

Serenity and Peace: Collegeville Retreat

Logan Lintvedt

Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca

Seneca's words resonate with me on a deeper level when I reflect on them at this moment of my life. Following one of the biggest milestones in my life's journey thus far, I have chosen to do something bigger than myself. The end of my Saint John's University tenure is leading me to an excursion across the world in Tororo, Uganda—beginning a journey that I expect will shape who I am for the rest of my life.

Immediately following graduation, the 2021–2022 chapter of the Benedictine Volunteer Corps (BVC) began their service experience by living on the Saint John's campus for two weeks. Initially I mused, “Really? We just graduated, and now we have to spend *more* time at this place?” I now regret that thought because our retreat was truly an occasion to slow down, move beyond the hustle and disarray that describes the life of a 21-year-old college student, and explore the many facets of Saint John's that were not part of our undergraduate experience. Each day of the retreat, I found myself looking around the quiet campus that was once so lively, and



Benedictine Volunteer Corps, 2021–2022

appreciating those elements that I took for granted: the riveting history that resonates in the abbey church and on campus; the abbey arboretum and its vast beauty; and of course, the people who make this place what it is. We truly do not appreciate something to its full extent until it is gone, right? Graduation seemed so far away when I was a freshman in 2017, but now, as a 2021 graduate, I cannot help but marvel at where the time went—even as I long to relive so many things!

Our daily regiment was extensive and structured with numerous activities to prepare us for our year of service. Each day would begin with prayer, followed by volunteer work around the campus. The work ranged from detailing cars (to raise money for the BVC), to planting trees in the

back to the place that I feel I can never fully repay.

Following our work periods, we would gather as a community—Benedictine monks and Benedictine Volunteers—and enjoy lunch in the monastic refectory. During these dining moments, the volunteers had the opportunity to sit down with various members of the monastic community to ask questions and get to know the monks on a deeper, more personal level. After lunch, the volunteers had three hours to do as they pleased. Activities ranged from spike ball to leisure on the beach overlooking Lake Sagatagan. Whatever the activity, each was another way to get to know our fellow Benedictine Volunteers and bond with each other. This was important because, although we were college classmates, we had not necessarily had many personal interactions with one another until the retreat.

After our free time, much of our day was spent with the monks. In addition to a daily class with a monk, reviewing a particular topic such as the *Rule* of Benedict, we would join the monastic community for Mass, dinner, and more prayer. We also had the opportunity to meet individual monks and hear their life's story—engaging in thoughtful dialogue, whether religious-based or about the monk's upbringing and interests. I can speak on behalf of my fellow volunteers in saying this was the favorite activity

for memorable moments during the retreat. These gatherings were remarkable in every regard and gave each of us different perspectives on the monks and why they chose this way of living. Moments such as these were not possible during our college years; I will not forget the intimate exchange with the monks because of that.

Throughout the two-week BVC retreat, the twenty-two volunteers had so many opportunities that other students missed: learning and praying with the monastic community every day. This kind of experience on the Saint John's campus made my college experience so much more delightful and fulfilling! While the retreat was unlike anything I have ever experienced, the aspect I enjoyed most was the peace and serenity at Saint John's that

we encountered throughout the two weeks.

The only way to say goodbye to a place one loves and adores is to immerse oneself in it and all it has to offer. And that was what the retreat provided for all the Benedictine Volunteers. I left Saint John's feeling more educated and more prepared for the journey of service that we Johnnies are about to undertake. I am thankful to Saint John's for so many reasons, but especially grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the BVC and to spend a year working across the world. It will be the most “Johnnie” thing I can ever do.

Mr. Logan Lintvedt, an elementary education major, graduated from Saint John's University in 2021.



Work periods included caring for the abbey cemetery.

The Benedictine Volunteer Corps (BVC) of Saint John's Abbey exists to provide a year of volunteer service for graduates of Saint John's University at a monastery of the Benedictine Confederation, supporting the work, prayer, and life of Benedictine monasteries around the world. Since its founding in 2003, the BVC has sent more than two-hundred-fifty men to twenty-six Benedictine communities.