

## FROM THE DESK OF FR. RENÉ

Dear Friends,

This past Thanksgiving, I had the wonderful opportunity of meeting Pope Francis. I was in Rome as part of the annual assembly of the Union of Superiors General (heads of men's religious communities from around the world). In addressing a question on the challenges that women face in the Church in some parts of the world, these words from the Holy Father resonated with me, "The Church does not function well without women. Women get things done."

Pope Francis gave as an example the transformation that has happened with the Vatican finances thanks to the five women he appointed to the Council for the Economy. The Holy Father also mentioned that "in the Vatican, we know who runs things," referring to the Franciscan Sister Raffaella Petrini, the Secretary General of the office governing the Vatican City State. He challenged the 125 Superiors General present to not only work collaboratively with women but to also provide them opportunities in the leadership and management of our Church.

I was invigorated by Pope Francis' words. When I was pastor in Grand Rapids, the Cathedral parish and the Catholic Information Center would not function without the vision, management and leadership of the women on staff, and on the finance and pastoral councils. I am sure that many of our ministries in the United States and Rome would not exist without the dedication and hard work of women.

We have long described our Paulist mission as "Giving the Gospel a Voice." At this point in our history, we are choosing to more intentionally include the voice of women in that venture. Having listened to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and faithful to the resolutions of the 2022 Paulist General Assembly, I am pleased to announce that three women will be part of the new five-member Lay Advisory Board of the Paulist Fathers. This is the highest lay leadership body in our community tasked to advise and guide the Presidential Board.

The Paulists are grateful to the hundreds of women who continue to breathe new life into our Paulist identity and mission. We are blessed to have you, men and women, as partners in our mission through your heartfelt prayers, community support, and generous giving.

As we celebrate the season of Christmas with joy and gratitude for the divine plan of God's inclusive love incarnate in Jesus Christ, may we seek the intercession of our blessed Mother—a woman of faith, courage and wisdom!

With prayerful best wishes for a joyful and peaceful Christmas season, I remain:

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Father René*

**Very Rev. René Constanza, C.S.P.**  
President, The Paulist Fathers

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**NEW FROM PAULIST PRESS**

**A Christmas Miracle**

By Annette Langen  
Illustrated by Frauke Weldin



In this illustrated book for children, a strange group follows a star towards Bethlehem: the prickly porcupine, the little bunny, and the cunning fox. Was what that stupid camel said true? Was a miracle about to happen? Many dangers lurk on the way and the animals realize how important it is to stay together.

To learn more about this and other Paulist Press titles, please visit: [paulistpress.com](http://paulistpress.com).

**QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS FOR THE OFFICE OF MISSION ADVANCEMENT?**

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Pictured: Paulist Fr. Vinny McKiernan and Paulist Fr. Jimmy Hsu with friends from Columbus, OH, at the blessing and dedication on November 19 of Hecker House, the Paulist House of Mission and Studies of Washington, D.C. Read about this special event inside this issue of The Voice!

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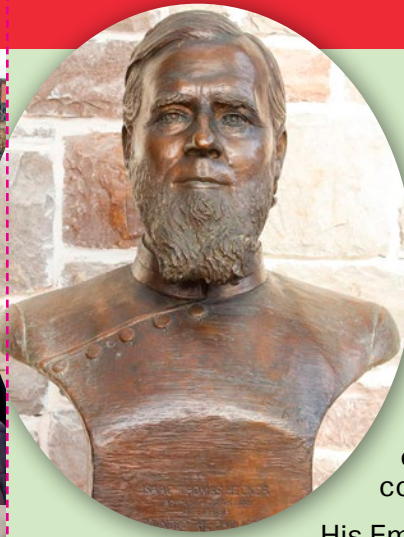
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**Voice**

News from The Paulist Fathers Office of Mission Advancement



*Merry Christmas  
from the Paulists!*

# Hecker House is Blessed and Dedicated



**T**hanks to the prayers and generosity of our parishioners and friends far and wide, Hecker House, the new Paulist House of Mission and Studies in Washington, D.C., was blessed and dedicated on Saturday morning, November 19, 2022.

After years of planning, fundraising and construction, this right-sized building is now home for our seminarians, novices, formation team and the Paulist Fathers who work in our nation's capital. The new seminary was the cornerstone project of our successful \$30 million "Hope for the Future" comprehensive campaign.

His Eminence, Wilton Cardinal Gregory, Archbishop of Washington, presided at the ceremony that took place under clear blue skies with a slight chill in the air.

Cardinal Gregory saluted the Josephite Fathers, who hosted the Paulist formation community at St. Joseph's Seminary in Washington, D.C., in between the sale of the former Paulist seminary, St. Paul's College, and the opening of Hecker House.

"The Josephites hosted the Paulists during this interim period and now they are losing their roomies. But we are so grateful that these two communities have shared so much in common over these past several years," said the cardinal.

In his welcoming remarks, our president, Paulist Fr. René Constanza, noted that Hecker House, in addition to being a seminary, also is "a house for the advancement of the Paulist mission."

"Faithful to the examples of our patron, St. Paul, and our founder, Servant of God Isaac Hecker, the Paulists formed in this new Hecker House will be formed for ministry with Catholics who no longer practice their faith, with women, people of color, young adults in their 20s and 30s, those who identify as LGBTQ+ and others, who may not feel at home in the Catholic Church," said Fr. René.

He continued, "The Paulists formed in Hecker House will be formed to listen – to be present and listen to people who are now absent from the conversation – and to give them a sense of belonging and welcome in our Church.

"We Paulists are also seeking to advance ways our faith can address the blindness, fear and anger wrapped up in toxic polarization that afflicts our country."

Fr. René also saluted his predecessor, Paulist Fr. Eric Andrews, who led the Hecker House project. "I want to give a big thank you to Fr. Eric for steering us through this major accomplishment," he said. "Thanks to him and our previous administration, our seminarians now have a place to call home."

In his remarks, Fr. Eric thanked the many people who had a hand in building Hecker House. He noted the special role of Joan A. Payden of Los Angeles, who made the leadership gift that enabled the project.

"Joan Payden, thank you so much for all you have done. This was not possible without you," said Fr. Eric.

**To watch a replay of the November 19 ceremony, or to view the program, please visit: [paulist.org/NewSeminary](http://paulist.org/NewSeminary).**



**On the cover:** The ribbon-cutting on November 19 during the blessing and dedication of Hecker House in Washington, D.C. Pictured in the front row, L to R, are: Paulist Fr. René Constanza, president of the Paulist Fathers; Wilton Cardinal Gregory, Archbishop of Washington, D.C.; Deb Stype of Columbus, OH, of the "Hope for the Future" committee; Paulist Fr. Eric Andrews; and Francie Dix of Horseshoe Bay, TX, of the "Hope for the Future" committee. Seen behind them are some of the Paulist seminarians. Photo by Paulist Fr. Ricky Manalo. Other photos in this issue by LNJ Designs Photo.

*Merry Christmas & Happy New Year 2023*

from the **Paulist Fathers**  
**Office of Mission Advancement!**

Father Dave  
Father René  
Linda Kami Paul  
Brett Mary Pat Ellie



Detail of painting by Elizabeth Bowman.