

Two men receive habits, names during investiture

By Emily Woodham
Staff Writer

Becoming a religious brother was not something Miguel Ayala or Corey Miller had considered as they were growing up. Now, they can't fathom anything else other than being part of the Verbum Spei ("Word of Hope") fraternity.

The young men received their habits and religious names during an investiture on Jan. 9 at Our Lady of Ephesus Monastery in Boise with nearly 200 family and friends attending. Ayala is now Brother Mary David and Miller is Brother John Francis.

Verbum Spei has established a monastery, Our Lady of Ephesus, at the former Nazareth Retreat Center in Boise.

Father Wandrille Sevin, VS, superior of the worldwide Verbum Spei fraternity, travelled from his monastery in Luxemburg for the occasion. Celebrating the Mass with Father Sevin were Father Dominique Faure, VS, Father Johannes Kamphuis, VS, Father John Christopher Vivier, VS, and Father Roger LaChance, a retired priest of the Diocese of Boise. The investiture ceremony followed the Mass.

"I think one of the aspects of why being in community is important to me is because it's like a family and we're all children of God," Brother John Francis said. "So we're together helping each other become more and more like children of God, praying for each other, studying and helping each other grow."

"We all have a personal relationship with Christ, but we're all a family of Christ," Brother John Francis said, quoting from Matthew 12:50, "Whoever does the will of my Father is my brother and my mother and my sister."

"There's this aspect of loving the Body of Christ through my brothers. So it allows me to exercise fraternal charity," he said.

"Community is something that I didn't discover until living here," Brother Mary David said. "The brothers inspire me to push further in seeing how they live. I think that's what honestly captivated me when I first joined – to see how they were so fervent in their search for Christ."

"Being in community helps me really live my faith versus it being in my head. Our brothers help me incarnate that love for Jesus," Brother Mary David said.

The young men discovered Verbum Spei in August of 2020. Both began attending classes at the rectory of the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Boise taught by Father Faure, who is the prior of the monastery.

Brother Mary David grew up in Buhl. He moved to Boise in 2012 to attend Boise State and became involved in the campus ministry there, Bronco Catholic. His faith was reawakened from this involvement at Bronco Catholic and FirePit, another young adult ministry. After graduating from BSU in 2017, he became a graphic designer while continuing his involvement with FirePit. That ministry eventually led him to the Verbum Spei metaphysics

classes.

"I've always loved to learn about our faith," Brother Mary David said. "It's something that always intrigued me. Coming to the classes, I felt like I plunged into really profound things, little by little. I couldn't go back to not knowing." The more he learned, the more he wanted to live the monastic life of the Verbum Spei brothers.

While Brother John Francis was a senior in high school in Montana, a deepening of his faith led him to consider priesthood. After he graduated from high school, he moved with his family to Lewiston where he met the parochial vicar at All Saints Parish, Father Nathan Dail, who also is the vocations director for the Diocese of Boise. (Father Dail has since relocated to Boise to be the chaplain at St. Paul's Student Center at Boise State.)

Father Dail encouraged Brother John Francis to discern his call while living in community with Verbum Spei. He came to Boise in August of 2020. He spent two months in Fruitland with Father Camilo Garcia to discern diocesan priesthood, but eventually decided to pursue either monastic life or priesthood with the Verbum Spei community.

In January of 2021, Brother John Francis and Brother Mary David entered the "School of Life" at Verbum Spei, a program for men to live with the Brothers in community while discerning their vocation. Four months later, they became postulants. In July, they became novices. The novitiate lasts for 18 months. However, the last week's investiture, when they receive their habits and religious names, occurs after the first six months of the novitiate. In a year, they will make their temporary vows.

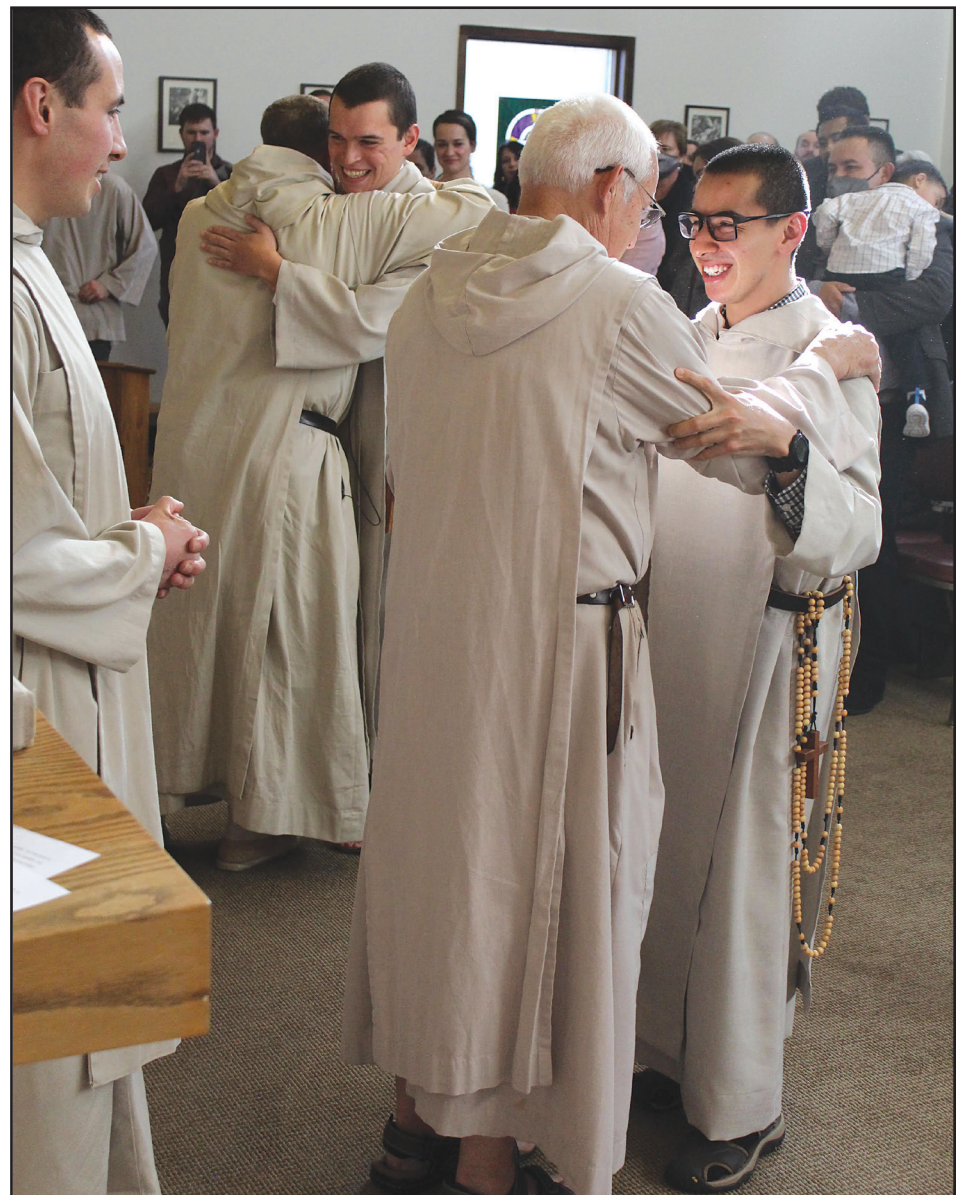
During his homily, Father Sevin described the habit the men received as an "exterior sign of something interior – your heart is carrying within it a deep secret, with an unspeakable love," Father Sevin said. "You met Jesus Christ and you want to give your entire life to Him."

Father Sevin explained the tension of the Greek verb, "lambano," which St. John uses in his Gospel frequently to describe the "receiving" and "taking" that happened particularly when Jesus gave Mary and John to one another as Mother and son. "Lambano" has no equivalent in English and can be translated both "to receive" and "to take," Father Sevin said.

"St. Thomas Aquinas said if you don't take and use the gift given to you, you reduce the gift, you don't honor the gift. To receive well, we have to take it," he said.

"To receive well the Virgin Mary as a mother, you have to take her in your life like St. John, as she is. You have to live like a son. You have to cooperate, to choose her, truly, you can't receive her only passively. Everything changes when you receive Mary in your life," he said. The habit the Brothers receive is the sign of that reality, he said.

Like the habit the brothers received, the names that are chosen for them also have significance. Brother John



Above, Brother Mary David Ayala, kneels to receive with great joy his habit from Brother Jonathan Kilkelly, left, and Father Dominique Faure, right, during the investiture ceremony at the Monastery of Our Lady of Ephesus in Boise.

Below, Brother John Francis Miller, left, is embraced by the superior of the worldwide Verbum Spei fraternity, Father Wandrille Sevin, VS. On the right, Brother Mary David is congratulated by Father Faure, who is the prior of the monastery. (ICR photos/Emily Woodham)

Francis was given John from St. John the Evangelist and Francis from St. Francis of Assisi. Brother Mary David was named for the Blessed Virgin Mary and King David of the Old Testament.

Our Lady of Ephesus Monastery offers Mass, the Daily Office, Adoration and intercessory prayer each day to the entire Catholic community. The priests

and brothers there also offer frequent classes and retreats.

"At Verbum Spei, we really try to offer to those who wish to have it, the contemplative light, the light coming from Christ," said the prior, Father Faure.

For more information about Our Lady of Ephesus and Verbum Spei, go to vsboise.org.