

INSTITUTE FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION



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A Public Association of the Faithful in the Archdiocese of Omaha

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How IPF plans to grow, based on the results from the strategic planning that took place in 2019.

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Pictured Left: Seminarians from several summers ago gather around the Sacred Heart statue in the Jesuit Garden on the campus of Creighton University. The statue, with its inscription, was erected by Creighton University students who were grateful no students' lives were lost due to the 1918 pandemic.

Pictured right: Fr. Mark Beran, Fr. Lawton Lang, and Fr. Xavier Mariae Meiergerd, CFR enjoy the snow in their last session of the Spiritual Direction Training Program in Mundelein, IL.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:



Dear Friends,

As this publication goes to print, we and all the world remain in the throes of COVID-19. Our prayers have been and remain with all our staff, alumni, and friends, praying for safety and for the Lord's consoling love to break through in all hearts, especially those most affected. Please see an additional article on page 7 for further reflections.

As you'll read in the pages that follow, a year-long strategic planning process resulted in what we are calling Vision 2025, charting the way forward into the coming years which will continue and expand the service of the Institute to the Church in the United States and beyond.

I am delighted that, as part of that vision, Father Brian Welter will step into the role of Executive Director this summer. He will be a wonderful leader and a great spiritual father to all our program participants and staff. For those in Omaha who might be wondering, he will take up residence

at St. Margaret Mary Parish on Dodge Street. Father Ralph O'Donnell, pastor, has been gracious in extending a warm welcome to him.

I will be continuing in the IPF mission, helping Father Welter in the transition, but also, as our mission expands in a variety of ways, I will be more available to help with both our new and current programs as a staff member.

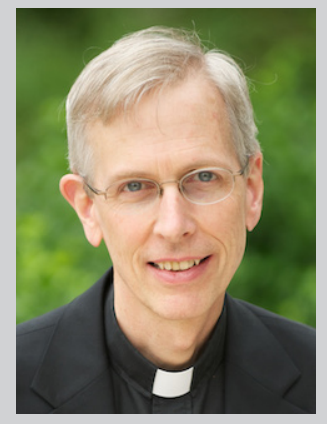
Gazing at the names contained in this annual report, my heart is full of gratitude for the many individuals and groups who faithfully support the IPF mission day-by-day, year-by-year. I can only hope that each of you feels a part of the Institute's work in helping to deepen the spiritual lives of all those we serve. Thank you and God bless you for your generosity!

Please keep us all in prayer,

Sincerely in the Lord,

Fr. Richard J. Gabuzda

Fr. Richard Gabuzda,
Executive Director of IPF





VISION 2025: HEARTS ON FIRE FOR CHRIST

Throughout 2019, the Institute engaged in a strategic planning process, looking back on the graces of the past 25 years while asking the Lord to show us His desires for our mission in the coming years. What did we learn in the process? To begin with, we discovered that **IPF has a unique role in the Church—no other organization does what IPF does!**

The major gift of the months of planning, however, has been **to see more clearly the vision of IPF's role in serving the Church in the United States in a needed renewal of holiness.** Here's how our new **Vision Statement** expresses it:

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.



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.

With that vision in mind, we elaborated a new **Mission Statement** which states more concretely IPF's role in this vision:

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.

From that place of clearer vision and with a renewed sense of mission, we elaborated our **Vision 2025** plan, which provides a direction and a concrete way to move forward. The **Vision affirms the importance of all of our current programs and activities**, while calling for **an expansion of our mission** to help lead priests to have **"hearts on fire for Christ"** and pass on that fire for Christ to others in the Church in a sustained way.

Here are some **highlights of the expansion** that the plan envisions:

- Retreats for bishops
- Retreats for priests 5-10 years ordained
- Adding another section of our Spiritual Direction Training Program
- Offering symposia to help seminaries and dioceses respond to the new Program for Priestly Formation

A few remarks on this expansion. For the first time in our history, we are being **called to focus more consciously on spiritual formation programs for bishops.** We know that, if priests need greater support in their spiritual lives, bishops certainly need that support as well.

Younger priests have a particular need to be accompanied in the years of their transition from seminary to parish life. And, given smaller numbers of priests, very often younger priests are asked to become pastors at an increasingly earlier age, often with only a few years of experience as associate pastors. The many demands that come across a pastor's desk can quickly consume a priest and can cause his prayer life to diminish.

The Vision calls for maintaining all of our current programs, including our summer program for seminarians which welcomes 175 participants each summer. **The Vision also affirms the value of our Spiritual Direction Training Program, which has 154 priests registered for the current round, but goes beyond that, calling for an expansion of the program.** We have for many years offered symposia on various topics. But the present moment calls for focus on the Program of Priestly Formation which will soon be published in its final form.

In order to support this expansion, the Vision calls for focusing on two important foundational elements:

- Staff expansion, including succession planning
- Sustaining and growing funding

Our deepest desire, in moving forward with this Vision, is that priests will have **"hearts on fire for Christ"** and will pass on that fire for Christ to others in the Church through their ministry.

To sum up: The Lord has given many gifts to the Church through the Institute's mission over the past 25 years. The Lord now

invites us to expand that mission to be of even greater service to the Church during a time when a renewal of holiness and hearts on fire for Christ is greatly needed.

We invite your prayers for the Institute's mission, especially in the coming months as we seek to follow the Lord's lead in bringing about the Vision He has for our future. We need your support more than ever, hoping you will continue to join in helping to carry out this vital mission in the life of the Church.



ALWAYS IN OUR MIDST, EVEN NOW

Continuing to be enveloped by the world-wide pandemic, we have passed through our Lenten observance and continue to celebrate the Risen Lord Jesus in our midst. If ever there was a time in our lives when the message of resurrection was needed and desired, this is the time. Jesus' assurance, "I am with you always," is encouraging in and of itself. But when we stop to consider that these words were uttered by the Jesus who suffered, died and rose again, they take on a deeper meaning. These events in the life of Jesus find their deepest meaning in the incarnation: this Jesus whom we declare to be risen and with us is the Jesus who fully shared our human experience. His sufferings were real—not merely a figure of speech or a kind of analogy to our own. And so down through the centuries, Christians have found solace in gazing on the image of Jesus crucified, sensing that "he is with me in my sufferings."

Some of us have experienced the coronavirus personally or perhaps with a family member or close friend; perhaps we even know someone who has died as a result of the virus. Countless others have had their lives upended by the domino effect and find themselves without work and concerned for providing for their families. Others have experienced the change in routine and schedule now demanded by "work from home" orders or school closings. And, for us as Catholics, most poignantly, one of the painful effects of this scourge is the inability to gather as the Body of Christ, most especially in the celebration of the sacraments.

Although small by comparison with all the sufferings listed above and many more besides, the Institute for Priestly Formation has been impacted by the present situation as well. Some of our major opportunities to gather with friends and supporters here in Omaha have been cancelled. And most dramatically, we made the painful decision to cancel all of our summer programs on the campus of Creighton University this summer.

Nonetheless, the mission of the Institute continues. The absence of program activity this summer will allow our staff to conduct some planning sessions for programs and projects that are part of Vision 2025. We will continue to rely on the support of all those who are part of the IPF mission. Please remember to pray for priests at this time so that they can continue to care for their parishioners in these unusual and difficult circumstances. As we pray each day may we allow our sorrows and fears to come to the Heart of Jesus, so that he may remind us that he is with us at every moment.

- Fr. Richard Gabuzda



WELCOMING FR. BRIAN WELTER

Father Welter will lead the Institute in the implementation of Vision 2025, expanding the Institute's service to seminarians, priests and bishops.

July 1st is the day when Father Brian Welter will become the Institute's new Executive Director.

The announcement of his appointment was made in January by Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Auxiliary Bishop of St. Paul/Minneapolis and President of the Board of Directors of the Institute. In that same announcement, Bishop Cozzens expressed his gratitude to Cardinal Blase Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, for allowing Father Welter to serve in this new ministry.

Father Welter will come onboard at an important time in the Institute's history. Having celebrated 25 years of

the IPF mission, Father Welter will lead the Institute in the implementation of Vision 2025, expanding the Institute's service to seminarians, priests and bishops. Father Gabuzda, who has served as Executive Director since the Institute's founding in 1994, will continue to serve in the IPF mission as Director of Programs and Mission as well as Moderator of the IPF Priests of St. Joseph.

No stranger to the IPF mission, Father Welter completed the Institute's Spiritual Exercises (30 day retreat) program as well as its Spiritual Direction Training Program. He has served as an adjunct faculty member

and spiritual director with the Institute since 2010.

Father Welter received a B.S. in Manufacturing Technology at Bradley University and an S.T.B. and M.Div. from the University of Saint Mary of the Lake. Ordained a priest in 2005 for the Archdiocese of Chicago, he served as Associate Pastor at St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church, Orland Hills, IL, and then as Vocation Director for the Archdiocese of Chicago. At Mundelein Seminary (Archdiocese of Chicago) he served as Director of Spiritual Formation before being appointed to the role of Vice Rector in 2016.

The Lord provided a special grace for him as a preparation for his new mission: he was able to make his first pilgrimage to the Holy Land this past February. Father Welter led a retreat for seminarians from Mundelein Seminary who were spending several weeks there in an annual study program which the seminary sponsors.

Father Welter took part in the March IPF Corporate Board meeting and has been in touch with IPF in subsequent weeks preparing for his transition. Please pray for Father Welter as he assumes his new responsibilities.



WELCOME TO ANDREA

In November the staff welcomed Andrea Walther as IPF's new administrative assistant. Andrea replaces Josie Cleary, now Josie Bopp, following Josie's marriage and move to La Crosse, WI.

Andrea joins IPF after working at the Bergan Mercy campus of Creighton University, part of the Creighton University Medical School, where she was Fellowship Coordinator in the Department of Endocrinology and Gastroenterology. Prior to coming to Creighton, Andrea worked at St. Mary's School, Bellevue and A Woman's Touch Pregnancy Counseling Center, also in Bellevue.

A resident of Bellevue and a member of St. Mary's parish there, Andrea is married to Randy; they have five children (Danny, Jay, Tommy, Missy and Joey) and two grandsons (Brendan and Connor).

BLESSINGS

Received between January 1, 2019 and December 31, 2019

IPF regrets any errors or omissions. If you notice an error, please contact the Institute at 402-280-3901 or email ipf@creighton.edu

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NEW STEPS FOR THE IPF FOUNDATION

It is a very exciting time for the Institute for Priestly Formation. The leadership and staff of IPF worked diligently developing a strategic plan to access the overall vision in preparation for IPF growth and plans in the coming years. Based on the extensive research and planning, and with the unanimous approval of the governing boards of both IPF and the IPF Foundation, IPF is pleased to announce that all development, funding, and communications functions has been consolidated under the IPF Foundation. The implementation began in March 2020.

Fr. Gabuzda in his announcement stated, "As a part of this change, the IPF Foundation created a new position, President of the Foundation, and will be conducting a thorough search process in the near future to fill the position. In the interim, the Foundation Board has appointed Mary Buttell to lead the transition and implement the highest priorities for IPF development, funding, and communications plans. We are deeply grateful to Mary for her leadership and willingness to step forward and serve in this new role."

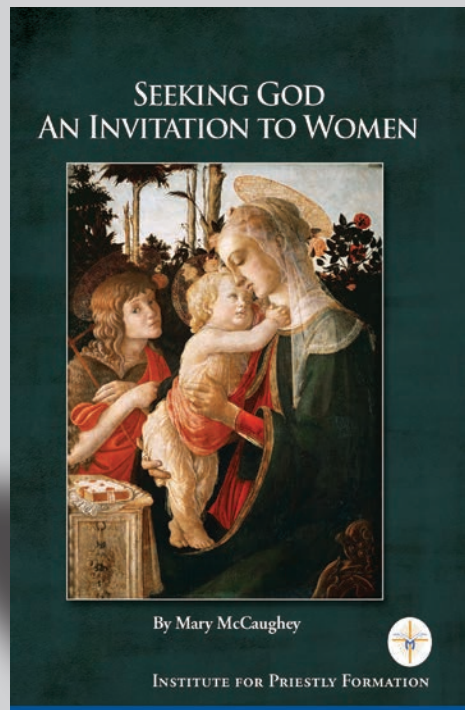
"It is my honor and privilege to be of service with the implementation of the new IPF strategic plan at this time of growth and transition for IPF. I have long admired the grace-filled mission of IPF and the programs it provides seminarians and priests, helping them better know, love, and serve God. Additionally, I value the numerous ways IPF benefits laity," stated Mary.

With the consolidation of all development, funding and communications functions under IPF Foundation, the position of Director of Mission Advancement at the Institute has been discontinued, effective the end of February. We thank Kevin Armshaw, who has served as Director of Mission Advancement since 2014, for his work with us and we wish him every blessing.

IPF staff members Linda Antonelli will serve as the Assistant to the President of the Foundation and Anna Drvol will serve as the Communications Coordinator for the IPF Foundation.



NEW IPF PUBLICATION



This short book is an invitation to women to open and trust the Lord as their beloved spouse, who calls them to trust Him and enter total intimacy with Him, to give Him everything that surfaces in prayer and in life. It is a call of love that invites us to abandon ourselves to the heart of Jesus and to allow this relationship of love to deepen and grow as we listen to Him calling us in the depths of our heart.

\$8.95

ISBN: 9781734283112

Order this publication online at
www.ipfpublications.org

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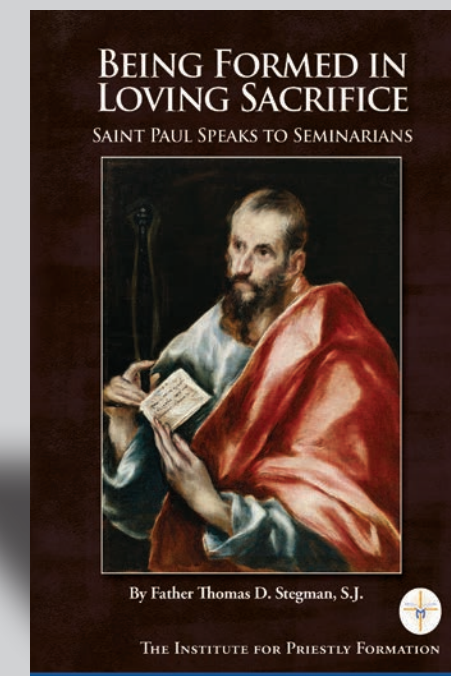
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ON THE TOPIC OF PRIESTLY FORMATION

In his book *Being Formed in Loving Sacrifice: Saint Paul Speaks to Seminarians*, Father Thomas D. Stegman, S.J. examines the areas of priestly formation (human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral) and illustrates how St. Paul, in his life and writings, represents each of these areas. Seminarians and their formators will find this book both helpful and inspirational.

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Time spent in Adoration at the Pax Christi Retreat Center Chapel in Corpus Christi, Texas.

IPF PRE-ORDINATION RETREAT

The Institute for Priestly Formation has inaugurated a new retreat program for those seminarians preparing to be ordained priests or deacons. Church law requires each man approaching ordination to make a retreat as a dedicated time with the Lord to prepare his heart for this next step in his vocation. In fact, the ordination retreat can be a profound grace of encounter with the Lord affirming the man's original call to ministry and assuring him of the Lord's fidelity with him throughout his ordained life. In December 2019, nine seminarians from around the country gathered

at the Pax Christi Retreat Center in Corpus Christi, Texas, for a five or eight day silent directed retreat as they looked forward to ordination in the spring of 2020. Fr. Jim Rafferty and Fr. Quinn Mann served as spiritual directors, meeting one-on-one with the retreatants each day for spiritual direction. After the activity of the fall semester and coming from the final exam schedule, the nine seminarians stepped away into the silence of retreat, amid the hospitality and intercessory prayer of the Pax Christi Sisters. The retreat day was very simple—Mass, silent meals, spiritual direction, and

four separate prayer periods with Scripture. The silence and solitude allow the man to be aware of the Lord with him in the depths of his own heart. There he is able to renew his own personal friendship with the Lord and to see himself as the Lord sees him. From this bond of friendship he knows himself sent outward to others to help them to encounter Jesus for themselves. It's a privilege to accompany the men on retreat and to witness their heartfelt desires to dedicate their lives to the service of God's people.

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Vocation Directors concelebrate Mass at the Bethany Retreat Center Chapel in Lutz, Florida.



A view of the altar used for Mass at the Bethany Retreat Center Chapel in Lutz, Florida.

ANNUAL DIOCESAN VOCATION DIRECTORS RETREAT

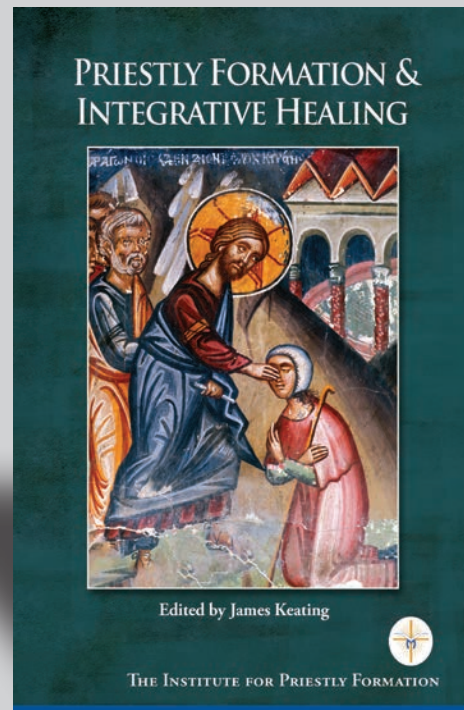
Recently, IPF staffed the Annual Diocesan Vocation Directors Retreat sponsored by NCDVD and its Executive Director Rosemary Sullivan. Twenty-six priests participated and spent five to eight days in silent prayer at Bethany Retreat Center in Lutz, Florida. Over these days the priests received individual spiritual direction, participated in Mass, Eucharistic Adoration and silent prayer. In the mornings they attended spiritual conferences aimed to prepare them each day to go deeper into the silence and into prayer. The morning

meditations invited the priests to consider the meaning of flourishing in their own vocations. We can only flourish as persons if we value truth over pleasure, truth over economic and day to day predictability and security. Valuing truth means gazing inward in the company of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, so one can be set free (Jn 8:31-32). To remain with Jesus in self-awareness is to become enlightened. Going into our hearts alone is going in without a compass, the priests were told. To remain with Him and in Him is to be assured that

what our minds apprehend about our real condition is being purified and made trustworthy. The vocation directors were encouraged to fruitfully listen to seminarians. In doing so the directors help seminarians find their way through the mystery that is their vocation. For the vocation director to listen in this way he must be in a regular state of availability to what is true and real in his own interiority, affectivity, rationality and behavior. The priests were invited to keep their hearts open to prayer even during their ministry. Christ wants to accompany

them throughout their day. To remain in such a posture of vulnerability to one's interior life as tutored by Truth secures the vocation director's leadership in a love of objective and absolute truth even as the culture continues to buckle under relativism and immediate gratification. In other words, if priests are to lead others to integration, they must be on the way to integration themselves. The retreat gifted both IPF staff and the priest participants with a new joy and confidence in Christ.

NEW IPF PUBLICATION



The formation of a seminarian is a journey to the priesthood that involves the healing of anything that impedes his becoming a bridge between the Church and Christ. Such healing is necessary so that this future priest can effectively minister to God's people. This healing, that is formation, is directed not toward emotional or psychological pathology but toward the normal cascade of moral and situational pain that holds many men captive. In the best of seminaries, the four integrated dimensions of formation—human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral—conspire to set these men free. This book sets out to explore this kind of healing.

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HELD IN OUR MEMORY

Kristi Coughlin, who had been an IPF staff member since February 2014, died unexpectedly on December 20, 2019. Kristi's principal role at IPF was recording and keeping track of gifts.

Kristi brought an infectious joy to her work and was an untiring cheerleader for the IPF mission. She loved her Catholic faith and was always happy to share that faith with others and invite them to enter into the joy of living in the Lord. Always wanting to learn more and grow more in her faith, Kristi pursued Biblical studies through a variety of programs and delighted in pilgrimages to holy places, most recently to the Holy Land.

While juggling work, studies and travel, Kristi was first and foremost a loving wife to husband, Doug, and devoted mother to Ava and Mickey.

Institute staff members welcomed Doug to a Memorial Mass for Kristi on March 12th, followed by lunch. At Mass, Father Gabuzda blessed a commemorative plaque and placed it in the IPF office chapel as a memorial to a dear and devoted staff member.

May the Risen Lord Jesus bring her into the fullness of His life and light and be a consolation to those whose hearts miss her so much!

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We have a deep, heartfelt gratitude for our supporters. Not only is their generosity overwhelming, we are often astonished at the breadth and depth of those who strive to support our work and mission.

IPF was founded in Omaha, Nebraska, and has received generous donations from those in the Omaha area. We strive to be present to the community that has so graciously sustained our mission by offering Mornings of Reflection in Lent and Advent. We rejoice with our local community during our annual *Celebration of Priesthood Banquet*. Fr. Gabuzda and Fr. Rafferty serve in Omaha parishes where they offer Mass on Sundays. When our summer programs take place at Creighton University, we have the opportunity to invite local individuals to celebrate daily Mass with our summer participants and faculty in St. John's,

the campus church. Spiritual Moms in Omaha and the neighboring area join us for Friends Night, and offer their gifts of prayer. Local volunteers offer their gifts to stuff mailings, help at events, or otherwise promote the mission of IPF. Through all of these, the community sees the IPF mission and as they personally witness IPF 'in action', they desire to provide financial support.

However, donations to IPF come in from across the country, and not just Omaha. We have supporters in small, rural towns; we have people who donate that live in large Archdioceses, from California to New York; and many areas in between. Parishioners learn about IPF from their pastors. Some have witnessed their own pastor's spiritual growth as he attended an IPF program. Others have learned various prayer techniques and spiritual lessons from their priest, that he learned from

his time in IPF programs. Some laity have received spiritual direction from a priest who has been part of IPF's Spiritual Direction Training Program. We have supporters who help their diocese to send men to the different IPF programs, and some supporters who offer extra donations to help other dioceses afford the costs for their priests and seminarians who desire to participate in IPF programs. Some of our past participants are pastors who generously send a tithe from their parish to support IPF; some of our donations come from the personal resources of bishops who value what IPF offers to their priests and seminarians.

For all this, dear readers, we thank you. As we have listed your names on these pages, we are overwhelmed by your personal generosity and financial support. Our deepest gratitude for your enduring patronage.



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There are people who have made an impact in your life or in the lives of others; a family member, a friend, or a priest you respect and wish to honor. Your gift will pay tribute to a special person in your life and will support the current mission and new programs for IPF.

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DEACON KEATING ACCEPTS NEW POSITION



Deacon James Keating, who has been on IPF's staff since 2006 as Director of Theological Formation, has accepted a position at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, St. Louis, effective August 2020. He will serve as a member of the Formation Staff and Professor of Spiritual Theology at the seminary. Although his presence will certainly be missed, Deacon Keating has indicated a desire to continue to work with IPF's programs and projects on a limited basis.

IPF is deeply grateful to Deacon Keating for his years of service to the

mission. His particular gifts of writing and speaking have served all parts of IPF's mission. He has made an invaluable contribution to the world of seminary formation by helping to demonstrate how classroom teaching can be integrated with the life of prayer, both working together to deepen a seminarian's or priest's relationship with God. Deacon Keating has served as editor of the IPF Publications division, expanding offerings from a single book when he arrived to over 30 titles today. He has overseen the selection of manuscripts and has built

up IPF Publication's offerings in three principal areas: books for seminarians/priests, books for seminary formators/vocation directors and books of more general interest. He has also conducted an annual Seminar for Seminary Theologians.

IPF's gratitude to him extends also to his wife, Marianne, and their whole family, for gracing the mission of IPF with their presence throughout these past 14 years. May God's blessings be upon them and upon Deacon Keating's new mission at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary.

... AND HOPE FOR TOMORROW

When the priest's account reaches the minimum perpetual level of \$5,000, it also releases those and any future funds donated to his SJPII account to the Institute to be used in its mission of offering spiritual formation and resources to priests and seminarians – essentially supporting the formation of priests with a Heart for Christ for the Church of tomorrow.

If there is a priest you would like to thank, visit priestlyformation.org/sjp2 or contact Beth Wells at elizabethwells@creighton.edu or 402-280-3528.

It's so easy to show appreciation for today and give hope for tomorrow.





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