

SPRING 2026

# GRAY

## R O B E S



SOCIETY of OUR LADY  
of the Most Holy Trinity



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## GRAY ROBES FORMATION PROGRAM

### SACRED HEART MAJOR SEMINARY — DETROIT, MI

#### Configuration III

Dcn. Gregory Rice (PA)

#### Configuration II

Br. Andrew Collart (GA)

#### Configuration I

Br. Nicholas Judge (MD)

#### Discipleship I

Br. Cole Hamilton (FL)

### CONSECRATED BROTHERHOOD IN MISSION — DETROIT, MI

#### Year II

Br. Rocky Garcia (TX)

### NOVIATE — CORPUS CHRISTI, TX & PUTIAO, PH

Blake Ducharme (MN)

Emmanuel Orozco Alfaro (MX)

Ethan Deters (KY)

Jack Harber (IN)

John Tabuntschikow (GA)

Patrick Walsh (VA)

### ASPIRANCY — BENQUE VIEJO, BZ

Eric Crowley (PA)

Nathan Hall (KS)

Nicholas Cox (TX)

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# Rector's Letter

"BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL, AND FORGET NOT ALL  
HIS GIFTS" PSALM 103:2

I sat the brothers down for our weekly meeting in early March. We reached the point in the year when they regularly think I will reveal their summer assignments to them at any moment! So, each Friday discussion carried with it a little more excitement.

I told them that on Monday of Spring Break we would go to Harsens Island, a small island town along the St. Claire River, to stay at a rectory for a few days. Br. Cole, the youngest and most recently professed brother, could not contain his excitement. His eyes lit up like a child's and a massive, quiet, innocent smile immediately overtook his face: "Really, Father?!"

This past winter was long and cold. We longed for temps above 12 °F to sneak out for runs; days without snow on the ground and ice on the road were difficult to come by.

In the early days of Lent leading up to our Spring Break, the routine of prayer, studies, apostolic work, early mornings, and community had kicked into high gear. During the Lenten time of purification, the routine can become a little weighty.

However, a little bit of light—even just sunlight—and reflection offer a fuller perspective. In the routine of daily life in the house, the face of Christ finds expression in the distinct personalities of the brothers, in the trials and in the joys. But, above all, as a formator for men discerning a call to priesthood and religious life, to closely witness their conversion and growth is a privilege. St. John Paul II defines conversion: "the most concrete expression of the working of love and of the presence of mercy in the human world" (*Dives in Misericordia*, 6). To have this close up encounter with Christ-centered living enriches my priesthood.

The Church asks formators like myself to accompany the men from (1) self-knowledge to (2) self-possession to (3) self-gift. At times there are struggles that come with our humanity, but to walk along them as they mature, makes the routine of studies, prayer, and work a real joy. They truly grow up before your very eyes as they learn to give their lives away like Christ.

The youngest brother expresses childlike joy at the thought of a simple Spring Break getaway. Just a couple of days later, the most senior brother in promises, Br. Greg, receives my blessing before I put him on a plane for his retreat, a retreat to prepare him for his diaconate ordination in April.

In my short time (less than two years!) as the Juniorate Servant, the Holy Spirit and the brothers teach me about the joy of gradual growth in discipleship and the richness of our vocations. Thank you for all that you do for us. Without your prayers and financial help, this Holy Spirit inspired daily living, this rich daily routine would not be possible.

May God bless you abundantly in your generosity!



In Christ,  
Fr. Jeremy

By Br. Cole Hamilton, SOLT

It was a particularly cold and cloudy winter afternoon in Detroit when I walked over to the grade school to teach the seventh-grade religion class. I happily welcome the organic levity and joy of the kids in the classroom that gives great balance to my full, seminary workload and religious formation. The students had just had several days off from school because of snow days, and being out-of-my-element as a native Floridian, I began class by commenting on the crazy Detroit winter and welcoming the students back after their unexpected break.

As I walked around to help different groups with their classwork, one of my students asked me, “Are you not from here?”

“No, I am from Florida,” I responded.

She audibly gasped, dramatically dropped her jaw and asked me with great exasperation, “Why are you *here?*”

I remembered asking myself a similar question when I exited a plane directly onto the tarmac surrounded by palm trees in Belize when starting my SOLT aspirancy at our mission in Benque Viejo del Carmen almost three years ago. I learned that year that the Father had a plan for my life that was far beyond my understanding and expectations, but also that He knew what would best fill my heart and best glorify Him. Considering the incredible joy and contentment I had in discerning the religious priesthood and being a missionary with SOLT, I happily continued with the novitiate and then made my first promises this past summer to continue pursuing God’s will under Our Lady’s guidance.



Br. Cole teaches religion class at Holy Redeemer Catholic School

I am here now in Detroit where indeed, the winter has been colder and darker than I am used to, I am still far from family and friends, and my studies and schedule constantly demand much of me, all of which are legitimate reasons to ask why I am here. Yet it is here that I am constantly inspired by my seminary professors and classmates, finding that I have more of a hunger to learn than ever before. It is here that I constantly encounter a beautiful, humble parish community that teaches me the value of simple and childlike faith; the opportunities to teach, sing, and altar serve alongside them always succeed in rejuvenating me. It is here that I thoroughly enjoy the edifying and life-giving fellowship of several other brothers and priests in the house, learning much about prayer, study, and service from their examples.

Just as I learned during my year in Belize and during my novitiate in Corpus Christi, I desire the Father’s will for my life more than anything, even more than being somewhere warmer or closer to home or lighter in workload. Despite the changing locations and challenges, each new year and each new place has solidified this truth for me, the truth that “our hearts are restless until they rest in [Him]” as St. Augustine says. Since I am with the Lord and seeking His will, where else would I want to be?

# Why are you **here!**?



# Restore & Adore:

## A Journey of Faith, Creativity and Community

By Br. Rocky Garcia, SOLT

In the heart of Mexicantown, I have the privilege of serving with the SOLT Family of Parishes, a vibrant ministry of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. My work at *Most Holy Redeemer* (one of three parishes in this Family) has become far more than a job. It has become a journey of faith that I share with an energetic and inspiring community, “The Pier Giorgio Frassati Group” of young adults.

Every Wednesday, I accompany and mentor the Frassati young adults who generously offer their time and talents to serve the parish. One of the young adults, Lizbeth, stepped forward to volunteer and help with another of my apostolates, Parish Development. I begin each day of this work with prayer, placing my creativity and efforts in God’s hands, and I am more than happy to be able to share my prayer life with Lizbeth and to witness how faith can inspire creativity and service.

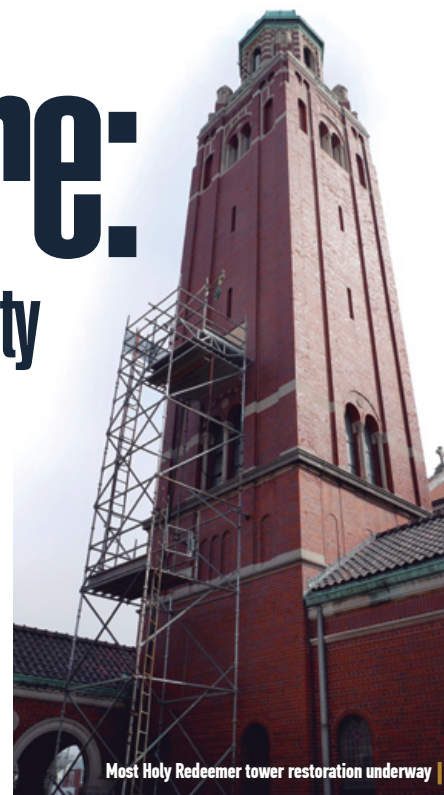
It all began with something simple: a church bulletin and then... creating flyers, producing videos, and helping update the parish’s website and social media presence. Before long, I realized my efforts had placed me in the middle of a much larger mission: helping raise \$500,000 to restore the historic bell tower at *Most Holy*

*Redeemer*. From that mission came a phrase that now guides the project: “Restore & Adore.” The vision is simple but powerful: restore the bell tower and establish an adoration chapel at its base, inviting people to encounter Christ while honoring the past.

As part of this work, I began researching the history of the tower. What I discovered was deeply moving. The bell tower was completed in 1926, nearly 100 years ago, as a memorial to parishioners who lost their lives in World War I. The tower is more than beautiful architecture; it stands as a tribute to sacrifice, faith, and the generations of families who built and sustained the parish.



There is something especially meaningful in this story. A century ago, German and Irish immigrant parishioners built this remarkable memorial of faith through their sacrifice and devotion. Now, as the parish approaches the tower’s centennial, a new generation of parishioners from the vibrant Mexicantown community is stepping



forward to help restore it. In this way, the same faith that built this tower continues to live on in those who now care for it.

One goal of this work has been to remind people that the bells of *Most Holy Redeemer* have long been the heartbeat of the neighborhood. For generations they have rung out to celebrate baptisms, weddings, and quinceañeras, and also in moments of sorrow as families say goodbye to loved ones. These bells carry the stories of an entire community.

Accompanying young adults in the parish has been a profound joy. Along the way, I have had the privilege of sharing some of my advice and my prayer life. In return, their enthusiasm, creativity, and joyful faith continue to inspire me and give me hope for the future of this parish.

I pray that the bells of *Most Holy Redeemer* will continue to ring for generations to come.

# An Ode to *Monaguillos*

By Br. Nick Judge, SOLT

The first time I served the Mass I was eight or nine years old, I believe.

Growing up I served regularly, but not every Sunday. I always wanted to though; I would sometimes poke my head into the sacristy to see if by chance the scheduled servers hadn't showed up. Or, if at the beginning of Mass somehow Father managed to process in without a full retinue, I would want to escape the clutches of the family pew to go fill in the gaps.

I think that this proximity to the altar and to the Mass was very formative for me. I knew a little bit about the Mass and the Eucharist and knew how to do my jobs well, but not too much more. I didn't particularly know how to pray during the Mass. But for some reason or another I was drawn to serving. I thought a little bit about being a priest, although not very consciously. However, once or twice I got to serve with seminarians, even as a little guy, and I liked that quite a bit.

Even as a very young boy the Lord was drawing me to the Mass, to His Sacrifice. I didn't necessarily know what He was doing, but He was quietly working in my life.

Now as a seminarian and a religious brother, I still love to serve, and in that way I'm not much different than I was when I was 8. But, now, thanks to seminary and religious formation, I have learned quite a bit more

theology about the Mass and I have certainly learned to pray the Mass better.

This year Dcn. Greg and I have formed a new group in order to walk with and mentor the older *monaguillos* (Spanish word for "altar server") at our Family of Parishes here in Detroit. The group is called "The Bosco Brothers" in honor of St. John Bosco. My own experience (and Faith) tells me that the Lord is doing something in the lives of these young men. We want to help them recognize and nurture this action of God.

One of the things we have been doing in the group is a Bible study. I have been very impressed by the guys' knowledge but also how they are thinking about the passages and reflecting on them. In the first meeting we read parts of Genesis and talked about the fall. The study helped to recast the fall in terms of relationship rather than merely broken rules, and then moved to show how

God rushes to remedy the fall which is ultimately accomplished in Jesus. It seemed like a new light was shed on the reality of Christian life for some of them. It's a privileged role to be with these guys, knowing that the Lord has a plan for each of them and that we are simply trying to help them to know and desire that plan.

For me, some of the most moving Masses of my life have often been Masses at which I have served. It is a real place of encounter, because it is serving at the Lord's Sacrifice. I pray this would be true for all *monaguillos* and that their service would lead them closer to the Lord.



Dcn. Greg and Br. Nick lead a Bible Study for the 'Bosco Brothers'



# First be Reconciled

By Br. Andrew Collart, SOLT

A few months ago, I and some fellow seminarians received formal institution to the Ministry of Lector from his Excellency Bishop Earl Boyea. I truly believe that I received special graces then that are available to me now when I proclaim scripture! I think that whenever God gives a task, He also gives power for it. This brings me much joy and confidence!

However, I am also more aware of my unworthiness through this formal commissioning: being in close proximity to such a sacred task! The Word of God is holy! In a way it even corresponds to the incarnational reality of Jesus's Eucharistic Presence; for Vatican II teaches: "For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men." (Dei Verbum, 13) I noticed that both Old Testament prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah acknowledged their unworthiness when receiving God's call. Isaiah says: "*Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips.*" (Is 9:5-7). For his own part, Jeremiah recognizes his inadequacy due to his youth. Despite this God causes their mouths to be touched for purification and reception of His words. "*See, I place my words in your mouth! Today I appoint you...*" (Jer 1:9-10).

As an instituted Lector, I too must prepare for my task by seeking God's mercy and purification. For decades already now, I have needed to examine myself to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. Approaching Holy Communion, as the line gets closer, I realize more what I am about to do: to receive God! Doing so, I may sometimes realize that I am angry with a brother, that I have been harboring

resentment, that I have recently been self-centered... I am "forced" through my proximity to God's holiness to recognize, and yield over to God, my attachment to sin.

Jesus says that "*if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*" (Mt 5:23-24) Depending on the situation we receive reconciliation with God in various ways—especially by the Sacrament of Confession first, if necessary—but reconciliation begins within our hearts when we lay aside our pride and allow God to show us His Truth there (always shown alongside His Love). I might struggle to be honest with God; but a realization I've had though? God already knows us through and through! And we need Him. These days I am at times led by this knowledge to pause at the ambo just for a moment before reading to offer anew my heart to God and express my desire to be made holy and worthy for His service.

What a honor it is to proclaim God's Word! Thank God! It reminds me on a frequent basis, along with approaching Holy Communion daily, that I need God and I need to turn away from sin. So I urge you also: Read Scripture! Go to daily Mass! To do so, you will need to be honest and humble before God; but this is salvific! The devil doesn't even love us. But God keeps His neediest children near to Him. Do you need God?



Br. Andrew and his classmates installed as Lectors |



Br. Greg is ordained a deacon on April 11th



Dcn. Greg preaches his first Sunday homily on Divine Mercy Sunday

# The Ordination of Br. Gregory Rice, SOLT to the Order of the Diaconate on Saturday, April 11th, 2026

The Gospel of the Mass of my Perpetual Promises this past summer was that of Jesus' apparition to Doubting Thomas (John 20:24-29). I took some note of this and prayed with it, of course, but had not thought about it too much since. That is, until I realized that it was also the Gospel of the first Mass I will preach on the Sunday after my ordination, Divine Mercy Sunday! This caused me to look at the Lord and ask: "Are you saying I'm Doubting Thomas?" I am kind of joking, but there was some of that feeling and also a sense that He had something special for me in this Gospel, a particular revelation of His heart towards me.

I was able to spend some good time with this Gospel over my pre-Diaconate retreat. As the week went on, there were a few things that continued to strike me. Thomas was not there when Jesus appeared to his brothers, and upon hearing the news when he returned, he was incredulous. It struck me that perhaps Thomas was hesitant to believe because he was hesitant to get his hopes up again. He had placed all of his hopes in the Lord to be a messiah according to his understanding, and it had ended so miserably. But the next thing that struck me was that he stayed with his friends: the next time Jesus appeared,

Thomas was with them. My pre-Diaconate retreat was at a Benedictine monastery in Kansas and as I watched the monks silently going their rounds I thought that many of them have probably gone through small or major seasons of "doubt." I don't mean doubt in the sense of doubting articles of faith, but perhaps in hesitating to fully hope in the unlimited capacity of the Resurrected Christ, just like Thomas did. It was a note of encouragement to me to reflect that, through these seasons of difficulty, they stay with their brothers and pray. Through this unity and fidelity, the Resurrected Christ is able to reach them and say "Peace be with you," and breathe into them a resurrected hope.

A formator of mine used to joke that "doubting" Thomas gets a "bad rap." After all, we don't call the other flawed Apostles names like Denying Peter or Greedy Matthew. But this has become a note of encouragement to me because Thomas did doubt and Jesus still chose him. Because it's not about Thomas; it's about the Resurrected Christ. Thomas became a Saint and a missionary to India by reflecting the Resurrected Christ and what He did for him. In being called into the Diaconate and into mission, I'd be fine to be called "doubting" if I could be like him.

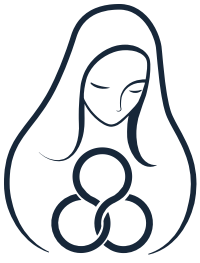


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*"It is love which not only creates the good but also grants participation in the very life of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For he who loves desires to give himself."*

St. Pope John Paul II

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# GRAY

R O B E S

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This following official Navy report describing Fr. Flanagan while in special operations training during WWII describes virtues that we ourselves aspire to through our own years of formation:

*"Officer is very cooperative and willing to do any kind of rugged duty. He is a natural leader and, by his actions and pleasant manner, gets the best out of men. He has volunteered for extra work on many occasions and has shown a fine spirit in all his assigned duties."*

—Cpt. C. Gulbranson, USN



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