



Hearts on Fire

Magazine

Blessed Stanley Rother's Witness

130 people joined IPF for the Blessed Stanley Rother Speaker event on November 8, 2023. Read more details and see photos from the event on pg. 10.





INSTITUTE *for*
PRIESTLY FORMATION

A Public Association of the Faithful
in the Archdiocese of Omaha

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Cover Photo:

Most Rev. Paul Coakley, Archbishop of Oklahoma City, and Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda offer presentations on Blessed Stanley Rother on November 8, 2023 at St. Robert's in Omaha, NE.

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Our Mission

In collaboration with Catholic seminaries and dioceses, we form seminarians, priests, and bishops in holiness and accompany them in their ongoing spiritual growth, so they can more effectively lead others to Christ.

Our Vision

We envision a joyful and powerful renewal of holiness across the U.S. Catholic Church as more diocesan seminarians, priests, and bishops seek and commit to a personal, deep, and sustained spiritual communion with the Trinity.

Our Objectives

1. Live out our beliefs and convictions in everything we do with humility and magnanimity, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, knowing we are nothing without God.
2. Stay focused on why we exist: to serve the spiritual formation needs of diocesan seminarians, priests, bishops, and those involved in priestly formation.
3. Ensure the ongoing excellence of our programs, retreats, publications, and activities by proactively seeking input and information from others.
4. Sustain and grow funding to ensure that IPF continues its mission for generations to come.

From the IPF Executive Director:

Dear Friends,

At different times throughout the year, we hear about or see an eclipse. Whether the eclipse is lunar or solar, those interested in the planets and stars experience a feeling of anticipation as they await the culmination of this phenomena. A couple of years ago (in 2020), Jupiter and Saturn aligned in the sky, making it appear that they were one giant star. This overlap occurred in late December that year and was called the "Christmas Star." I was thinking about these cycles in nature and realized we also have a cycle of anticipation at IPF. Winter, for us, is the time we begin advertising our various programs for the upcoming year and receive applications.

This year, we have two programs, which run on a three-year cycle (our Spiritual Direction Training Program for priests and our Spiritual Program for bishops), that are also in the application phase for the next cohort of participants. Even during this initial phase, our program applicants express their desire to be part of the next program. The programs we offer are really vehicles for the participants' own deepening encounter with the Lord. That is truly exciting - to hear another seminarian's or priest's or bishop's desire to encounter Christ more deeply in their life. All our desires to encounter God are forms of anticipation, which is the bedrock of hope. The anticipation we hear, whether from the IPF staff or from the new participant, is really the Lord Himself revealing again and again that He is the light come into the world.

One of the articles you will read is about the home at "Nazareth," which is the unofficial title of the house where two of our staff priests live. These two priests (Fr. Rich and Fr. Jim) live in Omaha and work full-time with IPF. Along with Fr. Rich and Fr. Jim, there are five other priests from across the U.S. who have formed a priestly community called the IPF Priests of St. Joseph. Their primary mission is the spiritual care of other priests. Every Saturday at Mass, we pray that more priests will join this community. As we enter the season of Advent, which is a season of anticipation and hope, please pray for our mission, that we continue to do the Lord's will in serving the spiritual needs of seminarians, priests, and bishops. You will be remembered at Mass this Christmas.

God bless you,



Fr. Brian Welter,
Executive Director of IPF



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INSTITUTE *for* PRIESTLY FORMATION FOUNDATION

From the IPF Foundation President:



As I reflect on the past year, it has been a year of blessings, spiritual awakenings, and special relationships. Yes, it has been an extremely busy year, full of many events supporting the mission of IPF, but it has also been a year of building and renewing friendships, welcoming new staff members, and sharing graces as we traveled through the year with hope and gratitude.

We welcomed Dawn Sledge to the IPF Foundation and Rachel Wiechelman to the IPF staff during the summer, two individuals whose presence and expertise are welcome additions to IPF.

2023 brought several successful events: The "Hearts on Fire Benefit Banquet," which took place in April, celebrated the Summer Program for Diocesan Seminarians, honored Archbishop Lucas, and raised funds to "Fill the Gap" between the actual cost of the seminarian program and tuition charged for the program.

"Golf Fore IPF," the first annual golf outing, was held in September. We raised funds for the IPF Annual Budget, which helps cover operating costs throughout the year. After playing through 18 holes, our golfers joined us back at the 19th hole (the IPF office) for a tasty luncheon and prizes.

It was a tremendous blessing to share the gifts of our new building with board members, donors, and close friends.

We celebrated the completion of IPF's headquarters with the dedication of the Chapel and an official Open House in October. It was a tremendous blessing to share the gifts of our new building with board members, donors, and close friends.

In November, we held our first IPF Speaker event. Presentations were given on the life of Blessed Stanley Rother, the first U.S. born priest to be declared a martyr. Proceeds from the event will be placed in the Blessed

Stanley Rother Pre-Ordination Retreat Fund, which provides purpose-restricted financial support for IPF's pre-ordination retreat program.

We continue to hold Mornings of Reflection during Lent and Advent to provide laity with a glimpse into the programs offered at IPF for priests, bishops, and seminarians. The Advent Morning of Reflection took place on December 9, 2023, at Christ the King Parish in Omaha. There is also a virtual Advent Reflection on the IPF website from Fr. Josh Brown, an IPF Priest of St. Joseph.

We will wrap up the year with our Advent Appeal. We receive copious blessings through the many prayers and financial support offered to our mission during this time of year. Thank you for your generous support throughout the year and especially during the holy anticipation of Christ's birth. It is through Christ's birth that we receive the ultimate gift of the Holy Trinity: the promise of everlasting life. God the Father's gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, and Jesus's gift of the Holy Spirit remains with us. The Holy Spirit's gifts of inspiration, comfort, and enlightenment continue to guide us on our journey to everlasting life.

May this holy season bring blessings, peace, and joy to you, your family, and the world. Merry Christmas and good health in the new year.

Come, Holy Spirit,

Mary Buttell,
President of the IPF Foundation

Save the Dates for 2024

IPF Hearts on Fire Benefit Banquet
Thursday, April 4, 2024

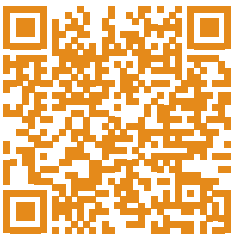
"Golf Fore IPF" Afternoon Tournament
Monday, September 9, 2024

IPF's Open House and Chapel Dedication

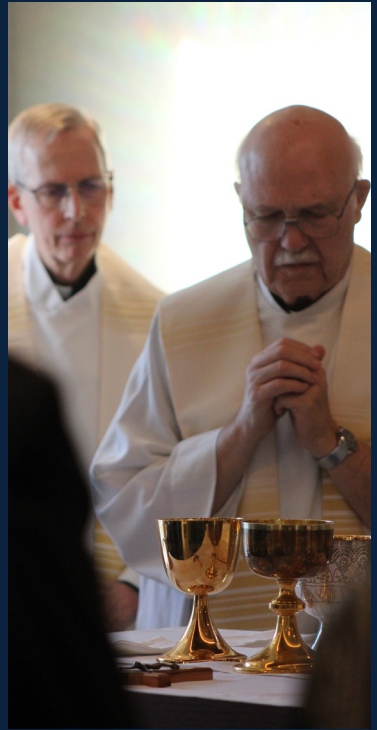
On Thursday, October 19th, key supporters, staff, and board members filed into the IPF Chapel. Archbishop George Lucas, assisted by Archbishop Andrew Cozzens (Diocese of Crookston), Fr. Dave Reeson, Fr. Harry Buse, Fr. Jim Rafferty, Fr. Brian Welter, and Fr. Richard Gabuzda, proceeded to dedicate the chapel, using holy water, incense, and various prayers to bless the space. Mass was offered, and afterwards, people gathered to enjoy light hors d'oeuvres and conversation.

On Sunday, October 22nd, from 2 to 4 p.m., IPF held its first official Open House. A continual flow of people stopped by to see the completed building. Staff members provided tours of the space, offering insight into the details of each room and sharing anecdotes about the building's progress and settling in to our new headquarters. After finishing the tour, guests were invited to enjoy cake and lemonade while sitting in the IPF Bistro area on the southwest side of the building. We were delighted to see so many faces, both new friends and old, stop by and visit.

If you would like to see the new IPF building, check out our virtual tour by scanning the QR code below with the photo app on your phone. Alternatively, call Mary Buttell and arrange a time to drop in and take a tour of the office.



Scan the code with your phone to view a Virtual Tour of the IPF offices!



Fulfilling a Desire for Communion with the Lord

Focusing on Priestly Identity in the IPF Spiritual Direction Training Program

Written by: Fr. Thomas Dunn, Priest of the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois

There is a famous radio interview of Father Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) from 1969 in which he made acute predictions about the future of the Church—many of which have already come true. I came across a transcript of this interview years ago and was deeply moved by his description of the type of priest the Church will need in the future. He said:

"The kind of priest who is no more than a social worker can be replaced by the psychotherapist and other specialists; but the priest who is no specialist, who does not stand on the [sidelines], watching the game, giving official advice, but in the name of God places himself at the disposal of man, who is beside them in their sorrows, in their joys, in their hope, and in their fear, such a priest will certainly be needed in the future."

Ratzinger's description affected me, not only because it was right—clearly, the Church needs many priests of that type now—but also, because it stirred within me a desire to be that type of priest.

As I pursued that desire, the IPF Spiritual Direction Training Program helped me more than anything else, particularly in my prayer life. Seminary taught me to develop a habit of prayer, but while in prayer, I did not always understand the interior movements of my heart. The IPF spiritual directors have guided me to notice and sift through these movements and discern what is from God and what is from the enemy. As a result, I now know Christ's love for me in a more personal way, and my heart has begun to shift from self-reliance to deeper union with Him.

As my union with Jesus deepens, so does my priestly identity. I often hear people say things like, "You're essentially a CEO of a small business." Many pastors feel that way, and there is a temptation to operate as such. But the Lord has called us to ground our identity in Him alone. IPF has helped me to understand that in the day-to-day pressures of parish administration, my chief role remains to live in communion with Him.

The priests who run and assist the IPF program are some of the best around. They are true role models. Some have been anchors in my priesthood throughout the years, providing spiritual direction, counsel, and friendship. Additionally, the fellowship I have shared with other priests participating in the program has been a great blessing. I have formed new friendships that have extended beyond the program. I now have a network of brother priests throughout the country who strive to live a contemplative priesthood. I look forward to being with these men at each program session. Their presence creates an atmosphere of priestly fraternity from which I have found new strength and hope.

With the training and support from IPF, I pray that I may become a priest like Ratzinger described—one who is available to the people of God and able to draw others into the Blessed Trinity's love.



Fr. Thomas Dunn

Applications for the next round of the Spiritual Direction Training Program (2024-2027) are still being accepted.

Contact Tina at 402-546-6384 if you are interested in applying.



Applications Open for Summer 2024

IPF has three programs that will run during the summer of 2024. They are the Summer Program for Diocesan Seminarians, the 30-Day Spiritual Exercises, and the Seminar for Seminary Spiritual Directors. Applications for all three programs are currently open. Those interested should contact the IPF office at ipf@priestlyformation.org in order to obtain the password for any of the three program applications.

Pre-Ordination Retreat in Maryland



For several years, IPF has offered a program for seminarians who desire to make a retreat prior to their ordination to the diaconate or the priesthood. The Church requires that every candidate for ordination make a retreat within six months of their ordination date.

In previous years, the program has been held in the Diocese of Corpus Christi, Texas. This year, the retreat will take place at Loyola on the Potomac Retreat Center in Faulkner, Maryland. The format will be the same as that of past years: a silent directed retreat with daily Mass and individual spiritual direction sessions each day.

The dates for the retreat are December 28, 2023, through January 6, 2024. Fr. Jim Rafferty is leading and directing those on retreat along with Fr. Josh Brown, Fr. Innocent Montgomery, CFR, and Fr. Jeff Eirvin.

The retreat program receives support from IPF's Blessed Stanley Rother Pre-Ordination Retreat Fund.



IPF Pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi

Plans are developing for IPF's pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi, scheduled for November 10-19, 2024. The itinerary will begin with days in Rome, including a chance to attend a Papal Audience and to celebrate Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, along with many other important pilgrimage sites. We'll then spend two nights in Assisi, birthplace of St. Francis and St. Clare. On the return to Rome, we'll stop by Orvieto, whose cathedral houses the corporal from the Eucharistic Miracle of Bolsena.

There are still a few places open for additional participants on the pilgrimage. Everyone is reminded that the **first payment is due on January 1, 2024**. Also, it is important to **check your passport**. Renewals can take some time. **Italy requires that your passport be valid six months after your return from the pilgrimage.**

Feel free to contact the IPF office for more details.

Photos from IPF's Golf Tournament

Thanks to Godfather's Pizza for being the Title Event Sponsor for "Golf Fore IPF" on September 14, 2023.

From the top left:

- 1) Teeing off at hole #1 to start the morning.
- 2) Golfers putting their balls into the hole.
- 3) Fr. Mike Swanton playing with Scott Drvol, Jack Couch, and Dan Drvol.
- 4) Enjoying lunch at the IPF office (the 19th hole) after the tournament.
- 5) Nick Winfrey, Tim Buttell, and Jason Bender had the lowest score and won the tournament.
- 6) Fr. Dave Belt and his team measure putts on the green for pin prizes.
- 7) Melissa Hegarty, Liz Langan, and Fr. Ryan Lewis pose for a group photo before teeing off.
- 8) Three team members look on as their fourth player sends his ball into the hole.

See all the golf tournament photos by scanning the QR code with your phone



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What is the Purpose-Restricted Fund for the Nazareth House?



IPF Foundation Purpose-Restricted Funds

From the top left to the bottom right: 1) Nazareth House Fund; 2) St. Joseph and Mary Seminarian Fund; 3) St. Ignatius of Loyola Spiritual Direction Training Fund; 4) St. Paul Communications and Publication Fund; 5) St. John Paul II Fund for Priests; 6) Blessed Stanley Rother Pre-Ordination Retreat Fund; 7) Sacred Heart Legacy Society; 8) St. Charles Borromeo Spiritual Program for Bishops Fund

This third article in the Foundation Purpose-Restricted Fund series will go behind the scenes of the purpose-restricted fund for Nazareth House, the fund that provides for the upkeep of the current home of the IPF Priests of St. Joseph.

Before moving into this duplex home, Fr. Rich Gabuzda lived in residence halls on the campus of Creighton University. The duplex, located near St. Cecilia's Cathedral, was purchased by IPF in 2008 with the assistance of two generous donors. But it was not until the IPF Priests of St. Joseph had been recognized as a Public Clerical Association by Archbishop Lucas



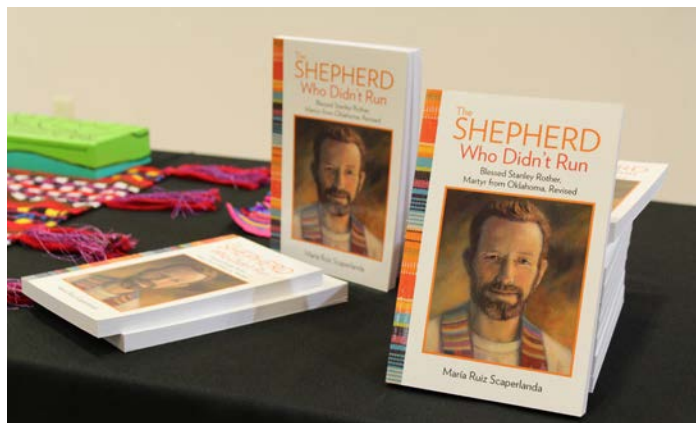
in 2015 that it became the home for these priests. Fr. Gabuzda and Fr. Jim Rafferty, originally priests of the Diocese of Scranton, became incardinated into the Archdiocese of Omaha as part of the origins of the IPF Priests of St. Joseph and now live in Nazareth House.

Prior to the move-in, the duplex needed refurbishing, a process that was overseen by Larry Dwyer along with the help of many volunteers, financial contributions, and professional donated labor. In addition to containing living space for the two priests, the home has a chapel furnished through the generosity of the Timothy L. and Thelma H. Slattery Family Foundation. Two extra rooms provide accommodations for priests and seminarians who come for silent directed retreats throughout the year.

From time to time, as with any home, repairs are needed. Allyn and Charlotte Wiebelhaus recognized the need to provide such repairs. They replaced windows and doors in the duplex and established the Nazareth House Purpose-Restricted Fund in the Foundation to provide for future repairs, leaving money from their estate to further build up the fund.

Currently, there is need for a \$25,000 project to repair the brick and masonry porch that is crumbling and causing structural damage to the Nazareth House. Please consider assisting in this and future repairs to the home of the IPF Priests of St. Joseph with a gift to the Nazareth House Purpose-Restricted Fund within the Foundation.

Blessed Stanley Rother Speaker Event Recap



The biography of Blessed Stanley Rother, *The Shepherd Who Didn't Run*, was available for purchase at the event's conclusion. It was written by María Ruiz Scaperlanda.

On Wednesday, November 8, 2023, over 130 people gathered at St. Robert Bellarmine's Mainelli Center to learn more about the life of Blessed Stanley Rother. Archbishop Paul Coakley, from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, and María Ruiz Scaperlanda, author of the biography for Fr. Rother, titled *The Shepherd Who Didn't Run* came to Omaha to give presentations and share their knowledge about this diocesan priest.

After a brief introduction from IPF's Executive Director, Fr. Brian Welter, the speakers shared a twenty-minute video about Blessed Stanley Rother. The video shared Fr. Rother's history, highlighting his desire to become a priest even as he encountered academic struggles in seminary. Five years after being ordained by the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, he volunteered to be sent down to Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala where he was a pastor for 12 years until his martyrdom on July 27, 1980.

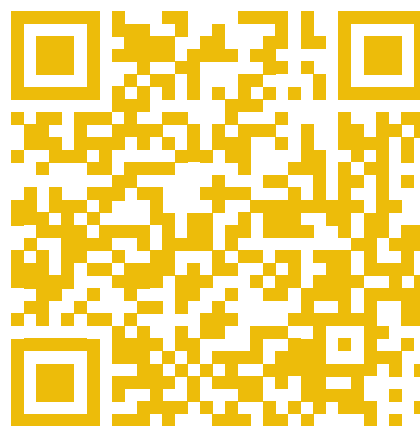
In 2016, Fr. Rother was declared a martyr by the Catholic Church and was beatified as Blessed Stanley Rother in 2017. What will it take for Fr. Rother to be declared a saint? When asked this question, Archbishop Coakley smiled as he responded in sincerity, "It will take a miracle."

Photos of the newly constructed Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine in Oklahoma were shared, along with details about the Shrine's dedication, which took place in February 2023. As part of the dedication, the casket containing the body of Blessed Stanley Rother was brought to the cathedral for public veneration. María

Ruiz Scaperlanda shared her own experience of being one of thousands who prayed with and venerated the remains of Fr. Rother throughout an entire night. She also gave some insight into the process of writing the biography of Fr. Rother and shared how encouraged she was by the life of this diocesan priest.

As the presentations wrapped up, attendees could take several prayer cards, pamphlets about the Shrine, or purchase a signed copy of Blessed Stanley's biography. Those gathered were encouraged to view the relics of Blessed Stanley Rother brought by Archbishop Coakley - a vial of blood from the priest's heart and a small piece of rib bone. Everyone in attendance was touched and grateful to have heard the unique perspective the speakers provided on Fr. Rother's life. Proceeds raised at the speaker event were put into IPF's Blessed Stanley Rother Pre-Ordination Retreat Fund. The purpose-restricted fund provides financial support for IPF's annual pre-ordination retreat program (see details about this year's pre-ordination retreat on pg. 7).

Want to see more pictures from the event? Use the photo app on your phone to scan the QR code below:



From the top left: Archbishop Paul Coakley, from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, talks about Blessed Stanley Rother.

María Ruiz Scaperlanda speaks about writing Fr. Rother's biography.

A full audience listens intently to the speakers sharing their expertise.

IPF staff greets and checks in attendees before the speaker event.

A vial of blood from Blessed Stanley Rother's heart (a first class relic).

Another relic from Fr. Stanley Rother's body.

People lined up to get an autographed book and to view the relics.





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Calendar of Upcoming Events

- ▶ December 28, 2023 - January 6, 2024
Pre-Ordination Retreat
Loyola on the Potomac Retreat Center, Faulkner, Maryland
- ▶ January 7-12, 2024
Spiritual Direction Training Program, Sec. A
Mundelein Seminary, Illinois
- ▶ January 14-19, 2024
Spiritual Direction Training Program, Sec. B
Mundelein Seminary, Illinois
- ▶ January 21-29, 2024
NCDVD Annual Retreat
Bethany Retreat Center, Lutz, Florida
- ▶ February 5-12, 2024
Alumni Retreat
Cenacle of Divine Providence, Clearwater, Florida
- ▶ March 2, 2024
Lenten Morning of Reflection
Christ the King Parish, Omaha, NE
- ▶ March 21, 2024
IPF Corporate Board Meeting
- ▶ March 22, 2024
IPF Foundation Board Meeting
- ▶ April 4, 2024
IPF Presents: Hearts on Fire Journey to Omaha Benefit Banquet
St. Robert Bellarmine, Omaha, NE