

# *Bison Catholic Forum*

SUMMER 2022



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## **A Spring Harvest!**

What a year it has been! As you will see in these pages, the Catholic ministry at Howard University (HU Bison Catholic) is quite active, both on- and off-campus. We had a wonderful Spring semester, and our students are excited about returning this Fall from the momentum of this first year coming out of the pandemic. This academic year will mark 75 years of Catholic ministry at Howard University. Our mission remains the same as it did in 1947: to provide a space for students to encounter Jesus Christ, to grow in their Catholic faith, and to live in authentic relationship with one another. With this newsletter, we hope to provide you a small glimpse of this mission in action.



HU Bison Catholic with Bishop Roy Campbell (HU '69) at the Archdiocesan Black History Month Mass, St. Matthew's Cathedral

## BLESSINGS POST-PANDEMIC

BY CHRISTINA GRANT, '24

Even before arriving in DC for my first year on Howard's campus, the pandemic had created a spiritual challenge for myself and the members of my home parish in Jamaica. Gathering restrictions and live-streamed Masses caused enthusiasm and togetherness to decline. I was excited to attend in-person Masses in the States, but, not yet knowing about HU Bison Catholic, I was concerned about entering a new church community. Would I need to commute to a nearby parish alone every Sunday? Would I be able to continue my vocation of reading and altar serving?

Fortunately, I met an inspiring group of students who wanted to grow in their faith as I did. It was refreshing to see everyone willing to learn the basics of being a lector, sacristan or altar server and join forces to stage our small Sunday evening Masses. As students at an HBCU, it was also rewarding for us to have roles in the Archdiocese of Washington's Mass celebrating Black History Month.

I also got to know other students while sharing our intentions, praying the rosary, talking about our journeys on our Fall retreat and catching up on the campus events after Mass each week. There was never a dull moment in our weekly fellowship sessions either. I particularly enjoyed our discussion with Santonio Hill from Vagabond Missions, who encouraged us, using his journey, to listen and be attentive to God's call and plan for our lives. It was a relevant topic for young people facing internal conflicts deciding on majors, career paths and future goals. Personally, his story motivated me to be more purposeful about evangelizing pursuing our ministry's goal of sharing our faith and reaching a wider audience. I pray that our ministry can continue to bring more laughter, companionship and meaningful discussions to the Howard community next year.



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Christina participating in the Spring Retreat

## *Seminarian Reflection: A Year of Firsts*

*By Nate Tinner-Williams*

To say that this past academic year was unusual for me would be an understatement. I moved across the country to Washington DC, began my first year of formation for the Catholic priesthood, and started school at a university I had never seen before, and studying a topic (philosophy) that was almost entirely brand new. To top it off, I experienced hands-on ministry for the first time, serving with the Catholic students on Howard's campus.

I had never before experienced an HBCU environment in-person on a regular basis, and the experience was very rewarding. My religious community, the Josephites, was founded to serve African Americans, so what better place to serve than at a school where Black culture is part and parcel to the university experience?

Moreover, the collaboration between the students, Fr. Boxie, and the local seminarians (from the Josephites, Archdiocese of Washington, Diocese of Raleigh) was a sight to behold—from event planning to theological presentations to exploring new prayers and topics of discussion. We all learned, laughed, meditated, and even disagreed together—and God was glorified in every high and low.



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As a recent convert to the faith, it was fascinating to see Catholic campus ministry in motion, and to be able to participate as one of God's instruments. I primarily assisted with music for Sunday Mass, something I had never helped lead before in the Church. There too, the students were beyond helpful, taking charge when needed and owning the ministry as their way to serve God.

I am looking forward to all that God has in store for Catholics at Howard University, and if this past year was any indication, I know that the students will continue to grow in their faith and spread God's love and message all over campus.

*Nate is 4th from the left, with students at the Franciscan Monastery in DC for the Holy Week pilgrimage.*



# The 7-Year Journey to Confirmation

BY STEPHANIE OKAFOR, '23

JOY! That's how I felt the day of my confirmation. A journey that began almost seven years ago would finally conclude on the 16th of April 2022. With my family present and all the friends I had made in recent months, it was indeed a day to give thanks. In the Spring of 2016, my peers in secondary school were getting confirmed, and I wasn't a part of the ceremony, but I'm glad I didn't participate because I was not yet ready to receive the Holy Spirit. Yes, I knew, and God knew it too. You see, the sacrament of Confirmation is precisely what it says--it confirms and strengthens our Catholic faith. Through this, we become full members of the church. Isn't that amazing? To become partakers of heaven here on earth is what the church is. At 15, I wouldn't really have understood the gravity of what that meant. Even now, I won't say I understand it thoroughly, for it is a sacrament and a mystery. But I know I have a full appreciation for the Holy Spirit and have a good sense of His presence in my life.



*Stephanie Okafor and her family at her confirmation*



*Campus ministry students with Victor Fabritz-Lugo at his confirmation*

My confirmation saint is St. Monica, mother of St. Augustine of Hippo. Many people know of her, but I truly came to know her in the months leading up to my confirmation. She had a big heart and a persevering spirit. She helped me see the joy in my own suffering and how the joy after persevering outweighs whatever heartaches we have encountered. She ultimately helped me to see the heart of the Father--the One who never leaves us without His mercy; the Father who continues to love us and chase after our hearts. In moments where I wanted to give up on people, projects, or myself, the Lord showed me, through St. Monica's example, what it means to remain steadfast and wait patiently. Because we live in a fallen world, now and again, we will sin. But when we sin, let us come to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who can heal us--the Divine Healer.

My journey would not be complete without my various Catholic communities, who helped me prepare in many ways for this glorious day. In many ways, the Catholic community at Howard University is like the early church. Few in numbers but great in spirit. We have embodied the calling of true discipleship and carried out this vocation with the help of our chaplain and campus ministers. Although the work is just beginning, we know we only need to bring the bread and fish, and God will multiply and do the rest.



Above: Howard students participate in the Archdiocesan Chrism Mass with Cardinal Gregory.  
Below: Palm Sunday Mass with St. Augustine Church.



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*Exploring/deepening my faith and actively participating in Sunday Mass with this group have helped me have a better relationship with the Lord.*



Holy Thursday pilgrimage visiting altars of repose at Immaculate Conception Church (above) and St. Matthew's Cathedral (right).



## *Walking With Jesus During Holy Week*

By Adanna Okafor, '24



During the Spring 2022 semester, HU Bison Catholic had a full Holy Week. St. Augustine Catholic Church welcomed us to participate in their liturgies as well. From Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, the Church meditated on the passion of Christ and His eternal love for us.

The first day of the Lenten season, Ash Wednesday, brought called us to penance and fasting as we sacrificed for the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert. On Good Friday, we joined the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel's Seven Last Words Service, the last seven statements made by Christ while he hung upon the cross. Several members of HU Bison Catholic participated in this ecumenical service, sharing their creativity and talents. Afterward, we prayed the Station of the Cross on the Yard, retracing the final moments of Jesus' last day on earth. It was great to have Dean Bernard Richardson join us along with other students from the Chapel.

My time at HU Bison Catholic this past school year has been amazing! Exploring and deepening my faith and actively participating in Sunday Mass with this group have helped me deepen my relationship with the Lord. From learning more about the sacraments during the fellowship to visiting the Franciscan Monastery and the National Shrine, I have been able to know more about different Catholic saints that have impacted how I view and live out my personal relationship with God.

# Holy Week cont.



Above/Below: Good Friday Stations of the Cross



Above: Easter Vigil Mass at St. Augustine  
Below: Franciscan Monastery Pilgrimage



Above/Below: Easter Sunday Brunch, Howard Towers



## Congrats to our 2022-2023 Executive Board!



**Elei Nkata, '25**  
Co-President



**Miles Lee, '24**  
Co-President



**Jacob Bryant '25**  
Liturgy



**Giannina Daniels-Lajon, 25**  
Communications



**Adanna Okafor, '24**  
Hospitality/Outreach



**Victor Fabritz-Lugo, 25**  
Music



**Christiana Bennet, 24**  
Community Service

# Seminarian Farewell



Anthony May  
(Diocese of Raleigh)



Jessiah Rojas  
(Archdiocese of Washington)

This past year, we were blessed to have several seminarians as part of our ministry. Two of them, Anthony May (Raleigh) and Jessiah Rojas (Washington), will be moving on to continue their theological studies. Anthony, who graduated this Spring from CUA with a license in Philosophy (Ph.L) will attend St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, FL, while Jessiah will attend Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmittsburg, MD.



Fr. Boxie, Jessiah Rojas, Bro. Cursey Calais, SSJ, and Anthony May, at the 2022 Black History Month Mass, St. Matthew's Cathedral.

## THANK YOU

for your service & dedication to our ministry and your YES to God's call to serve his Church.

Let's keep these men in our prayers and to pray for more vocations to the priesthood and religious life from our community.

*Venerable Fr. Augustus Tolton...pray for us.*



Seminarian Jessiah Rojas served as the confirmation sponsor for Victor Fabritz-Lugo, '25.



Seminarian Anthony May leading a Thursday night fellowship with a lively discussion on Angels.



## Chaplain's Corner: Responding to the Faith

*Fr. Robert P. Boxie, III*

The enthusiasm from the Fall semester propelled us into a full and fruitful Spring semester. HU Bison Catholic began the new year showing our school spirit at the Howard-Notre Dame Men's basketball game. We also made a trip to the Kennedy Center to see the Alvin Ailey Dancers. Our students even participated in Archdiocesan Masses (MLK, Black History Month, and the Chrism Mass with Cardinal Gregory), and collaborated with other student organizations on campus for ecumenical events. We co-sponsored a successful inter-university lecture at Catholic University with Fr. Manuel Williams on the wisdom of Sr. Thea Bowman, and we joined with the University of Maryland Catholic Student Center for our Spring Retreat.



*Celebrating Mass at the Franciscan Monastery*

I'm grateful for the season of Lent, which gave us the opportunity to grow closer to the Lord and to one another. We provided Mass on Thursdays during Lent and Stations of the Cross on the Yard. (Dean Richardson participated with us on during the Stations). We joined St. Augustine Catholic Church for their Holy Week liturgies, which was capped off by two of our Bison Catholics (Stephanie Okafor '23 and Victor Fabritz-Lugo, '25) receiving Confirmation at the Easter Vigil—a sign of the health of our ministry. I want to personally thank the Sister Servants of the Lord for leading our RCIA program and preparing our students.

*"Our ministry is growing. We are empowering our students to take ownership of their faith, and they are responding."*

As you can see, we are providing our students with opportunities to deepen their faith and to realize that they are a part of something much bigger than themselves, all the while building solid relationships and having fun at the same time. This the work of evangelization, and we are committed to serving the whole person. I'm especially looking forward to this upcoming school year with our solid leadership team, led by Miles Lee ('24) and Elei Nkata ('25) as co-presidents to usher us into the 75th year of Catholic ministry at Howard University.

Our ministry is growing. We are empowering our students to take ownership of their faith, and they are responding. Continue to pray for and support our efforts to strengthen the Catholic presence at Howard University.



*2022 Spring Retreat*