



UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTRE DAME

ARTS & LETTERS



# 2022

## SENIOR THESIS PROJECTS

Study everything. Do anything.<sup>SM</sup>

**Lucia Chang**

- Majors: Biochemistry and Theology
- Minor: Catholic Social Tradition
- Advisor: John Betz

## A Divine Remedy: Restoration through Humility

At the start of creation, God created human beings from the ground, which shares the same root as humility. Soon after, pride distorted human's nature. Yet, with humility, Christ, as the new Adam, redeemed human nature. This project examined how the great Saints imitated Christ and cultivated humility through love and dependence on God. Further, it examined how people in the modern day can rediscover their true self through humility and better love God and others.

Humility and love are two important virtues that have appeared constantly in my academic endeavor in theology and have guided my spiritual journey to be more open to God's grace. I hoped that through learning more about them, I could better appreciate and celebrate everyone's gift from God.



### John Consolie

- Majors: Theology and Arabic
- Minor: Philosophy, Religion, and Literature
- Advisor: Kimberly Belcher

## Our Sure Foundation — An Ecumenical View on Liturgy and Ministry

I identified points of unity and disunity in how “traditionalist” and “mainline” liturgical communities in parishes enact ministry in individual formation, family formation, and ministry outside the parish. I attended Eucharist at an Episcopal parish in downtown Detroit, Michigan, and had conversations with the rector of the parish.

Through ethnographic studies in Episcopal parishes, I identified the fruits from liturgy in these ministries, compared them to their Roman Catholic counterpart, and offered an ecumenical exhortation to come together despite liturgical differences to minister to God’s children and broader society.

I have witnessed both large-scale and personally how the Christian faithful’s reception of certain forms of liturgical celebrations and the denominations from which they come actively divide people both inter- and intra-denominationally. This thesis attempted to point to the fruit of both liturgies in ministry and exhort Christians to reconciliation among ourselves.

*Traveled to Detroit, Michigan.*

**Patrick Gouker**

- Majors: Theology and French
- Minor: Philosophy
- Advisor: Rev. Kevin Grove, C.S.C.

**Candlemas**

My thesis is a historical, liturgical, and critical study of Candlemas. It offers a perspective on what liturgy should be and how liturgy, properly celebrated, should convey a theology which is complete — meaning one that presents all theological foci of a feast, even when they seem contradictory or in tension with one another.

I began to think about this project in 2020 because I served as the master of ceremonies for a liturgy according to these ancient rubrics. Not only was the Mass stunningly beautiful, but the reactions of those who participated in the liturgy made me curious about the unique rituals I had witnessed.

**Katie Lucenko**

- Majors: Biological Sciences and Theology
- Advisor: Gerald McKenny

## Contraception in Catholic Clinical Ethics

In my thesis, I discussed the Catholic Church's teaching on contraception and presented nuances that are important to authentically understand her teaching. I also discussed how the papal encyclical of St. Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, contributes to the Church's understanding of the purposes of marriage. Additionally, in light of *Humanae Vitae*, I analyzed complicated bioethical scenarios related to the use of contraception by Catholic hospitals and physicians.

My thesis has allowed me to explore questions in clinical ethics from a theological perspective and aligns well with my personal and academic interests. It also highlighted the importance of bringing faith into conversation with scientific practice, which has long been interesting and important to me.



### Mary Mueller

- Major: Theology
- Minors: Philosophy, Studio Art, and Catholic Social Teaching (CST)
- Advisor: Ann Astell

## Fear of the Lord in Julian of Norwich and Sirach

In the Book of Sirach, fear of the Lord is seen as an act of seeking toward the wisdom, which underlies the whole created order, and personified Wisdom Herself that gives wisdom to those who seek her. Julian of Norwich recovers Sirach's fear of the Lord that is a deep awe that longs toward Christ, who is the wisdom of the Trinity and who reveals the wisdom of His cross, which is overwhelming, undeniable love.

I chose this project because I saw that there was a common misconception of fear of the Lord. It is a virtue that allows one to see the beauty of the cross which was, ultimately, the greatest gift that the Catholic faith has ever revealed to me. An offshoot of my thesis will be my Catholic social teaching capstone, which will be on the ethics of Sirach and how fear of the Lord underlies Catholic social teaching discipline.





### **Maria Sermersheim**

- Major: Theology
- Advisor: Nathan Eubank

## **Exegesis of the Wedding at Cana**

Writing an exegesis of the wedding at Cana, I tried to synthesize interpretations of the passage throughout history and to deduce and explain the most important message of the passage. Many prominent commentators over the past century have called for a renewal of exegesis, such that the literary investigation is lively and fruitful for the spiritual life beyond mere academic conjecture. I attempted to write an exegesis in this vein, keeping everything in the key of John 2:11.

I credit my thinking about the renewal of exegesis and about the wedding at Cana to a favorite theologian of mine — Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Additionally, I will be joining the Master's in Theological Studies program in the biblical concentration next year, so the three combined well for a very relevant topic.

**Francine Shaft**

- Majors: Theology and Japanese
- Glynn Family Honors Program
- Suzanne and Walter Scott Merit Scholars Program
- Advisor: Trent Pomplun

**Mizuko Kuyō: Abortion Ethics, Jizo Bodhisattva, and a Response to LaFleur**

My thesis gave an account of the history of Buddhism in Japan, the evolution of Jizō Bodhisattva in China and Japan, and Buddhist abortion ethics in order to critique William LaFleur's depiction of the mizuko kuyō ritual in *Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan*.

I chose to study the mizuko kuyō ritual because it allowed me to synthesize my interests in theology, Japanese history and culture, and abortion. I also chose this topic because I am interested in how non-Western cultures and non-Christian religions approach the abortion issue. I planned to travel to Japan to visit temples that perform mizuko kuyō and potentially conduct interviews. Instead, due to the pandemic, I leaned into the historical aspects of the project.



**Teddy Whiteman**

- Majors: Theology and Philosophy
- Advisor: Todd Walatka

## Modern Ecumenical Theology Through the Writings of Ratzinger and Pope Francis

The project attempted to concretize the Church's promulgated ecumenical theology through three steps: an analysis of the ecumenical theology in the texts of Vatican II, Joseph Ratzinger's own ecumenical emphases, and Pope Francis' own ecumenical emphases. Ecumenical theology seems particularly applicable to young Catholics today who struggle with knowing how to relate to those of different Christian communities.

