

The Gift of St. John's Draft III

June 24, 2022

How to say Thank You for this honor? I think everyone who imbibed the spirit of this place and follows through on what they have learned would be in this limelight if someone recommended him or her. It is the essence of St. John's to respond to what is set before us. St. Vincent de Paul used to say, "Be open to what God lets you see"

Actually, what pushed me to say yes to receiving this honor, was the opportunity it presented me to come back to a place revered in my memory.

I've written this response many times in my head and three times on paper. I'll share one specific memory with you from my time here. It is a memory of an impromptu panel of three professors, Richard Dillon, the Scripture scholar, Carl Peter, a systematics professor and Bp. [now] Joseph Charron. I don't even remember the topic, but it was an aspect of the Church we students wanted to hear more about from their areas of expertise. When the allotted time was up, we were returning to the dorm and I could not go into a building. I could not tolerate walls and a roof. I felt like I would suffocate. I needed to go for a walk in the open air. I had been exposed to so much knowledge, from various languages, from those three distinct disciplines. Then I thought, they were only three, imagine how much knowledge is in the world. And then the deeper insight: What must the knowledge of God be like. The mystery in which we dwell.

It is difficult to show depth of gratitude. Words don't do it. What occurred to me was an analogy. Have you ever visited a couple who have a toddler who has never seen you before? You bend down to say hello, smile, maybe touch his or her hand and are rewarded with a shy smile? Conversation with the adults focuses and includes, for a bit, this new person, who seems to like the attention. But the toddler- maybe two or three- runs off and the adults continue to talk and move to comfortable chairs. Before too long, the child returns with his or her best/ favorite toy. She or he comes right to you, flashes the brightest of smiles and shares the toy. Tonight I share the whole toy box!

Thank you so much for bringing me back to a place that is a treasured part of my life for all I have received here.