturally, this requires some effort. For this reason, a seminarian undertakes a complex and demanding theological and philosophical formation as part of the intellectual dimension. Saint John Paul II wrote in the apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* that through theology, “the future priest assents to the word of God, grows in his spiritual life and prepares himself to fulfil his pastoral ministry” (PDV, 51).

Additionally, he states that only through sound philosophy can candidates for the priesthood “develop a reflective awareness of the fundamental relationship that exists between the human spirit and truth, that truth which is revealed to us fully in Jesus Christ” (PDV, 52).

I came to Australia in 2017 and began my journey of inculturation in a foreign country. The following year I began my studies at Holy Spirit Seminary and at the Australian Catholic University. Over the course of the last six years, I have studied a great variety of subjects from church history to canon law, Latin, and ancient Greek and modern philosophy, just to name a few.

I have enjoyed my studies, though with each year of seminary formation, I have faced a number of difficult challenges. With English not being my first language, I have struggled with things like the reading of textbooks and constructing academic essays, especially in transferring the ideas from my head to words on paper. A lot of the time I have been very overwhelmed and frustrated with my studies, feeling as if I am not capable to continue down this path.

Yet, as I have come to now know, these struggles are part of a seminarian’s intellectual formation and have huge potential for building one’s character, resilience and mindset. For me personally, these challenges have also helped me to realise my limitations and how I



Sang applies himself to his studies despite the challenges

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*Intellectual formation is an effort but, in making such an effort, I have felt myself truly growing in wisdom.*

greatly rely on the Holy Spirit to guide me through and to retain what I need for future ministry.

When you realise that it is not about how much studying

you do and how good your grades are, but that you seek this knowledge for the benefit of God’s people, then the challenges of intellectual formation become bearable and you become more willing to embrace (and you learn to love) this sometimes-frustrating cross. Intellectual formation is an effort but, in making such an effort, I have felt myself truly growing in wisdom.

I see now that all the effort I put in seeking “an ever-deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries”, through the seminary’s high quality and thorough intellectual formation and theological and philosophical study at Australian Catholic University, is for the salvation of my brothers and sisters (PDV, 157).

The Holy Spirit continues to guide and help me, and I know and trust that God looks kindly upon the efforts I have made. For through it all, my calling to the priesthood has remained fervent and strong.

# Retreat into silence

To be silent and retreat from the world for 30 days is often a life-defining if not life-changing experience. While I was on retreat last year at Sevenhill Retreat Centre in the heart of the Clare Valley of South Australia, I missed the shortest tenure of a UK prime minister, the Medibank security breach and the Melbourne Cup, to name a few.

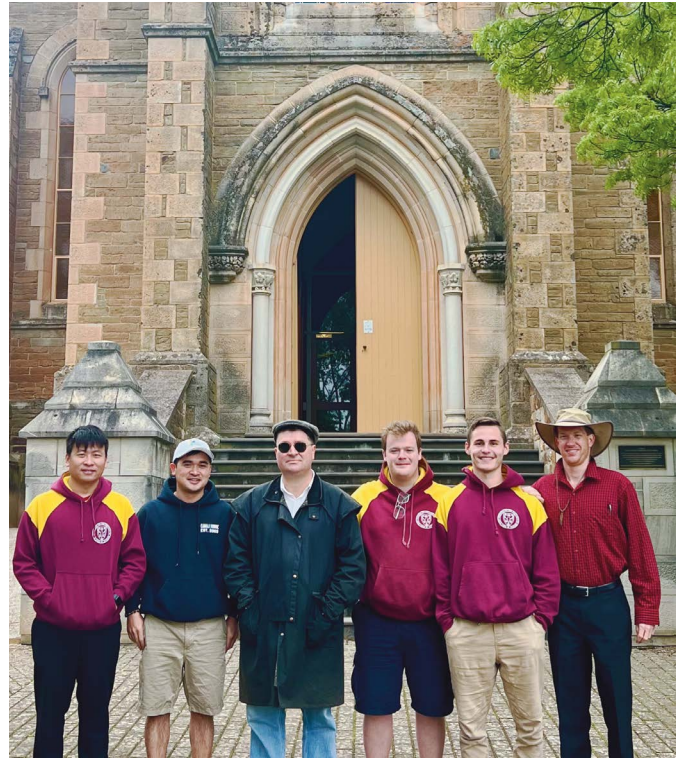
However, the retreat helped me to realise how unimportant these events really are in the grand scheme of things, and while these events have the power to change the lives of some, my retreat focused on something that impacts every single person ever created: the personal and loving call of God.

In preparing for the retreat, I was expecting to be confirmed in my calling to the diocesan priesthood in the Diocese of Townsville. While this hope was fulfilled, I came to realise a greater call of God's that St Peter calls us to confirm.

The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola was the general program for my retreat. The Exercises, as the program is sometimes called, have been adapted and followed by thousands, possibly millions of people throughout the world ever since the life of St Ignatius himself.

Before beginning the retreat, St Ignatius notes that one "will benefit greatly by entering these exercises with a great heart and with generosity toward their Creator and Lord" (Annotation 5). This note by the saint set the tone for my retreat and pushed me towards being as open as I possibly could to God's generous love for me. In moving towards a space of radical openness towards God, I began down a path that would change how I see God at work in and around my life and how I am called to participate in this work.

Facilitated by my Spiritual Director, the course of the retreat was split into four parts and I was guided in



William and fellow seminarians visit St Aloysius, an historic church that has served the Parish of Sevenhill, South Australia, since 1875

each part to deepen my understanding of how I relate with God. The first so-called "week" (that was nine days long) concentrated on God as the loving giver of all good things, and how, despite God's total giving to me, I still turn away from God just as some angels and Adam and Eve did in the beginning.

The second week focused on the birth, life and ministry of Jesus, recognising that despite the flaws of creation



Seminarians together with two Missionaries of God's Love sisters, and their spiritual directors at Sevenhill Retreat Centre





Thomas spends a quiet moment during the retreat to feed the animals that graze the tranquil surroundings of the retreat centre

God still desires to be in a loving relationship with us through becoming human.

The third week concentrated on the fullest act of God's love for me and for creation as a whole — the passion and death of Jesus. This time I was forced to recognise the sheer magnitude of God's love for me in how much Jesus suffered for my sake. However, we know that this is not the end of the story, and neither was it the end of my retreat.

In the fourth week, I focused on the resurrected Christ and how he calls His disciples to be transformed by their encounter with Him and how He calls me to be transformed as well.

In journeying through the retreat, my relationship with God was totally renewed. I fell in love with God in a much deeper and all-encompassing way, and so I saw my own life in a new light. A major part of this illumination was regarding my vocational calling. The experience of The Exercises strengthened my discernment of my vocation to the diocesan presbyterate, with God reaffirming the call that I first recognised some years ago.

However, my experience of God's call in my life through the 30 days of the retreat helped me to recognise that this calling towards the presbyterate is in fact a secondary calling and, while it is very important, it relies on a call that God has for all of us.

This primary call of God's is the call to Eternal Life. While the retreat helped to affirm my vocational calling, it also reinforced for me the fact that I should make every effort to confirm God's loving and personal invitation to "participate in the divine nature" and to do all I can to help others realise this primary call of God's as well, so that one day we might all "receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1: 4, 11).

So, while I retreated from the world of political intrigue and horse racing, I began to bask in the light of God's magnificent love. This new light helped me to realise that God calls me to a life consumed with love, a love so deep and complete that in immersing myself fully in this love it will flow out into the lives of all the people I meet.



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# Yearning for more

Godwin James | *Seminarian*



**B**y God's grace after a year of no intake, Holy Spirit Seminary welcomed four men who have begun their propaedeutic year.

I am excited to be one among those whom God has brought together as a unique and culturally diverse brotherhood on this journey of discernment and formation. My fellow propaedeutic brothers are Harold Conrod from Canada, Valentine Ohaneje from Nigeria, Charles Nguyen from Vietnam and I, Godwin James, from India.

I find it very fascinating how the four of us have come from different countries across the world and have been shaped and formed by our own rich cultural traditions and heritage, yet we are united in the common faith we share and the desire to heed this calling to the priesthood.

Allow me to now take this opportunity and share a little about my journey to this point. I was born in Pondicherry, a city on the south east coast of India.

After finishing school, I enrolled in a mechanical engineering degree, graduated and pursued a career as an engineer. Three years into the job, despite its challenges, the professional path ahead looked quite promising; however, I began to feel a nudge from within. Was I really content with what my life was all about?

I had always desired to have a good professional career and one day a family of my own, but deep within my heart there was this profound yearning for more, which I could not ignore, and I needed to attend to it. I became certain that my life was not about engineering anymore and this was the beginning of my calling.

The greatest blessing that I had when I embarked on this journey of discernment was that I was not alone, for the support and prayers of several priests, religious nuns and



Propaedeutic seminarians Harold Conrod, Valentine Ohaneje, Godwin James and Charles Nguyen

faithful Catholics was backing me. It was up to me though to make an intentional effort to confirm what God was calling me to do in this life.

Up until the point of realising the sense of calling, I had been doing the basics of what a Catholic was meant to do — Sunday Mass and periodic confession. So, one of the many efforts that I made was to shift my weekly Mass attendance to daily Mass participation and to pray regularly before the Blessed Sacrament.

I can see in hindsight how each and every one of my efforts strengthened me to renounce the world and move forward in my discernment — like stepping stones, they eventually led me to the seminary.

Now my job, as well as for my fellow propaedeutic brothers, is to make a continuous effort to confirm our calling through the gift of the seminary's routine of prayer, work, study and fraternal living.

For all of us who strive to follow

after Jesus Christ, in various moments of our life the Holy Spirit gives us little nudges in the depths of our heart to be or to do something more. These nudges are God's way of calling us closer to Him and to a life of greater holiness and sanctity. After all, God wants every one of us to become saints.

A chosen few are called to that end through ordained ministry and consecrated life, but many are called to become saints by being devoted fathers and loving mothers who are committed to building strong and faithful families wherein Jesus Christ is placed at their centre.

Therefore, I exhort you like St Peter to be attentive to your calling and to make every effort to confirm it. For wherever it might lead you, whether that is the path to priesthood or religious life, or to live as faithful parents raising good, courageous and holy children, be assured that that path will shape you into the person that God wants you to be and will be the path where you will find true joy and abiding peace.

# Tributes

**Rev Dr Joseph Sardie**  
Archdiocese of Brisbane

Born: 16 December 1953  
Ordained: 19 March 1993  
Died: 26 September 2022

*+ Requiescat in Pace*

Brisbane born Joseph Sardie was an intelligent and humble man who, before entering St Paul's Seminary in Sydney, had spent a little over two decades in the area of science and physics. After completing a Bachelor of Science (Honours) (Physics) and a Diploma of Meteorology at The University of Queensland, he furthered his education in physics through a PhD at Penn State University, Pennsylvania, USA. This led him to work for the Bureau of Meteorology (Victoria) until his entrance into the seminary.

During his 29 years of ordained ministry, Fr Joe was Assistant Pastor at St Catherine's, Wishart, and St Paul's, Woodridge. In 2000, he was appointed Parish Priest at St Brigid's, Nerang, for 12 years. Due to illness complications, Fr Joe retired prematurely and moved into St Vincent's Care Kangaroo Point.



Picture: Sergey Gabdurakhmanov

**Rev Benjamin Lewis**  
Diocese of Townsville

Born: 27 November 1923  
Ordained: 1 July 1958  
Died: 7 July 2022

*+ Requiescat in Pace*

Born in Cloncurry, Ben Lewis was educated at Ingham State School. He completed his secondary education at All Souls, Charters Towers.

After graduating, he began an apprenticeship at the oldest sugar mill in Queensland, Macknade Mill, as a fitter and turner. He began ministry as an Anglican priest and was received into the Catholic Church in 1951, the same year in which he started his seminary studies.

Throughout his ministry as a Catholic priest, Fr Ben served in many parishes including Sacred Heart Cathedral, Ingham, Bowen, Mt Isa, Winton, Richmond, Cloncurry and Collinsville. He retired to Villa McCauley and then to Villa Vincent in Townsville. He is remembered as a man of the people and of unwavering faith.



**Rev Peter Fountain**  
Archdiocese of Adelaide

Born: 7 May 1945  
Ordained: 4 September 1971  
Died: 1 January 2023

*+ Requiescat in Pace*

Peter Fountain began discerning the priesthood at a young age. Becoming critically ill with peritonitis and glandular fever when he was 10 years old was a strong inspiration for following the calling. Joining St Francis Xavier Seminary, Rostrevor, Fr Peter was ordained at 26 and over the course of 51 years of priesthood served in every parish in the South East Deanery.

He thoroughly enjoyed preparing couples for weddings and then celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony, as well as spending much time in the confessional ministering to penitents. Fr Peter also cherished those many moments he spent sharing in the joys and sorrows of his parishioners. He deeply loved the South Australian country towns and their people, and that love was well reciprocated by all who knew him.

With their passing to eternal life, we honour the legacy of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Cardinal George Pell for the Universal Catholic Church, as well as the particular Catholic Church of Australia. Seminary Rector Fr Neil Muir and seminarians were blessed to have met with Cardinal Pell while in Rome. *+ Requiescant in Pace*

# Diaconal Reflections

Deacon Gerard's first baptism at Star of the Sea Parish, Cleveland



## Rev Mr Gerard Lai Archdiocese of Brisbane

Contrary to popular belief, deacons are not just trainee priests completing their practicals. Deacons are ordained ministers in their own right and are called to serve in three specific ways: in the Liturgy, by proclaiming the Gospel and in charitable works. As part of the Vocational Synthesis Stage, a seminarian who has completed his studies and is accepted by the bishop as having fulfilled the requirements of formation, is then ordained a transitional deacon.

This is different from a man ordained to the permanent diaconate who is not required to complete seminary studies but instead partakes in formation through a diaconate program. These men follow God's call to serve the Church in a way that does not eventually lead to the priesthood. Married men too may be ordained as permanent deacons.

For me, being a transitional deacon has been very exciting. There has not been a dull moment, and every day is different here at Star of the Sea Parish, Cleveland. Ministry opportunities are abundant with two schools, eight nursing homes and two hospitals within the parish boundary.

Sometimes I find myself doing an array of ministry from reading the Gospel and preaching the homily at Mass, to presiding over baptisms, teaching religious education classes at schools and attending the various



A trio of deacons, Minje Kim, Gerard Lai and Isaac Falzon were ordained to the transitional diaconate on 18 November 2022 by Brisbane Auxiliary Bishop Ken Howell at the Chapel of the Holy Spirit at Banyo (Picture: Lamplight Media)

ministry groups around the parish. Other times I am visiting the sick and housebound, playing soccer in the school playground, cooking meals for various parish events, decorating noticeboards, creating content for the parish's social media or engaging in conversation with God's people almost anywhere and at any time.



My favourite part of the transitional diaconate has been preaching at Mass and teaching in schools.

It has been my observation that people these days are spiritually starving, much “like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36), so I feel immensely privileged to be able to feed these people with God’s Word and to help them make God a bigger part of their lives.

All of these experiences as a deacon have strongly confirmed my calling to the priesthood, and I have absolutely loved every minute of it.

**Rev Mr Minje Kim**  
**Archdiocese of Brisbane**

After my diaconal ordination I was sent to St Anthony and St Joseph Parish, Bracken Ridge, to carry out my diaconal ministry of servanthood and service. Since then, I have found myself taking part in the ministry of healing while assisting Fr Gerry Hefferan with numerous anointings of the sick.

I have partaken in the ministry of discipleship at the commissioning Mass for parish school staff, and found that at the parish youth group mine was a ministry of hope in which I listened and responded to the young people’s dreams for the future.

As well as proclaiming the Gospel, baptising babies, leading funeral preparations, and the like, these have all been the various ways that my diaconal ministry has presented itself as I continually seek to confirm this calling to priesthood. In such a multicultural community, as is Bracken Ridge Parish, my ministry has not just been limited to these diaconal works.

Instead, this multicultural aspect has driven me to



Deacon Minje delivers a homily at St Joseph and St Anthony Parish, Bracken Ridge

reflect and find diverse ways of using my gifts and talents to minister to the needs of the parishioners so that their relationship with Jesus Christ, the true Servant of us all, can be strengthened, nourished and deepened.

As God does not approach us in only one single way but embraces where we are at and accepts us for our strengths, weaknesses and various circumstances, I feel the responsibility to also use various ways of reaching out to these people. By doing so, I feel that I am responding to St Peter’s appeal to confirm my calling and, with the help of this parish community, preparing myself for priestly ordination and a lifetime of ministerial service.



**Rev Mr Isaac Falzon**  
**Archdiocese of Brisbane**

Lamplight Media filmed a wonderful video of Isaac sharing his story of discernment as he prepared for his ordination to the transitional diaconate. Type in “A Journey of Discernment – Isaac Falzon” into YouTube, or alternatively, scan the QR code to watch the video straight away. Make sure to also give it a like.



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# Farewelled with thanks

**T**he seminary gathered over a community dinner late last year to farewell with thanks and prayers two well-loved and cherished members of staff, Fr Frank Jones and Carmel Taylor (pictured).



Fr Frank spent three happy years as seminary vice-rector, bringing deep parish and missionary experience to the role. He oversaw the propaedeutic program for students beginning their seminary journey and conducted the pastoral year and diaconal programs for students at that point in their formation journeys.

He wonderfully accompanied students through times of challenge, doubt, confusion and questioning, seeking to bring them through these difficult periods in the formation journey into a place of deeper awareness and peace with their calling.

Fr Frank brought to the seminary's formation program a unique blend of missionary and parochial experiences. Having spent many years with The Society of St James in South America, he lived, worked and worshipped with some of the poorest people on the planet. In doing so, he ministered and accompanied people on the

economic, social, healthcare and ecclesial peripheries. He sought to overcome the circumstances of disadvantage and distress that afflict most acutely those who are made like all people in the image of God.

Among Fr Frank's particular memories is building a convent for a religious community of Ecuadorean Sisters. They generously answered his request to help him on mission with the education of poor children and their parents in the building of the parish school. Building friendships among the poor and helping them live with human dignity were the focus of a very happy life for Fr Frank.

With the support of Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Fr Frank will return to university to undertake a two-year Master of Psychotherapy with a focus on psychodynamic psychotherapy. These studies will situate Fr Frank well as they will complement his future ministry work in journeying with priests and seminarians as part of the work of clergy support. So, he will still be a familiar face in the lives of many students who he has come to know.

The seminary community will deeply miss Fr Frank.

After more than five years working in the seminary office on reception and in administration, Carmel decided to hang up her hat and retire.

She always impressed her work colleagues and those she served at the seminary with her ability to think on her feet and her never-failing kindness and positive attitude.

She said she felt honoured to support the call of our future priests and the formators who support them. Staff and students will miss her commitment and contribution.



*Rev Fr Neil Muir  
Rector*



*Rev Dr Paul  
Chandler O.Carm  
Spiritual Director*



*Rev Dr Anthony  
Mellor  
Academic Dean*



*Sr Ursula O'Rourke  
SGS  
Liturgy Formation*



*Shayne Bennett  
Director of  
Faith and Mission*



*Dr Maeve Louise  
Heaney VDMF  
Director of Theological  
Formation in Ministry*



*Paul Jensen  
Director of  
Pastoral Studies*



*Marina Grey  
Administrative  
Assistant*



*Hollye Ryan  
Administrative  
Assistant*



*Robert Schroeders  
Evangelisation*



*Pierre-Antoine  
Rey Du Boissieu  
Chef*



*Bruce Lavender  
Grounds and  
Maintenance*

## Our Seminarians

### Propaedeutic Stage



Harold  
Conrod  
*Brisbane*



Godwin  
James  
*Adelaide*



Charles  
Nguyen  
*Brisbane*



Valentine  
Ohaneje  
*Brisbane*

### Discipleship Stage



Dylan  
Asmus  
*Brisbane*



Gabriel  
Guillaume  
*Brisbane*

### Discipleship Stage



Grant  
Sutherland  
*Rockhampton*



Peter  
Doherty  
*Rockhampton*



Sang  
Duc Bui  
*Brisbane*



BJ  
Perrett  
*Toowoomba*



Thomas  
Popovic  
*Brisbane*



William  
Brennan  
*Townsville*

### Pastoral Stage

### Configuration Stage

### Configuration Stage



Bradley  
Davies  
*Brisbane*



Michael My  
Van Tran  
*Brisbane*



Sean  
Woods  
*Brisbane*



Isaac  
Falzon  
*Brisbane*



Minje  
Kim  
*Brisbane*



Gerard  
Lai  
*Brisbane*

### Vocational Synthesis Stage

## VOCATIONS

Through baptism  
God calls each one  
of us by name to  
follow Christ and  
serve the people of  
God.

If you feel God  
might be calling you  
to serve the Church  
as a priest, or have  
questions about the  
priesthood, then  
contact your  
diocesan vocations  
office.

### ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

Mr Nick Kelly - Team Leader, Vocation Brisbane,  
Evangelisation Brisbane

**1300 133 544**

[vocation@bne.catholic.net.au](mailto:vocation@bne.catholic.net.au)

**GPO BOX 282, Brisbane QLD 4001**

### DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

Mr Michael Otto - Executive Officer Vocations,  
Youth and Family

**07 4887 3089**

[vocations@rok.catholic.net.au](mailto:vocations@rok.catholic.net.au)

**PO BOX 611, Rockhampton QLD 4700**

### DIOCESE OF TOOWOOMBA

Fr Gonzalo Duran - Vocations Director

**07 4681 2157**

[vocations@twb.catholic.org.au](mailto:vocations@twb.catholic.org.au)

**114 High Street, Stanthorpe QLD 43803**

### DIOCESE OF TOWNSVILLE

Fr. Michael Lowcock, Vocations Director

**07 4726 3251**

[vocations@tsv.catholic.org.au](mailto:vocations@tsv.catholic.org.au)

**PO BOX 324, Mt Isa QLD 4825**

### DIOCESE OF CAIRNS

Fr Nathan McKay - Vocations Director

**07 4054 1171**

[nathanmckay@bigpond.com](mailto:nathanmckay@bigpond.com)

**18 Balaclava Rd, Earlville QLD 4870**



A blessed opportunity to meet Pope Francis at a Papal Audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall  
Picture: Vatican Media

Thank you \*

To all who have generously supported this year's edition of *The Paraclete* - either financially, through donations or sponsorships, by your prayers, or the submission of written contributions - we thank you sincerely. Keep up with all the news from Holy Spirit Seminary via our website:

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(Archdiocese of Brisbane and  
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Toowoomba, Townsville and  
Cairns)  
PO Box 18  
Banyo Q 4014  
Australia

