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In the Woods

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Perceptions

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the mornings, what you will do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

(Pedro Arrupe, SJ)

These are the words from Pedro Arrupe that brought me to Saint John's. I spent much time before moving here thinking about where my heart was. Was it really in ministry? Discernment to me has taken on a specifically Benedictine heart since I have come to Saint John's. I recognize that I am mixing my Catholic traditions—Jesuit and Benedictine—but both embody to me the desire to place the language of God within human grasp. Words are so important to me. They have the ability to convey love, hate, vulnerability, sorrow, and profound joy. There are times in life when they are carelessly thrown around, and other moments when there are not enough to share. Very few moments in my life can be recalled when I don't remember the words that were stated that inspired great emotion. I recall how I told my first lie. (I was two, I did write on the wall, I did try to blame it on my older sister, and my mother was able to snap me like a twig—in a very loving way, of course!) There are many instances in which we use words to inform our practices and experiences. We use them so much, and trade them back and forth with such fluidity that we are able to distance ourselves from their very costly nature.

As an undergrad English major I was able to explore in great depth my love for the written word. Flannery O'Connor, William Shakespeare, Henry David Thoreau, Jane Austen; all of these and many other literary geniuses formed my understanding of the power of words. I learned that when used in the right order, words are more powerful than any other force humanity can create.

When I first heard about the project of beginning a School of Theology publication I was excited, intrigued, and perhaps a bit skeptical. Yet I knew I needed to be a part of this endeavor. This project is

a reflection of many different people, their dreams and ambitions, as well as my own. In pursuing this publication, I was made to realize my own dreams and the steps needed to make those a reality.

With my involvement in *Obsculta*, I decided to pursue this project with a style typical to Benedictine living. The integrity that is fundamental to the core learning at the SOT•Sem would need to be transferred authentically to this project. Also, there would need to be an audacious spirit that could be felt and recognized when first glimpsing this work. Finally, this would be accomplished through deliberate pursuit of the scholarly work that is done in the School of Theology. There is one phrase from a famous poem that I have the opportunity to see every day that I go to work at the School of Theology offices. I wish to share those words with you. As you read this first publication, think of the men and women who have lived deliberately, with integrity, and have had the audacious desire to pursue their heart's desires; recognize that this happens every day in the School of Theology at Saint John's University.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, to discover that I had not lived. (Henry David Thoreau)

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