

Donor Impact Report

Recognizing Bill McEssy

May 2024



**MUNDELEIN
SEMINARY**

*University of
Saint Mary of the Lake*

A Message from Fr. Kartje


Dear Friends,

While I was certainly familiar with the McEssy name when I was assigned to teach at Mundelein in 2013, I did not have the privilege of meeting Bill until I was appointed rector in 2015, when he was serving as the Chair of the Board of Advisors. Over the past 9 years I have continually been humbled and amazed by the passion and fervor with which Bill has supported the mission of the seminary—to form parish priests—and he has been doing it since long before I arrived.

In the pages of this booklet you'll see beautiful witnesses to Bill's support memorialized in stone and scholarship: the McEssy Theological Resource Center, Mundelein Hall (containing the Welcome Center and Bookstore), the Belvedere renovations, the reconstructed Bridge One which you cross as you approach the seminary buildings and the beautifully landscaped sign that greets you on the other side, the Cardinal's Villa renovations, a Chair in Biblical Studies, and the McEssy Seminarian Scholarships, to name but a few.

What you may not fully appreciate, however, is the wisdom and guidance that Bill has provided to me and my predecessors in the Rector's Office. I vividly recall one of my first conversations with Bill when, as Board Chair, he emphatically told me: "You need a professional COO, not just a well-meaning priest!" I took that advice to heart and have never regretted it. That is just one example of how Bill has positively influenced the seminary far beyond the building projects he has helped us complete.

So to Bill I say: Enjoy this well-deserved, and long overdue, day of gratitude and celebration. I know that I, and the hundreds of priests across the world that you have helped to form, are deeply grateful. God bless you and your family for years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rev. John Kartje". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. John Kartje
Rector/President

The McEssy Touch

Visitors to Mundelein respond to the transforming power of the campus as soon as they enter the gate. *The original entrance and drive to the campus center quietly invites visitors to “come and see” where the Master dwells.* Long deferred repairs to the “old” bridge have renewed its functionality as a welcoming main entrance to the grounds surrounding the lake. *The dual piers of the belvedere open like arms to welcome all* while connoting an atmosphere of dignity, serenity, and grace.





Turning on to Principal Avenue, lined with Dutch Elms reminiscent of the earliest days of Mundelein, brings visitors to the center of the grounds that include *Memorial Gardens dedicated to the spirit and virtues of the late Francis Cardinal George*, a walking path set with the stations of the cross, and *a grotto recollecting the apparition of Mary to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes*, the obelisk/statue of Mary of the Immaculate Conception, *the dignified Church of the Immaculate Conception*, and the main buildings: the nexus of daily life for those who call this place home. Second configuration seminarian Michael James, who is preparing to serve the Syro-Malabar Catholic Community, is drawn to the Stations of the Cross in the memorial gardens because, “Cardinal George’s life and teachings provided a living example of Christ-like humility, compassion, and dedication to others.”





Adjacent to the church, the spiritual center of Mundelein, *stands its intellectual center: the Feehan Memorial Library and McEssy Theological Resource Center.* They contain a rich repository of theological scholarship that students and visitors access in their studies.

Connecting the church and the McEssy Center lies a simple yet elegant fountain and garden containing a statue of St. Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower.

In deep mid-winter quiet descends over the campus. The rose bushes are bare of the rich colors of leaf and bloom. Someone eager to get out of the cold and into the dining hall to enjoy the warm camaraderie of a shared meal might overlook her image in the courtyard outside the chapel, gazing heavenward in her mantle and veil, her upward gaze connoting her choice of the “Little Way” of service to the Lord. But Christian Garcia, a third configuration student preparing for ordination to the Diaconate for the Archdiocese of Chicago this spring, *does not pass St. Therese without courteous regard and a quick prayer*. Cristian learned through experience, including a hiatus from formation, to embrace the “little way” of self-effacement that yields, like the roses that surround her in the spring, a reminder of the beauty of Divine Love.

St. Therese’s Garden connects the Church to the Library and Theology Resource Center, thereby joining the dual foci of seminary formation: prayer and study. Luke Lato, of the Configuration 1 cohort for the Archdiocese of Chicago, intuitively felt this connection when he first visited the building and felt “wonder and awe” at the riches the building contains.

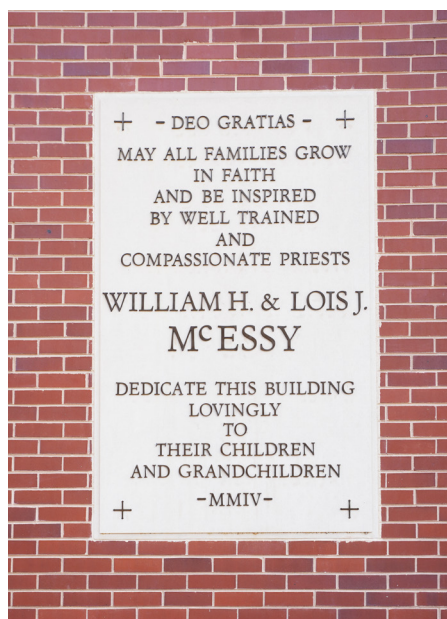


From the beginning of his studies, Luke was drawn to the MTRC by the display of the two historic monstresances that visually connect the two buildings, as the sacred merges beautifully with the scholarly, just as St. Therese, whom Luke calls “One of my closest Saint Friends,” brings the outside inside. This juxtaposition of inside and outside, of saintly and scholarly inspired Luke to produce his own colorful image of the Blessed Mother.

At every turn on the road from old gate over the old bridge, beneath the elms on Principal Avenue, past the lake and its gardens, the grotto and the stations, to the bicameral heart of Mundelein, *prayers of thanksgiving and gratitude bless unawares the names of*

William and Lois McEssy, whose largesse and commitment have been an inestimable gift to those who call Mundelein their “Alma Mater,” that is, Nourishing Mother. The McEssy’s continue to enrich the physical, intellectual, and spiritual lives of those men who rise to the challenge of bringing Christ to others as parish priests. Their recent endowment of the McEssy Distinguished Visiting Professorship of Biblical Theology and New Evangelization, and academic scholarships to provide more students access to the preeminent formation program for both priests and lay ministers benefits all the People of God. We are confident that Christ will bless them abundantly since we can never thank them enough.

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McEssy Campus Impact

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|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| A. Cardinal George Memorial Garden | G. Belvedere Towers |
| B. McEssy Theological Resource Center | H. Repaving of Principal Avenue |
| C. St. Therese Garden and Statue | I. Welcome Signage |
| D. Mundelein Hall Renovation | J. Bridge One |
| E. Campus Wayfinding Signage | K. Elm Trees Lining Principal Avenue |
| F. Mall Reconstruction | |

