



# THE CANTICLE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SAINT BENEDICT INSTITUTE FOR  
CATHOLIC THOUGHT, CULTURE, AND EVANGELIZATION

WINTER 2023

## *Pursuing* Spiritual Greatness

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AT HOPE COLLEGE



THE daily grind of trying to grow in holiness can become frustrating and discouraging for college students. Many struggle to make important life decisions. Others find that their prayer life is labored and dry. Instead of feeling grateful for being a unique child of God, some students lead lives lacking in meaning and direction. They need someone to help them pursue the spiritual greatness that God desires for them.

Coaches help athletes improve their performance on the field. Likewise, business mentors share their experiences and insights with up-and-coming professionals. Spiritual directors provide a similar service, helping their directees seek holiness. In spiritual direction, those who seek deeper intimacy with God open their hearts to a director who travels with them on their spiritual journey.

Since his arrival on campus six years ago, Fr. Nick Monco has been providing spiritual direction to both Catholic and Protestant students who have sought him out. More recently, our campus mis-

sionary, Carly Baldwin, has been meeting with young women to form friendships and discuss their spiritual challenges. Between Fr. Nick and Carly, SBI provides spiritual direction for approximately 40 students twice a month.

A good spiritual director helps their directee seek spiritual maturity. This happens during regular meetings in which they actively listen to their directee speak about their spiritual life and help them to overcome challenges and cooperate with God's grace. Aside from helping to eliminate loneliness and frustration, spiritual direction helps students make good day-to-day as well as long-term decisions. Other benefits of spiritual direction include a more open and honest relationship with God, consistent improvement in one's spiritual health, increased self-awareness, and a greater sense of purpose.

It should come as no surprise that both Hope graduates who are currently studying for the priesthood, the women who have entered religious vocations, and the three graduates working as FOCUS missionaries all received spiritual direction at Hope. On top of these, one or both spouses of all of our recently married graduates have been in spiritual direction. Most of our students entering the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) program to enter the Catholic Church have been in spiritual direction, as have numerous graduates finding success in business, medical, and other professional fields. Because of its many benefits, spiritual direction will remain a major part of our ministry in the years to come.



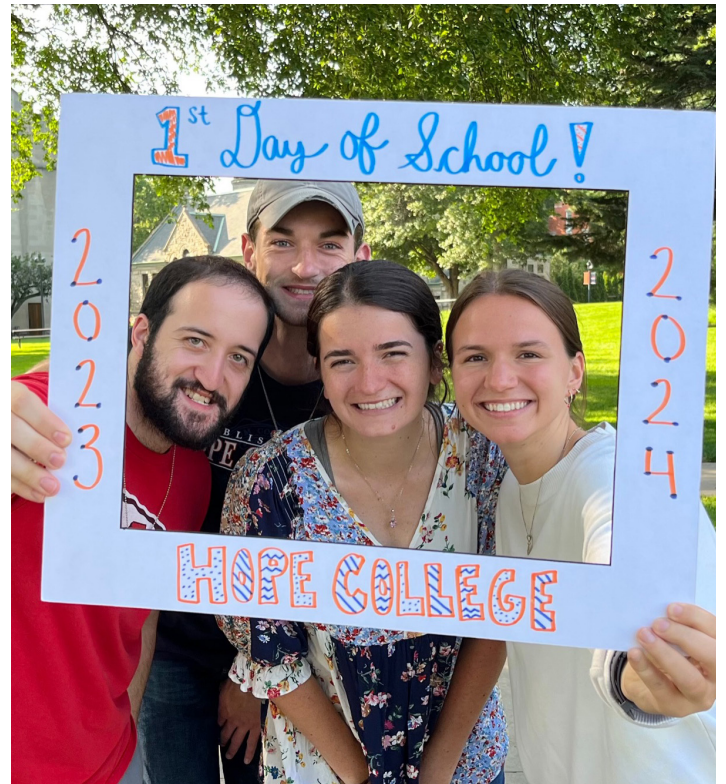


# focus

fellowship of Catholic  
university students

*This Fall, the Saint Benedict Institute began a partnership with the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) that brought four campus missionaries to Hope College. We asked them to share how the Lord has been working through them in their first semester at Hope.*

FOCUS holds as its mission statement the following: "To know Christ Jesus and fulfill his Great Commission." FOCUS does this by inviting college students into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church, inspiring and equipping them for a lifetime of Christ-centered evangelization, discipleship, and friendship in which they lead others to do the same. It has been a great joy to be able to bring this mission to Hope College this year. It is always surprising how quickly semesters come and go. As I reflect on how this semester is wrapping up for my team and I, **I cannot help but be filled with gratitude and awe of what the Lord has done here in such a short amount of time.** It feels like yesterday that my teammates and I were moving into our houses and confused about the layout of campus. But the Lord has done mighty things in our hearts as well as the students' hearts!



To put this into perspective, I would like to share a little of the outreach that we have participated in. So far, we have nearly 60 students who have joined one of the seven Catholic Bible studies we are offering. Five of those are women's studies and two are men's. On top of that, a lot of our effort this semester has been geared towards inviting students to join us this January in St. Louis, MO, for

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We are hopeful that as the year goes on, we will continue to reach even more souls on campus and invite them into a deeper relationship with Christ. And in doing so, our love for the Lord will continue to be purified. **There is nothing more humbling than to be able to accompany someone on their journey towards Christ and to be trusted with vulnerable parts of their hearts and lives.** At the end of the day, it is not about what we are doing, but more so, who we are becoming because of it. There is no doubt about it: this semester has brought my teammates and I even closer to the heart of Christ. Thank you for the ways that you have supported the Saint Benedict Institute in allowing us to be on campus so that we can invite students into the beauty and magnificence of the Catholic Church.

**With His Love,  
The Focus Team:  
*Gabby, Ben, Lauren, and Nathan***

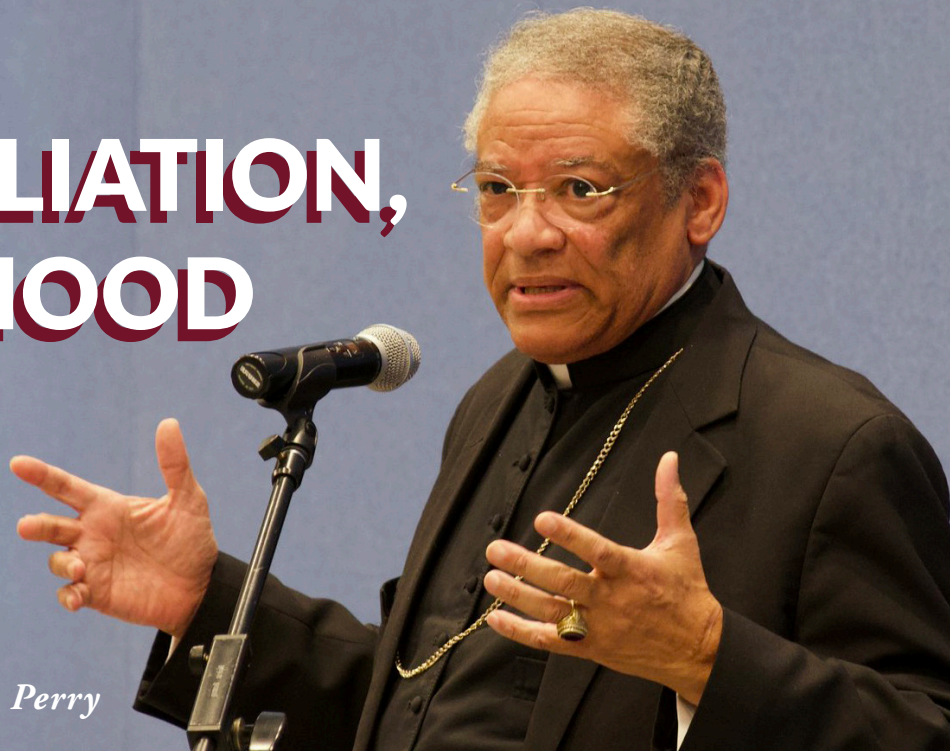
our annual SEEK conference. SEEK is a five-day conference filled with world-renowned Catholic speakers like Fr. Mike Schmitz, Mass, adoration, and thousands of college students, priests, religious, and other adults trying to evangelize in their parishes. It is a conference geared towards equipping students and others to bring Christ to their campuses, parishes, office spaces, etc. At this conference alone, there have been thousands of conversions. **Students' lives are completely changed**, and they come back to campus ready and equipped to continue to bring the light of Christ with them. So far, we have around 40 students who will be joining us for this grand event!

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# RACE, RECONCILIATION, & SAINTHOOD

*A Lecture by Bishop Joseph Perry*



ON October 16, Bishop Joseph Perry joined us to discuss the path to sainthood for six African American Catholics. He also had dinner with several students, and afterward we asked them to reflect on what they had heard.

“Before the presentation, I hadn’t stopped to reflect on the racial issue within the Catholic Church in America,” said one student. “Because of this, it was enriching to hear Bishop Perry and understand how segregation in the U.S. has played a role in segregation within the Church in America, and how this problem has led to African Americans not seeing the Church as a welcoming place to them.”

“Bishop Perry’s explanation of the lives of the six saint candidates, as well as his own experience growing up as a black Catholic in the era of Jim Crow, were very eye-opening,” said another student.

Students became more aware of how some Catholics have been complicit in racism as well as how they have fought against it. “I learned that the Church in America does have a history of racism, from priests and religious owning slaves to African Americans being denied entrance to seminaries and monasteries. This history is painful

and heartbreaking to learn about. However, I also learned that the Church has a history of fighting injustice.”

After hearing Bishop Perry, the students expressed their hopes that the Church could work to promote racial reconciliation even more in the future: “I think the Church plays a large role in promoting healing and I hope that it will continue to develop into a place where people of all races feel safe and heard.” Another student identified historical ignorance as a challenge to overcome: “I think the Church’s biggest hurdle is to overcome this polarization and help people to understand that there is a deep-rooted history to why things are the way they are today, and that it is our job to help our communities fix that.”

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In the quest for racial healing, the students saw a role for the six candidates for sainthood that Bishop Perry talked about: “In the future, I think spreading stories about African American saints and holy people will be important. It can be hard to feel like you belong somewhere if you don’t see anyone there who looks like you, so we can be more welcoming to a diverse range of Catholics if we celebrate a diverse cloud of witnesses.”

“I felt really impacted by Bishop Perry’s elaboration on sainthood. He presented six great candidates who lived a life geared towards God. Ultimately, Bishop Perry reminded us that we have the capacity to be a saint, too! Emphasizing commitment and sanctity, he explains that no matter what we go through, we can rise up, put God first, and live a saintly life.”

