

# CAST YOUR NETS

A JOURNAL SUPPORTING VOCATIONS IN THE DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

All are invited to attend our Annual Vocation Promotion Workshop:

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS  
POPE FRANCIS ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE 53rd  
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER  
FOR VOCATIONS**

**"The Church,  
Mother of Vocations"**



***The Church, Mother of Vocations***

**Keynote Speaker:**

Rev. Msgr. Michael Carruthers,  
Parochial Vicar,  
St. Cecelia Catholic Church

**Location: Bethany Center**

18150 Bethany Center Dr.  
Lutz, FL 33558

**Date: Saturday, January 28, 2017**

8:00a.m. - 1:15 p.m.

Cost: Free

Continental Breakfast and Lunch Provided

**Please RSVP by Wednesday, January 18, 2017:**

**Heidi Varley, Assistant Director, Office of Vocations**

hlv@dosp.org OR (727) 345-3452

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## ANIMUS

The famous Christmas song: “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year” brings, in a secular way, the excitement and anticipation of Christmas. The season of Advent, is for Christians, while all the Christmas Carols, shows, and parties demonstrate, excitement, anticipation, and joy. Advent is that time of year where we, as Christians, prepare in joyful anticipation and excitement the Second coming of our Lord as we remember His birth in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago.

The Season of Advent also gives us the most intimate look at three principal figures in salvation history. The Blessed Mother Mary, John the Baptist, and St Joseph. All three show us the importance of living out one’s vocation. Looking at each one of these extraordinary figures, and their unique call or vocation, helps us to see how God’s call for each of us can have in God’s ultimate plan for His creation.

Let us take a quick look at our Blessed Mother Mary and her yes: Mary called by St. John Paul II, “The Mother and Model of all Vocations” is, indeed, a model for all vocations. We say so often that vocation is a call but, in reality, vocation is an invitation. Mary’s yes demonstrates to each of us how in saying yes to our vocation, or the invitation God has extended to us, we enter into a much more intimate and personal relationship with our Lord. Mary’s yes models for each of us how in opening our hearts to the Lord and His call for us fulfills us and brings us to a life that is joyful. We all know that the life Mary lived was not always happy. In fact, Mary suffered greatly at times. However, the fact that her yes allowed God to use her to bring forth His Son into the world and fulfill His promise of salvation must have brought Mary a joy and fulfilment that is beyond compare. The joy and fulfilment she received allows Mary to understand and make sense of the suffering she endured. Mary’s understanding and acceptance of her suffering and ultimate fulfilment and joy is the great model for each of us that St John Paul is hoping we see in the model Mary demonstrates.

Seeing Mary in the role of mother is also so very important for us. Not only is Mary the mother of our Lord she also is the mother to each of us. Interceding for us to Her son, providing protection, com-

fort, and love when we need it the most. Mary is in the most profound and deep way a true mother to and for all of us. Mary is also mother of the Church. As she birthed her son she also birthed the Church as the way in which we encounter her son. Therefore Mary is mother of Jesus, the Church, and mother for us all.

Our Lord uses, most importantly, His own voice heard in our own hearts, He uses the voice of others, and He uses the voice of His Church in inviting us into our vocation. As one can easily see St John was absolutely correct when he called Mary the model and mother of all vocations.

As we pray through this Advent Season let us focus on Mary as model and mother of all vocations for it is her *yes* that brings to conclusion this time of preparation- the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ! It truly is *The Most Wonderful Time of the Year!!*

God Bless you all,



Fr. Carl Melchior  
Director of Vocations

## SEMINARIAN PERSPECTIVES

### **Zachary Brasseur, St. John Vianney College Seminary Growing in Love and Freedom**

Hello, good people of the Diocese of St. Petersburg! As I write this, I am sitting on the patio of a Starbucks in Miami, a few blocks from St. John Vianney College Seminary. Miami is a place I never planned to visit, let alone live in, and I am amazed that my time here is almost finished. As I approach the halfway point of my time here I reflect on the ways I have grown in the past year and the growth and formation still to come.

I began this semester with thanks and gratitude for my summer parish experience, but also some anxiety. Over the summer I was affirmed in many ways and I grew in confidence of my call to the priesthood of Jesus Christ. At the same time, I also became very aware of some of my weaknesses and I wondered how I could possibly overcome them. So, I made a resolution to work harder and to focus on those areas of formation where I needed to grow. I knew that last year I had sort of coasted through, but now I wanted to buckle down and get to work. I quickly realized that putting pressure on myself to be better and work harder was counterproductive, so I became discouraged, and I wondered if it was really worth it. But a homily at daily mass one day reminded me of why I was at seminary: the priest told us that while so much of what we do in formation might appear to be shortsighted and tedious, it is all for the sake of the people we will one day serve. We won't know these people for another ten, fifteen, or thirty years, but it is all for them, so that they too can have a relationship with Jesus. This was the jolt I needed! I wasn't in priestly formation for my own sake, but for the benefit of others. This marked a rediscovery of my vocation. Why am I here in the first place? What do I have to offer?

After a great deal of prayer and reflection, I realized two things. First, I had to relearn my identity as a son of God, who is loved by God, and was given a name by God. I am in seminary because He called me here in order to grow in love of Him and knowledge of His love for me. Second, I began to truly understand that formation is an ongoing process. If I give myself over to formation in humility and dedication, and God willing I am ordained, I will be ready for priestly ministry. However, there is no way I can expect to be the perfect priest after only seven years of seminary. There will always be room for growth and improvement. There is freedom in this realization, because I know that He loves me just as I am with all of my gifts and weaknesses.



**Zachary Brasseur** is the second of four children belonging to Brad and Kathy, and he is the only boy. His sisters are (in order) Amy, Alexis, and Jessica. A native of St. Petersburg, his family has been involved in several parishes over the years but they now call St. Paul's in St. Pete home. He graduated from St. Petersburg High School in 2011 and from Saint Leo University in 2015 with a bachelor of arts in history and a minor in religion. While at Saint Leo, Zach was involved in campus ministry, worked as a resident assistant, and during the summers served as a summer missionary at Life Teen camp in Georgia. Zach always thought of the priesthood as a possible vocation from the time he was a young boy, but it wasn't until college when he began to seriously discern and pray about it. He was attracted to a life of service to others and making the same love of Jesus Christ that he experienced present and real to everyone. Following major league baseball (particularly the Rays), reading and discussing history, listening to folk rock and punk music, and exploring the world of craft beer are among his hobbies.

### **Israel "Izzie" Hernandez, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary**

After two years, I have graduated from St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami. Two years of studying philosophy and now onto studying theology. This of course means new beginnings; a new beginning means new brothers to get to know, new priests, new staff, etc. There is a bit of fear that comes with moving on to the Masters program at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary. Fear of failing courses, new teachers, not getting along with new brothers and so on. On the flip side, there also comes much excitement. I am given the opportunity to learn more about the scriptures, forming new relationships with new brothers and priests, and let's not forget that I get my own room which includes my own bathroom.

I can say that I will miss SJVCS because it is where I began to be formed into the person God wants me to be. Now, I must take the next step of formation, integrate what I will learn here, and open myself up even more to the will of God. This will allow me to be the best man I can be, which will help me to better serve in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Coming in with an open heart to receive what lies ahead will take much trust on my part. But, who better to trust with your life than God the Father. After all, "I am his beloved son with whom he is well pleased."

Thus far, in my first semester at SVDP, I can say that I am happy. Maybe not all the time, but for the most part I am. I have new obstacles to overcome, a new apostolic assignment that I enjoy very much, and amazing priest and formation advisors that will be guiding me along the way. I do not fear what will come next for me, not at all; instead, I look at my future with excitement and openness. I know that God is with me and if this is His will for me to become a priest, then I will discern alongside Him and accept what He places before me. I will probably complain a whole lot along the way, but this complaining will be accompanied with much love. My trust in God has grown in my time in seminary and I am hoping that it continues to grow. I pray that when I fail to trust in God, I come to realize how foolish I have been.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Jesus as my teacher, and God opening my heart and mind to receive him, I am in great hands. I am always praying for everyone back in the diocese and appreciate all the letters that I receive from those who write me. I thank you all for your prayers and hope to serve you one day.



**Israel "Izzie" Hernandez** - I graduated from St. John Vianney College Seminary in May 2016 and I am currently in the Theology I masters program at the major seminary. Outside of my studies, I have been given apostolic work at a nursing home. Prior to last summer, I had no experience with elderly ministry. I only had experience ministering to the poor and the youth. I am very excited about this new assignment and hope to learn a lot that will allow me to be a great priest. I am enjoying the major seminary and can't wait to see what God has in store for me here. The teachers, faculty, and priests are amazing. I am able to play sports and work out, which I enjoy doing a lot. I also have the opportunity to help some of my fellow brother's get in shape by teaching them about health and exercise. I feel really blessed to be in a place where I can pray in solitude and contemplate on becoming a better man for the people of God. The seminary has been a great place thus far for unveiling the plans that God has for me. It has opened me up to new ways of serving the people of God that I could not see before.

## SEMINARIAN PERSPECTIVES - CONTINUED

### **Khalil Selim, St. John Vianney College Seminary**

I am a Pre-Theology I student. I started seminary this past August 2016 and it has been a very diverse experience. I have met many wonderful men, that I call my brothers, and are also discerning their call to the priesthood. I have slowly grown closer to the Lord in ways that go beyond words. There are also days that upon waking up at 6 a.m. I question why I am here. Why do I have to wake up every morning and go to mass? It is through the grace of God that on those mornings I do get up. I do go to mass and as the Holy Eucharist is being consecrated I see God face to face and the answer to my question comes rushing at me. I am here for Him. I am here to be formed as a man. I am here to serve my brothers, my seminary community, my parish, and my diocese. I am here to be formed so that one day years from now I may share in the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have the privilege of studying philosophy here at the college seminary. It was at first very difficult for me to comprehend some of my homework reading assignments. I have a bachelors degree from the University of Florida in Psychology so to me philosophy was like another language at first. It has been through the grace of God that I have wonderful teachers here who are patient with me. They are also there to help me whenever I rush into their offices lost and confused. It was a different kind of experience for me to get used to, to have professors willing to help. There is nobody here that wants any of us to fail. The teachers go out of their way to be available and help in whatever ways they can.

My vocation director Father Carl Melchior has a saying: "happiness is fleeting, it comes and goes." Joy is not fleeting; it is something that God gives each of us. I might not be happy to wake up early every morning, but I am so joyful to be here. I am so joyful and blessed to be able to see our Lord every single morning. I am joyful and blessed to spend an hour or two with Him during my holy hour time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. I am very grateful to all the benefactors that make it possible for me to be here. I ask that you all pray for me and my brothers here at the seminary and know that we will be praying for you all as well. God bless you all.



**Khalil Selim** - is originally from New York and moved to Florida in 2006. He graduated from Palm Beach Gardens High School in 2008. He attended the University of Florida and graduated with his Bachelor of Science in Psychology in August 2011. His home parish is St. Theresa in Spring Hill, Florida. His family consists of his mother Donna, father Adel, twin brother Adam, younger sister Grace, and younger brother Joshua. He has worked as a Lead Pharmacy Technician for CVS for 10 years before entering the seminary in August, 2016, as a Pre-Theology I student. He enjoys watching television shows with his family, he likes to go to the movies with his friends, and he loves playing soccer. Khalil's interest to the priesthood began when he was 14 years old. His pursuit to the priesthood lead him to attend a high school seminary in Elmhurst, New York called Cathedral Prep Seminary. He continued to consistently be called by God throughout his young adulthood and finally accepted his calling in 2015. Khalil loves God and enjoys serving his parish as an altar server and minister of Holy Communion. He looks forward to one day serving God's people as a priest.

### **Louis Turcotte, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary**

I write this reflection in the midst of the busiest and most chaotic semester of my academic career. I'm now in 3<sup>rd</sup> theology, and our fall semester is loaded with seven classes, seventeen credit-hours of heavy hitting theology, scripture study, homiletics, and \*gulp\* canon law. Over the next three weeks, I have six papers that are due as our seminary hurdles towards exam week. This semester is the last great "peak" of formation and academics – the next three semesters start to slowly reduce the course load as our attention shifts toward our impending graduation and ordination. Knowing that gives me hope, but in the meantime it sure is stressful! All of my classmates are struggling together, walking step by step up this jagged peak. So keep praying for us!

I'm sure most of you have experienced similar challenges. We all face our own crucibles in which we must fight tooth and nail to move forward, always worried that we might be crushed under the weight of all that is being asked of us. These moments have a way of picking at the scabs of our fears and insecurities, but they also can be the occasions of great virtue and growth. Two realizations have brought me much consolation and hope in the struggle – perhaps you might find them to ring true in your own life as well.

The first is the wonderful support and solidarity of my brother seminarians here in Boynton Beach. Knowing that I am walking alongside these good and holy men is one of the greatest sources of strength and courage in the stressful journey. Maybe this seems obvious, but I know that when I'm busy I can easily bunker down in my room, isolating myself from others. One of my goals this semester is to make the conscious effort to reach out to people, calling friends and family, and visiting other seminarians here on campus. It makes such a difference! To be able to talk with someone who understands what you are going through is one of the greatest gifts we could possibly ask for.

The second realization is that we have a Lord who knows what we are going through, because He went through it Himself. Jesus' long journey up the "peak" to Jerusalem was fraught with obstacles, challenges, and tremendous suffering. Praying with the events of His life in the gospels has been a tremendous source of consolation. He fought, He wept, He fell and bled and suffered and died. But He also laughed, healed, rested, and shared His life with others. The journey of Jesus is one of ups and downs, jagged peaks and peaceful valleys. His suffering and death was followed by Resurrection and life. And ours are too. Our frustration, stress, and darkness will yield to joy, peace, and light. We just have to take a deep breath, trust in the Lord, and keep moving forward. ¡Siempre adelante! And with that, I guess it's back to that canon law paper!



**Lou Turcotte** - I was born on June 8<sup>th</sup>, in Clearwater, Florida, and have lived there all my life with my mom, dad, and two sisters. I'm a big fan of the Rays, Bucs, and Liverpool FC, and I have a great group of friends that I love hanging out and playing sports with. Raised Catholic, I've attended Light of Christ Church for my entire life. I graduated from Clearwater High School in 2008 and, while I thought about entering the seminary, instead attended the University of Florida. At UF I was very involved with the Catholic Student Union and the Fellowship of Catholic University Students. As my faith life continued to deepen at college, the call to the priesthood returned in a major way. I decided to graduate a year early, and entered the seminary in 2011 after graduating from UF with a degree in Marketing. I've now completed five years of seminary, and have experienced incredible growth as my vocation has deepened, especially after my pastoral year at St. Paul's parish in St. Petersburg. As I approach diaconate ordination, I pray that God continues to guide me, and ask for your prayers as well!

## VOCATION EVENTS



### Focus 11

February 15-16, 2017,  
St. Lawrence, Higgins Hall,  
Tampa

We are excited to announce our  
Keynote Speaker for Focus 11 is  
**Sr. Elfie Del Rosario, FMA.**

Sr. Elfie is a Salesian Sister of St.  
John Bosco and teaches 2nd Grade at Villa Madonna  
School in Tampa. Sr. Elfie was our keynote speaker  
last year and has graciously accepted our invitation to  
share her enthusiasm for vocations again this year!

She and the other Salesian Sisters also continue to  
help us with our Re-Focus program for 9th graders!

We look forward to her presentation at Focus 11 in  
February.

More information and resources for Focus 11 will be  
posted on our website before the end of the year.  
Information will also be sent to all Principals and 6th  
Grade Religion Teachers.



### Holy Hour for Vocations Cathedral of St. Jude Sponsored by the Serra Club

Every 4th Wednesday of the  
month (with a couple of ex-  
ceptions) the Serra Club hosts the Holy Hour for Vo-  
cations from 7:00 pm until 8:00 pm at the Cathedral of  
St. Jude the Apostle. Please consider attending one of  
these holy hours to pray for vocations to the priest-  
hood and religious life.

Upcoming dates are as follows:

December 21, 2017  
January 25, 2017  
February 22, 2017

### Animae Via

Animae Via is a discernment group for individuals  
who are reflecting on God's call in their lives and are  
considering the possibility of priesthood or religious  
life.

This year we will rotate between four different parish-  
es around the diocese, every other month. Sessions  
will be from 7:00pm-8:30pm. We will start with din-  
ner followed by a talk, conversation and prayer and  
conclude with Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction.  
Without a doubt participation in Animae Via will help  
to make God's will in your life clearer! The evening is  
open to anyone high school age or older. Friends are  
always welcome.

Meeting dates and topics are as follows:

**January 18, 2017, St. Lawrence Parish**  
(5225 N. Himes Avenue, Tampa)  
Topic: *Receiving God's Grace*

**March 15, 2017, Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle**  
(5815 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, St. Petersburg)  
Topic: *The Courage to Respond to God's Invitation*

Please RSVP to Heidi Varley ([hlv@dosp.org](mailto:hlv@dosp.org)) or by  
calling (727) 345-3452, in order for us to plan for din-  
ner.

### Save the Dates!

#### Come & See Weekend

St. John Vianney College Seminary  
March 10-12, 2017

#### Altar Server Appreciation Mass

Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle  
3:00 pm, Sunday, March 26, 2017

#### World Day of Prayer for Vocations

Sunday, May 7, 2017

#### Ordination to the Priesthood

Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle  
11:00 am, Saturday, May 20, 2017

# VOCATION NEWS

## Shout Out to St. Stephen's Vocation Team!

St. Stephen Parish in Valrico has a very dedicated leader of their Parish Vocation Enrichment Team in Liz Hauer!

Liz always goes above and beyond in the promotion and awareness of vocations in her parish. She sends updates of their Vocations bulletin board on a regular basis.

In November, Liz got approval from her Pastor, Fr. Bob Schneider, to include a bookmark insert in their parish bulletin. She was overjoyed at this accomplishment, and who can blame her! This coincided with the close of Vocations Awareness Week no less!

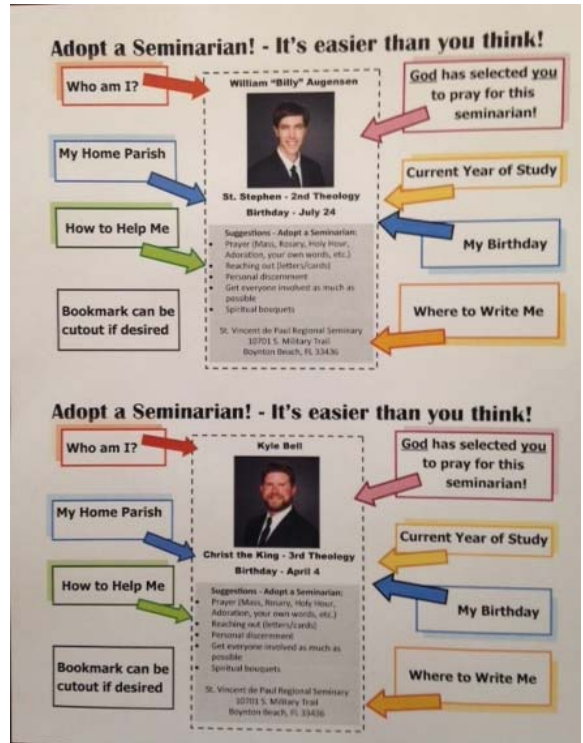
We also want to thank Fr. Bob Schneider and Fr. Curtis Carro for their support and promotion of vocations in the parish, and being open to new ideas!

Here are some pictures of what the inserts looked like and also some of their bulletin boards of the last few months.

*Way to go St. Stephen Parish, keep up the good work!*



## Bulletin Inserts



## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

### December 2016

† **December 21, 2016 (7:00 pm-8:00 pm)**  
Diocesan Holy Hour (Sponsored by SERRA Club)  
Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle

### January 2017

† **January 25, 2017 (7:00 pm-8:00 pm)**  
Diocesan Holy Hour (Sponsored by SERRA Club)  
Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle

† **January 28, 2017 (8:00 am-1:15pm)**  
Annual Vocation Promotion Workshop  
Bethany Center, Lutz

† **January 18, 2017 (7:00 pm-8:30 pm)**  
Animae Via Discernment Group  
*Topic: Receiving God's Grace*  
St. Lawrence Parish, Tampa

### February 2017

† **February 15-16, 2017**  
Focus 11  
St. Lawrence Parish, Higgins Hall, Tampa

† **February 22, 2017 (7:00 pm-8:00 pm)**  
Diocesan Holy Hour (Sponsored by SERRA Club)  
Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle

## OUR SEMINARIANS

### St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary

William Augensen	2nd Theology
Kyle Bell	3rd Theology
Deacon Elixavier Castro	4th Theology
Israel Hernandez	1st Theology
Connor Penn	2nd Theology
Louis Turcotte	3rd Theology
Timothy Williford	3rd Theology
Mark "Drew" Woodke	2nd Theology

### Pastoral Year

Anthony Astrab	Nativity Parish
Joshua Hare	St. Lawrence Parish

### Pontifical North American College-Rome

Ralph D'Elia	2nd Theology
Joshua Bertrand	1st Theology

### St. John Vianney College Seminary

Donald Amodeo	Pre-Theology II
Zachary Brasseur	Pre-Theology II
Mark DeSio	Freshman Year
Johnatan Fernandez	Senior Year
Christian Galvan	Pre-Theology I
Peter Gonzalez	Pre-Theology II
Reinaldo Jara	Senior Year
Patrick Lambert	Senior Year
Christopher Marte	Freshman Year
Harry Quinones	Pre-Theology I
Khalil Selim	Pre-Theology I
Mark Yarnold	Senior Year



## CONTACT US:

**Fr. Carl Melchior, Director of Vocations**

(email: [spvocation@dosp.org](mailto:spvocation@dosp.org))

**Heidi Varley, Assistant Director**

(email: [hlv@dosp.org](mailto:hlv@dosp.org))

P.O. Box 40200, St. Petersburg, FL 33743

(727) 345-3452

Website: <http://dosp.org/vocations/>



**2016/2017 Diocese of St. Petersburg Seminarians**

