

SOCIETY of OUR LADY
of the Most Holy Trinity

gray robes

WINTER 2019





Celebration, Discernment, and Perseverance All Lived in Christ

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)



Dear Friends and Benefactors of SOLT,

Over the summer SOLT celebrated the perpetual profession of Br. Danny Tozzi and the first profession of Br. Andrew Rowedder and Br. Steven Bernal. The excitement from Dcn. Dave Brokke's diaconate ordination this past April seemed to spill over in a continued joyous celebration of the milestones of these three men. For Br. Danny formal formation comes to a close and generous service ensues, while for Br. Andrew and Br. Steven the journey of conformity to Christ sets off with vigor.

The time of formation is one of preparation marked by openness and receptivity like that described by the prophet Isaiah: "Morning after morning he wakens my ear to hear as disciples do" (Is 50:4). It is a time of continual discernment as the path the Lord lays out is made clear. As formators in SOLT we are at the service of the Church and of the men under our guidance and care. Our desire is for their flourishing, to the glory of the Father, that they may be a blessing to all peoples.

This ministry demands a resignation and docility to that which God asks, above and beyond our own plans. This past summer, the path of discernment brought two of our brothers in formation to a point of transition. Br. Javier and Br. Tim made the difficult decision, not without emotion and sentiment, to leave formation for other paths, to "wait upon the Lord" and what his designs may be. We trust in the plan of God for them and give thanks for the role that SOLT has played in their journey.

I am reminded of a personal axiom I have developed in formation ministry: any discernment is good discernment. That is, when the process of discernment is followed with prayer, docility, and detachment, under the guidance of a spiritual director, leading to a decision made in a spirit of faith, independent of what that decision may be, we rejoice in the knowledge that God has let his will and ways be known. And such will and ways are always for his greater honor and glory and for the good of his people. We rejoice in the Lord's will.

With four men in formation in Detroit, our house this year is smaller than expected, and yet this brings unanticipated blessings. There is a closeness and a tightness of bonds that is present, including a deeper fraternity for me personally with the men in the house. With nine men at various stages of formation in SOLT, we forge out together, confident in the Lord's calling and in his fidelity to bringing men into his service.

Enjoy this issue of Gray Robes that includes some of the brothers' ministries from the summer months as well as other celebrations, milestones, and pursuits.

With gratitude and prayers for God's blessings,

Fr. Mark

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Desert Flock Formation

Br. David Snow, SOLT



Br. David (far right) with other SOLT members from Phoenix at the Grand Canyon.

Cacti, mountains, sunshine, canyons, basketball, cabinetry, and a musical instrument museum—what do these have in common? The SOLT Phoenix mission, of course! This summer, God blessed me in the desert by allowing me to serve at Most Holy Trinity Parish in Phoenix, and what a summer it was! I got to do a little bit of everything: train altar servers, help coordinate and run the summer Bible camp, choose music for Sunday liturgies, and help refinish the convent kitchen. Even with all this enriching and wonderful work for the Kingdom, additional blessings flowed out through fraternal time with the other SOLT members at the parish. We took a trip to the Grand Canyon, spent some evenings playing basketball, and checked out Phoenix's Musical Instrument Museum. God is truly good!

One of my most memorable and meaningful experiences throughout the summer was with a small parish group called the Faith Builders. They gather twice a month at a group member's home where they share a meal and study the Bible and the teachings of the Church. In attending these meetings, I got to hear so many beautiful stories: some of blessing, some of struggle, some of happiness, some of suffering. I listened and participated in their discussions. One time, I even brought my violin and ended up spontaneously sharing my vocation story

with them. In the days following each gathering, I prayed about my experiences.

In my prayer, God helped me recognize something profound. He placed on my heart the knowledge that my presence with the Faith Builders was incredibly precious to him, just as much for my sake as for theirs. The Lord helped me realize how much he loves being with his people and walking with them in all the bliss and turmoil of life. Not only that, as a brother-seminarian, he had sent me to them in order to represent *him* in some capacity. I was humbled; who am I to represent God? Yet, as a future priest (God-willing) my role will be just that, to be the Good Shepherd's presence to his beloved flock. In every moment during my busy summer in Phoenix, God's hand was there, guiding me, shaping me, forming me into the man he desires me to be. But he did so most especially with his beloved Faith Builders.

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Striving to Imitate Christ

Br. Joseph Spears, SOLT

This summer I returned to Belize, Central America. It was my first time back since I said goodbye to many people in 2017: students, their families and friends, and people whom I had begun to consider family. I was excited to be back in a mission setting while serving people that I greatly love. The initial part of my time went by quickly as I was assisting two mission groups that came in to teach catechesis, helping with a house building project, and painting a school in one of the nearby villages. In addition, I was getting used to serving now as a religious brother and not just as a SOLT missionary volunteer. I continually had people asking me if I was a priest yet and how much longer it would be until my ordination, and a few people even tried to tell me their sins while (I think) hoping that I could somehow give them absolution. Nonetheless, it was great to be back because accomplishing things that are tangible, like building a house or painting a school, is really life-giving.

However, sometimes the idea of just 'being' and not 'completing something' is much harder. Not long after the two mission groups left, someone came to tell me that a 17-year-old girl had passed away. Her name was Grace and she was a former student of mine. I couldn't believe it when they told me and I didn't want to believe it either. She had been battling cancer for a couple years, but within that month she had rapidly declined. That night I went to the velorio (the wake). Her father spoke of her last moments and of their final conversation before her death. She had said to her dad, "Papá, estoy lista para ser un sacrificio para Dios" (Dad, I am ready to be a sacrifice for God). The wake itself was incredibly beautiful and also incredibly sad. But that line that she had said to her dad provided comfort. There was nothing that I could tangibly do for her family, her younger brother, or any of her friends that sat there and wept. As I sat and prayed for her, I remember thinking that on the one hand I want to weep and on the other hand I want to be there for all those that are grieving more than I am, especially her past classmates. Someone asked me if I would rather have been out of the country when Grace died. I thought about it and realized that, even though there was nothing tangible to do, I still wanted to be there.

This seems to be a great challenge in being Christ's disciple: being present to others amidst the blessed and the difficult times. Yet this is what Christ does for us even when we are unaware of it, and it is what we are called to do. I hope that you will keep my fellow brothers and I in your prayers as we strive to imitate Christ and be present to others amidst times of great blessing and times of great pain and sorrow.



Above: Br. Joseph serving primary school children in Belize.

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Crossing the Finish Line

Br. Uriel López, SOLT



On April 27th, 2019, I completed my Certificate in Catholic Theology. It was one of the happiest days because, by the grace of God, I was able to complete these past two years of studies. I never wanted to go back to do more studies because it was something that I was afraid of. Now I know that with a lot of hard work and dedication I can do it. It was exciting to graduate with some of my classmates who started out with me in my first year, especially knowing that we were able to complete our program together. Even though it wasn't easy, we made it through. It was also a blessing that my cousin Nanci, my niece Nanci, my friend Omar, and his mother Doña Enriqueta were able to come for my graduation all the way from Phoenix, Arizona.



After completing my first two years of formation for the permanent brotherhood, I was assigned to reside and to serve at Holy Redeemer Parish here in Detroit, Michigan, for one year as I continue my formation. I am really thankful to be able fully to serve the parish. Now I'm able to focus more on ministry and simply to be with the People of God.

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(Above) Br. Uriel standing with his graduating class and celebrating with fellow classmates at Sacred Heart Major Seminary.



Belize to Brother

Br. Andrew Rowedder, SOLT

Br. Andrew and Br. Steven profess first promises with SOLT.

On July 14th of this year, the Lord blessed me with the entrance into my first year of promises with SOLT. The journey has been wonderful, fun, and trying. It all started in 2015 when I volunteered for SOLT at Mount Carmel High School in Benque Viejo, Belize. Little did I know that I would be blessed to take first promises with this missionary community four years later in Corpus Christi, Texas. Those two years in Belize helped to transform me from being an assuming college-educated young man into a less-assuming student of the Holy Spirit—He worked and is still working through various relationships in my life.

Our Lord showered me with companions and mentors from among the staff at Mount Carmel



Andrew (green shamrock shirt) and other SOLT Missionary Volunteers in Belize.

High School. I gained friends whom I hope to have for the rest of my life. Although mentors guided me and my friends supplied fantastic moments of humor and joy, I struggled my first year. New to teaching and Belizean culture, I waded through the first semester trying to stay a day ahead of my students. They quickly caught on to the fact that I was a stressed and inexperienced teacher. Instead of milking it to the last drop, however, they began volunteering to help me and to quiet the class for me. In a sense, I became a student again.

As I came to the end of the year, a priest suggested that I ask myself what my heart was telling me to do for the coming year. I realized that God had been giving me grace all year from the Mass and the prayers of my loved ones. My heart said to do it again for the kids and the other teachers. My second year rewarded and edified me. As I continued to learn by teaching, I was able to help new volunteers as I was helped the year before. When I finished my second year, it became clear that I wanted to be near SOLT, the community that had shown me graced friendship and my call to a deeper relationship with God and my brothers and sisters. I moved on to the novitiate, and now, one year later, God has brought me to the seminary in Detroit as a SOLT brother.

I realized that God had been giving me grace all year from the Mass and the prayers of my loved ones.



SOLT

BROTHERS IN FORMATION



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Parish Assignment
Maryland



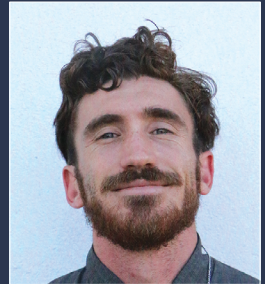
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Missouri



BR. JOSEPH SPEARS, SOLT
Philosophy II
Kentucky



BR. URIEL LÓPEZ, SOLT
Year III Permanent Brotherhood
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BR. ANDREW ROWEDDER, SOLT
Philosophy I
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BR. STEVEN BERNAL, SOLT
Year I Formation
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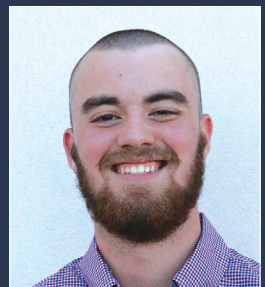
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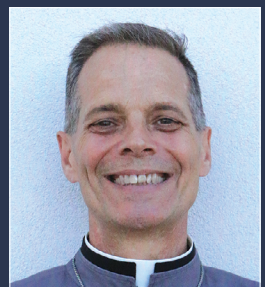
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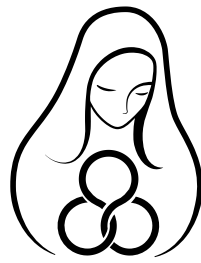
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Br. Joseph Spears serves in Benque-Viejo, Belize during his summer assignment.



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*On the front cover: Bishop Michael Mulvey solemnly blesses the newest perpetual member of SOLT, **Br. Daniel Tozzi, SOLT**, at Our Lady of Corpus Christi in Texas.*

*Right: **Br. Daniel Tozzi, SOLT** professes perpetual promises to the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity.*



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