



## *For the Glory of the Father*

The series *For the Glory of the Father* began as an idea among a few of us seminarians.

It was late August 2020 and the beginning of a new semester amidst Covid-19. We were trying to make sense of having an in-person semester in seminary unlike the previous spring when we were sent home with online coursework. Also, we were concerned about a semester without ministries in parishes, hospitals, and homeless shelters.

"What's this year going to be like?" was a question that everyone asked themselves to begin the fall semester.

I asked Brendan Foley, Luke Dagher and Brian Norris—"What if we did a video series on the stained-glass windows in our chapel and published them on YouTube? We've all done a little video work before. We love *Word on Fire* and the work that they produce. Let's go for it."

"Sure."

"Not a bad idea."

"Let's do it."

In hindsight, after the hundreds of hours of gathering footage, brainstorming, scheduling presenters, editing, learning through trial and error, researching video angles, meetings to discuss the styles of videos, etc.—we had no idea what we were getting ourselves into. Sometimes those are the most worthwhile projects.

Although it first began as a simple idea, we quickly realized that the project had a unique opportunity: during a year when no one from the outside could enter the seminary—we could reach others. We quickly realized that the release of this video series could be during the months of February and March 2021. A potentially difficult time for people during a pandemic, the heart of winter and limited social interactions.

Nothing motivated us more than this basic goal: reaching people during an extremely difficult time.

It was that simple – this quickly became mission work.

We presented the idea to our rector, Fr. Brown, at the beginning of September and the idea was well received.

We created a Chapel Video Project team consisting of six seminarians: Brendan Foley (Diocese of Syracuse), Luke Dagher (Diocese of Erie), Brian Norris (Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown), James Gebhart (Diocese of Wilmington), Jon Callahan (Diocese of Buffalo) and me (Ben Dagher—Diocese of Erie).

We looked at our skill set, equipment, gathered ideas and developed a game plan. We also looked at high quality videos from *Word on Fire* and other Catholic ministries. We analyzed their videos: lighting, angles, audio, style, intended audience, length, etc.

I remember one night during the month of September when papers and tests were piling up and a few of us were in a classroom watching trailers of Bishop Robert Barron's series. We were analyzing each video: "I like that." "No, we can't do that angle because we don't have the equipment." "I think we should do it this way."

Those were awesome moments because we grew as a team.

I also remember our first test run in the Chapel. We had one question yet to be answered: “What about the lighting?” We just didn’t have the right lighting to make the video look professional.

One of our guys met with our maintenance staff at the seminary. They directed us to some painter’s lights in a closet. We were missing height though. The angle just wasn’t right. So, we went to our seminary hangout space and grabbed some stand up tables. Problem solved. We brought the stand-up tables into the chapel and placed the painter’s lights on top of them. Also, we grabbed some music stands and used those to level our iPhones for video angles. We had a sufficient setup—no one would know the difference except us. It doesn’t get any better than that.

We also needed a title for the video series. *For the Glory of the Father* comes from a prayer that we say together every Monday morning by Fr. Jean-Jacques Olier, the founder of the Sulpicians. Quickly synthesizing, the prayer asks Jesus: *come and live in your servants—for the glory of the Father*. We believe this prayer strikes at the heart of our chapel seen in Jesus Christ the High Priest and the overall mission of our seminary.

In hindsight, we simply looked at what we had and made the most of it: prayer, a vision, iPhones, iMovie, creativity, community and a seminary faculty and staff guiding us along the way. We had a unique vision too: something produced by seminarians without a budget. We almost achieved the no-budget goal, but one expense became necessary: copyright on music.

We began analyzing the chapel, seeing what natural layout it could provide for our video series: Christ the High Priest, stained-glass windows, murals, images of the priesthood, the sacraments and the beauty of the sun’s rays. We also knew that we needed to incorporate the liturgical life in the seminary and our seminary community.

The question quickly became, “How could we show not only the beauty of our chapel but also the life of our community?”

The solution was simple - spiritual reflections from seminarians, priests, and our archbishop. This approach was powerful, intellectual, spiritual, and provided a perspective into the seminary that could extend beyond mere architecture. In fact, it could show the depth of prayer and discernment. Rarely, can one find videos on prayer, discernment, creativity, and reflection from seminarians. We think this series presents a both-and: both the spiritual depths of our seminarians and the sheer beauty of the chapel.

In gathering the footage for this series, we learned a tremendous amount about our chapel and the seminary community. We watched as our brothers discerned, prepared, and presented on the spiritual significance of windows that we have all looked at thousands of times. We also listened to our priests provide in-depth reflections on the meaning of the priesthood.

It should be noted that several seminarians outside of our Chapel Video Project team assisted us along the way. First, Yen Tran (Archdiocese of Louisville) provided a remarkable insight into *B-roll*. This word means any footage which is supplemental or alternative to the main speaker. Yen’s talents and insights are impossible to miss in our project.

Also, we implemented a review team for our series. Mike Misulia (Archdiocese of Baltimore), Scott Kady (Archdiocese of Baltimore) and Mark Donahue (Diocese of Wilmington) reviewed our videos and provided feedback concerning angles, audio, font, lighting, the general feel, and much more. Their feedback was crucial.

Our team would also like to acknowledge the role of Betty Visconage, Senior Vice President of Administration and Advancement at St. Mary’s Seminary & University. Her positivity, creativity and commitment could not be overstated. Her immediate, detailed feedback has allowed for this project to meet its deadline—to reach people during these difficult months of February and March.

We also cannot overlook the quiet, behind the scenes work of Fr. Paul Maillet, Fr. Gladstone Stevens and Dr. Bill Scalia. They reviewed reflections, provided feedback and sharpened presentations through their insights and perspectives.

Our team would also like to mention that Fr. Phillip Brown's commitment was essential to this project. He quickly directed us to faculty who could help guide and enhance this video series.

I've been asked a few times, "What motivated you to pose the question to your friends at the start of the 2020 semester, 'What if we did a video series on the stained-glass windows in our chapel?'" It's a difficult question to answer.

I will say this much: the summer of 2020 was powerful for me. I had a parish assignment with Msgr. Richard Siefer at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Dubois, Pennsylvania. We rolled out a video series on how St. Catherine of Siena grew in holiness despite living through waves of the Bubonic Plague. Although Msgr. Siefer didn't regularly use video, he replied "Sure. Let's go for it" when I asked him if we could produce a series. Then later that summer, my brother (Luke Dagher) and I worked with our hometown parish in St. Marys, Pennsylvania on a video series on the stained-glass windows. We worked with our parish priest, Fr. Peter Augustine Pierjok, O.S.B., who also didn't regularly use technology in this manner. He also responded "Sure. I think it's a good idea." I have deep respect for these two priests who are both approaching retirement in their respective vocations.

I think many people see a disconnect between generations in this rapidly changing digital age. They might be right. Personally, I've seen a lot more synergy at work rather than disconnect.

Something tells me that's the work of the Spirit. The same Spirit who guides us through Jesus Christ the High Priest to live *For the Glory of the Father*.

Ben Dagher  
Diocese of Erie  
3<sup>rd</sup> Theology