



The Serra Club of Arlington
Minutes for Friday 10 May 2024 | Luncheon Meeting
The Portofino Restaurant | Arlington, Virginia



GUEST SPEAKER – FATHER RICHARD NICHOLS SJ, CHAPLAIN AT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL WASHINGTON, DC

Within the first century since the death of their founder St. Ignatius Loyola, the Society of Jesus sent countless martyrs on mission to the furthest points of the world. Not the least among these heroic missionaries was the Reverend Father Andrew White SJ, who on March 25, 1634 landed on Saint Clement’s Island in the Chesapeake Bay to offer the first Mass within the Palatinate of Maryland.

Father Nichols SJ continues this great Jesuit tradition by birthright as well as by education. Father Richard Nichols SJ hails from Baltimore, where Bishop John Carroll established the First See of the United States. Having followed the exacting discipline of a chorister at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Father Nichols continued his Jesuit education, first at Loyola Blakefield in Towson, MD, then at Boston College for his undergraduate studies in Mathematics. Commissioned as a Submarine Officer in the U. S. Navy upon graduating, Father Nichols later discerned his vocation to the Sacred Priesthood in Washington DC.

After entering the Society of Jesus Novitiate in 2008, Father Nichols earned a Master’s degree in Philosophy from Saint Louis University. Father served as a Mathematics instructor and Chaplain to the Athletics Department at Gonzaga College Prep School in Washington DC. Father later earned a Licentiate in Sacred Theology at Boston College. While serving as Deacon at St. Anthony Church in Oceanside, NY, Father volunteered at Calvary Hospital, Bronx, NY and studied Latin under Father Reginald Foster. Father completed clinical pastoral education at the renowned Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston, and continued to serve as Chaplain at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital.

Many Catholics in the Washington Metro area have been blessed by Father Nichols in his daily ministry at Georgetown, and in his local ministry of offering the *usus antiquior* Mass with great devotion and attention to the rubrics. Likewise, we have received many graces from his gifts for preaching, singing, and teaching. Today the Serra Club of Arlington is privileged to welcome Father Nichols as our special guest speaker for this month devoted to the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Highlights: Father Nichols summarized his path to priesthood, his moments of discernment and various experiences eventually bringing him Georgetown University Hospital. In no particular order:

Richard Nichols grew up singing in the choir at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Baltimore. Worked hard as a choir boy earning \$8 per month as a “pale blue ribbon” choir boy.

His first encounter with the Jesuits occurred during seventh grade at Loyola Blakefield in Towson, Maryland. He was in church “all the time.” Found inspiration through St Ignatius.

Later, he continued his studies alongside the Jesuits at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Before entering the seminary, Father Nichols served in the U.S. Navy aboard a nuclear submarine. His experiences in the Navy shaped his path toward priesthood. While in the Navy, he became interested in the monastic life and contemplated the life of a monk.

He reflected on his time at St Patrick's in Washington, DC, where the priests made an impression and where he experienced his first Spiritual Directive.

He attended several 30-day Spiritual retreats where he gained grace and clarity.

Taught math at Gonzaga University. Wrote his thesis on Albert the Great, who taught Thomas Aquinas.

He found being Chaplain at Georgetown University Hospital very hard as it was in the midst of the covid period. He recanted fighting to stay active at the hospital as he didn't have "permission" to be within the hospital but Doctors found a way to include him with the covid staff. In reflection, he realized a lot of prayers were answered as he provided last rites to many patients and prayed with non-Catholic patients. Also, given his familiarity with Latin, the students arranged for a Latin Mass during covid. Father Nichols realized that you never know where life goes but was filled with God's grace.

Father Nichols handed out a card with a picture of the "Infant Savior" from the picture that hangs in the National Art Gallery, Washington, DC.