



SOCIETY of OUR LADY
of the Most Holy Trinity

gray robes

SPRING 2020





“May the light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.”



- Prayer over the Paschal Candle

GRAY ROBES FORMATION PROGRAM

PARISH ASSIGNMENT IN CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

Dcn. Dave Brokke (MD)

SACRED HEART MAJOR SEMINARY IN DETROIT, MI

Theology I: Br. David Snow (MO)

Philosophy II: Br. Joseph Spears (KY)

Philosophy I: Br. Andrew Rowedder (MD)

PERMANENT BROTHERHOOD IN MISSION

Year III

Br. Uriel López (Mexico) - Detroit, MI

Year I

Br. Steven Bernal (TX) - Corpus Christi, TX

NOVITIATE IN CORPUS CHRISTI

Blair Burton (CO), Adam Schmitzer (OH)

ASPIRANCY IN BELIZE

Andrew Kanne (KS), Noah Burdett (PA),

Gregory Rice (PA)



Dear Friends and Benefactors of SOLT,

As I write this letter the world is shutting down in “stay home, stay safe” mode, pulling together in hopes to move through the COVID-19 viral threat. Lent is moving towards a culmination unprecedented in our lifetime: a silent Easter remembrance of the Lord’s Passion and Resurrection.

One thing is for certain: God is at work.

A friend of mine wrote to me saying this “reminds me of the power and greatness of God. Men use armies and guns and bombs, ships and planes in order to try to conquer other nations, but God uses a microscopic virus that we are unable to see with the naked eye to bring the entire world to its knees.” In a myriad of ways, this pandemic has brought us all questions of faith, purpose, values, and focus. We have come to appreciate, to be purified, to worry, and to pray. I have found the Word of God given to us in the Lenten liturgies particularly powerful and vivid, with themes of new life, sorrow, longing, and redemption. And I am reminded that we are journeying to a better homeland, together, seeking to make each one’s burden lighter. We seek to fill every life with the light of faith in the Crucified and Risen One, to resonate the cry of the Easter Vigil, “Lumen Christi!”

This edition of the Gray Robes focuses on the ministries of our brothers in formation. In their reflections you will find the brothers encountering not only God’s people, but also themselves and His presence in their works of charity. We pray these men may know the joy of service, the fulfillment of co-laboring with the Lord, and may experience His own love for those for whom he died and rose again.

May faith, and what it reveals of the fidelity of God and of our own purpose and identity, continually deepen, strengthen, and unite us in a common bond of the redeemed.

With gratitude and prayers for God’s blessings,

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Encountering Jesus

Dcn. David Brokke, SOLT

My life was changed in the 8th grade when I was able to attend a youth conference that had Eucharistic Adoration. As soon as the priest carrying Our Lord in the monstrance entered the tent, I was struck by the power of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. I instantly began weeping from the sheer amount of goodness and love I experienced. My life was never the same after that encounter. I knew I wanted to tell people about Jesus' love available for them in the Eucharist, but I did not know that God would be calling me to the priesthood.

After having received that call to the priesthood, one of the things that I had been wanting to do is to bring Jesus to people in the way that that priest brought Jesus to me. While on a retreat for the catechists at our parish, I had an opportunity to do Adoration and to bring Our Lord to each individual catechist. One of them brought his 4-year-old son. I was just going to couple the little guy and his dad together when I blessed them, but something in my heart said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). Jesus would have called him over individually to bless him. So I beckoned him to climb behind his dad and come over to the edge of the pew, and this little guy just knelt down



Dcn. David bringing the Blessed Sacrament to the people of St. Joseph's Parish in Corpus Christi, Texas.

and bowed his head so reverently. The love of Jesus for each individual person, for each individual child blew me away at this moment. The love of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is truly powerful.

As soon as the priest carrying Our Lord in the monstrance entered the tent, I was struck by the power of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.



Three Minutes

Br. David Snow, SOLT



I walked down the hall, patient list in hand, until I arrived at the door. It was my second month of once-a-week hospital ministry; by this time, I was used to making cold calls. I looked down at my list, found the room number, and matched it to the door—already opened—that I was about to enter. I took a couple seconds to collect my thoughts and knocked.

"Mrs. Smith?"* I asked as I leaned inside the doorway.

Time slowed. I beheld an elderly woman, opening her exhausted eyes as she turned to face whomever had just addressed her. I crossed to the other side of the bed, accommodating her position so she would not have to move in order to see me. We made eye contact, and as I took in her appearance little by little, I was astonished by what I saw. Her face was covered in cuts, her arms lacerated, her entire right forearm red with bruising. She was breathing deeply through her mouth. I softened my voice and introduced myself, "Hello, Mrs. Smith, my name is Br. David; I'm a spiritual care volunteer. I just wanted to come visit you and ask if there was any way I could be of service to you today."

She took a breath, brought her lips together, and said, almost inaudibly, "Pray."

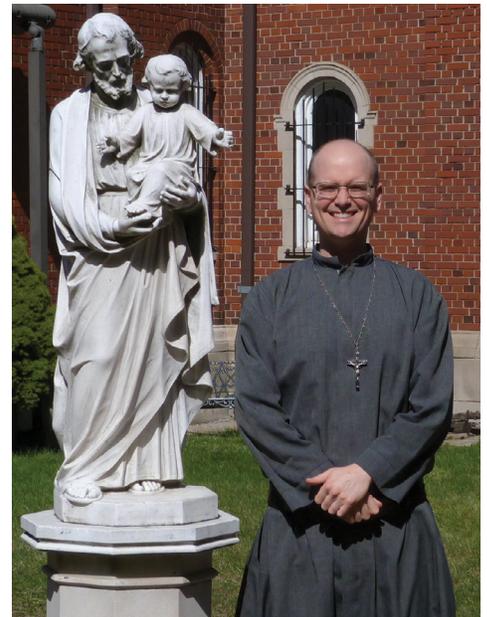
"Would you like me to say a prayer right now with you?" I asked.

She nodded, so I began a prayer asking God to bring her comfort and healing in body, mind, and soul, entrusting her health to the loving, caring hands of Jesus. I ended with the Lord's Prayer, offering her to God, our Father. As I recited those familiar words, I noticed her lips silently praying them along with me, her eyes closed. We finished, and I took my leave, assuring her that she would be in my prayers. But before I left, as I was still speaking, a single tear fell from her eye and rolled down her cheek. She exhaled and softly whispered, "Thank you."

"You're welcome," I replied. "God bless you."

Later, I found myself reflecting about my visit with Mrs. Smith. My astonishment at her appearance returned. What could have happened to this poor woman? A car accident? Abuse? How long was I in the room? Three minutes? Then God helped me realize what he had done. Mrs. Smith was greatly suffering, yet all it took was one visit and a simple prayer for him to meet her in her pain and bring her a tear of consolation. God reminded me that in ministry, I am his instrument, working in his timeframe, not the other way around. My visit brought her his love. All it took was three minutes.

* Note: "Mrs. Smith" is a pseudonym used for this reflection.



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Feeding the Hungry, Body and Soul

Br. Uriel López, SOLT

It has been a blessing to continue to serve the people at Most Holy Redeemer Parish. After completing two years of studies, I was assigned to remain here in Detroit as I continue my formation for the Permanent Brotherhood. Being able to serve fully, I have had the opportunity to continue working in various ministries such as the food pantry, REVIVE (a parish evangelization program), New Leaven, and catechism classes. Also, being able to attend the youth group, young adult group, and the charismatic prayer group has been a great blessing.

One of the things that I like from helping in the food pantry is being able to serve the local homeless and needy people. It has been a blessing because we are meeting a great need in the community. The most joyful time comes when I give out the boxes of food and see the people leave with great smiles on their faces. Sometimes some of them ask me to pray for them or sometimes they ask me, "Father, can you give me a blessing?" and I always respond, "I am not a priest. I am a religious brother, but I can pray for you." And so we pray together a short prayer asking the Lord to be with them in their struggle.



Br. Uriel with volunteers in the food pantry.

My favorite person to see while working with the food pantry is an elderly lady. She arrives alone and in great need. Often times I notice that others avoid her because she does not bathe regularly. This woman, for some reason, calls for me whenever she arrives. And when I come, she greets me with a great big hug. It is part of our ministry to greet and care for this needy woman because she is a daughter of God. She is one of the many blessings God has given me in my various ministries here at Most Holy Redeemer.



Being Present to God's Children

Br. Joseph Spears, SOLT

My second year of seminary and philosophy studies are quickly coming to an end. It has been a good year of learning and a great year to serve the people in the community by being present to them in their day-to-day lives. This year I realized that I missed being around the youth and serving them in some manner. There is a school here at our SOLT Parish, Most Holy Redeemer, so I decided to be intentional about going to see the students. I began spending time at the school during the kids' lunches, recesses, or sometimes I would drop in during the end of a class. When visiting with the kids, I would try to engage them and see how they are doing and what they are learning in school. I would ask them about their families and what was the best part of their day (usually it's recess).

As I spent more time at the school, the kids began to ask me, "So, what do you do every day?" or "What is it like at the seminary?" or "What's the best part about being a brother?" They were interested in why I had chosen to go to seminary rather than working a typical everyday job and having a family. Many of the kids began to share with me that they come from difficult family

situations but that they really enjoy being in school at Holy Redeemer.

One day in particular, one of the kids told me that he had not met his dad, and his mom was struggling to take care of the family. He said that he felt the weight of needing to be the man of the house and of trying to help care for his little sister. Yet, he seemed to doubt his ability as he became sad and his face dropped. I tried to reassure him, but it was noticeable that he was carrying a heavy weight.

Being with the students has been a great opportunity for me to continue to be present to God's people in small and seemingly unimportant ways. The kid who shared with me about his family situation did not have to, but he chose to because he trusted me and knew that I cared about him. But he only knew this due to my intentionally spending time at the school and visiting with him and the other kids. We may never know if what we are doing has any sort of lasting effect on others. I hope that Christ will use my time being present to others so that they may grow closer to Him. May we be lights that reflect what God has gifted to others and us!

Being with the students has been a great opportunity for me to continue to be present to God's people... ”

Couples Bearing Crosses

Br. Andrew Rowedder, SOLT



Above: Br. Andrew with the leaders of Holy Redeemer Parish's miscarriage ministry, Rodolfo and Mary (with grandson Ricardo).

May the cross of Christ continue to renew us!!

This past semester, I stumbled into another wonderful blessing of God's healing power. I volunteered as a reader in a healing ministry for couples who have suffered a miscarriage. I thought this would be a great way to improve my Spanish and a good thing to do in the parish.

But it turned out to be more than simply reading. After I read the first meditation, the leader, Mary, asked me to share my reflections. I knew very little about the unexpected death of a baby child. I realized that if I had not entered the religious life, I could have been part of a married couple who suffered a miscarriage. From that moment, I began to feel compassion for the couples present. By the grace of God, I found myself connecting with

another man in the group who was there supporting his wife. She had lost her child, but he was not the father. Witnessing his love for her fanned the small flame of compassion within me because I was also being asked to be there for others out of love. I began to learn that when we find ourselves with someone we can relate to, we open ourselves up to God's healing.

As time went on, I began to see a beautiful change in the couples. They became united in their acceptance of the pain and joy of having a child, even one that was never born. My favorite moment was when a couple needed to vocalize how many children they had after suffering four miscarriages. The husband was frustrated that he had no living children. The leader then decided to do a small exercise with the group. Each member was to ask him, "How many children do you have?" He began reluctantly, "I have four children." As each person in the group asked the question, he and his wife began answering together out of sync, "I have four children." But then they slowly started to smile with each passing question. And then they recognized that it was not "I" but "We." They began to say "We have four children" together with huge smiles. I could feel the joy and love coming from both of them as they beamingly said,

"Yes, WE have four children." We all witnessed a beautiful change from two individuals to one family. The cross becomes so much more bearable when we recognize it as a shared cross with Christ and our loved ones.



Br. Andrew enjoys the spring weather in front of the historic baptistry at Most Holy Redeemer Parish.



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On the front cover: Br. Joseph and Br. Andrew enjoy an afternoon in the Holy Redeemer church courtyard.

Right: Br. Uriel helps Holy Redeemer food pantry workers to prepare and deliver food bags for the poor during the COVID-19 quarantine.



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