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As of June 30, 2023

### Executive Summary

The quarter began with a regional banking crisis but, by its end, banks had faded from the headlines and the tumult subsided. Come June, the markets had returned their attention to predicting the next policy move by the Federal Reserve (the Fed), where inflation was going and, always in the background, if and when there might be an economic slowdown. Against this backdrop, the Victory Core Plus Intermediate Bond Fund (Institutional Shares) outperformed its benchmark, the Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index, for the quarter ended June 30, 2023. See next page for other share classes.

### Market Update & Commentary

The first quarter closed with the U.S. in the throes of a banking panic that began in regional banks but leaked over to continental Europe in the form of a forced merger of Credit Suisse with UBS. As the second quarter closed, the banking crisis was forgotten and back to the forefront was how to interpret three common harbingers of difficult economic times: rising interest rates, high inflation, and a recession that—seemingly—has loomed on the horizon for some time.

Federal Reserve policy held center stage as the second quarter progressed. By the June meeting, the market was ready to welcome and indeed had come to expect that the Fed would finally pause its hiking campaign; this is what it got, as the Federal Open Market Committee kept rates at 5.15%. But the accompanying hawkish commentary disquieted many, and Chairman Powell's insistence over the ensuing weeks that the Committee was firm in its willingness to hike again if inflation should not abate persuaded many that the Fed may not be done tightening after all. The shift in expectations is evident in the market's pricing of the federal funds rate for January 31, 2024. At the end of the first quarter, the consensus was 4.17%, indicating widespread expectations of rate cuts in the latter months of 2023. By the end of Q2, the implied rate had jumped to 5.29%, revealing that the market believed the Fed could hike again. However grudgingly, the market has come to admit that rates will probably go higher in the near term, rather than lower, and that, if they go higher, they will likely stay higher for longer. How much longer is anyone's guess, but the numbers to watch are those involving inflation. The Fed wants inflation back at or below 2% and, while headline inflation is well off its peak, core CPI remains stubbornly above 5%. As long as core CPI is elevated, the Fed is likely to keep monetary policy restrictive, and this could be for a while.

Markets whipsawed—sometimes violently—from April to June, but little of this turmoil leaked into the corporate bond market. Corporate credit spreads tightened during the quarter across all rating categories. Still, performance across the major fixed income asset classes during the quarter was mixed as tighter credit spreads in both investment grade and high yield corporate credit were partially offset by an increase in yields along the Treasury curve.

- The Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index returned -0.8% during the quarter.

	Yield (%)	Spreads (bps)			Returns (%)	
		3/30/2023	6/30/2023	Δ (+/-)	3M	1YR
<b>Investment Grade (Moody's Ratings)</b>						
U.S. Treasury	4.4	0	0	0	(1.4)	(2.1)
U.S. Aggregate	4.8	56	49	-7	(0.8)	(0.9)
U.S. Credit	5.4	130	113	-17	(0.3)	1.4
Corporate	5.5	140	122	-18	(0.3)	1.5
Aa	4.8	70	60	-10	(0.7)	(0.0)
A	5.3	120	103	-17	(0.4)	0.8
Baa	5.8	169	150	-19	(0.1)	2.5
Crossover	6.7	265	226	-39	0.6	6.1
<b>High Yield (Moody's Ratings)</b>						
U.S. Corporate High Yield	8.6	469	392	-77	1.7	9.1
Ba	7.1	300	251	-49	0.9	8.1
B	8.7	492	400	-92	1.9	9.9
Caa	13.2	1015	837	-178	4.2	9.4
Ca-D	23.1	3636	1,805	1,831	11.5	18.7
<b>Structured Product</b>						
U.S. MBS	4.8	59	51	-7	(0.6)	(1.5)
ABS	5.5	84	68	-16	(0.1)	1.2
CMBS	5.7	142	134	-8	(0.6)	(1.7)

Source: Bloomberg

- Investment grade (IG) corporate bonds returned -0.3% on a yield increase of 30 basis points (commonly abbreviated "bps," with each basis point equal to 1/100th of a percentage point), to 5.5%. Investment grade credit spreads tightened 18 bps to 122 bps, led by bonds rated A and BBB.
- Corporate high yield bonds were up 1.7% to 8.6% as a decline in credit spreads more than offset a higher Treasury curve. High yield spreads fell 77 bps during the quarter.
- Asset-backed securities (ABS) performed best across structured product categories, returning -0.1%. Agency mortgage-backed securities (MBS) and collateralized mortgage-backed securities (CMBS) lagged, with both down 0.6%.

## Portfolio Performance & Positioning

During the quarter, we increased our allocation to U.S. Treasuries and agency residential mortgage-backed securities (RMBS), as well as other asset-backed securities. We also reduced our positions in high yield, senior secured bank loans and corporate credit.

### Contributors

- Our overweight allocation to collateralized loan obligations (CLOs) as well as an underweight to RMBS and Treasuries aided performance, as did an overweight to corporate credit. Within corporate credit, airlines, office real estate investment trusts (REITs), technology, and gaming were the best performing sectors.

- From a credit perspective, our allocation to high yield and our selection of securities within the highest-rated asset classes (bonds rated AAA, AA and A) aided performance.
- Allocation and selection added the majority to performance. Duration aided performance, as the Fund's portfolio is overweight the belly of the curve (7- and 10-year key rate portions) versus the index, which has more exposure to the long end.

### Detractors

- Sectors that detracted from performance included commercial mortgage-backed securities, life insurance, midstream, lodging, and metals and mining.
- From a credit perspective, BBB-rated bonds slightly detracted from performance.

## Standardized Performance: June 30, 2023

Average Annual Returns (%)

Victory Core Plus Intermediate Bond Fund	Ticker	Inception Date	Q2 2023	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	Since Inception	Expense Ratio	
								Gross	Net
Fund Shares	USIBX	08/02/99	-0.30	1.18	2.13	2.67	4.77	0.65	0.65
A Shares, without sales charge	UITBX	08/02/10	-0.47	0.92	1.84	2.39	3.40	0.92	0.92
A Shares, with sales charge (max. 2.25%)	UITBX	08/02/10	-2.69	-1.31	1.37	2.15	3.22	0.92	0.92
C Shares	UITCX	06/29/20	-0.53	0.27	-	-	-2.28	1.99	1.54
Institutional Shares	UIITX	08/01/08	-0.28	1.24	2.20	2.74	4.76	0.60	0.58
R6 Shares	URIBX	12/01/16	-0.24	1.42	2.35	-	2.62	0.43	0.41
Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index	-	-	-0.84	-0.94	0.77	1.52	-	-	-

**Past performance does not guarantee future results. The performance quoted represents past performance and current performance may be lower or higher. The investment return and principal value will fluctuate so that an investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than the original cost. To obtain performance information current to the most recent month-end, visit [www.vcm.com](http://www.vcm.com).** Returns include reinvestment of dividends and capital gains. Performance for periods greater than one year is annualized. Fee waivers and/or expense reimbursements were in place for some or all periods shown, without which Fund performance would have been lower. Class C Shares are subject to a deferred sales charge of 1.00% on shares redeemed within the first year. Performance would have been lower if it reflected this charge for the applicable period(s). Net expense ratio reflects the contractual waiver and/or reimbursement of management fees through November 30, 2023.

**Carefully consider a fund's investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses before investing. To obtain a prospectus or summary prospectus containing this and other important information, visit [www.vcm.com/prospectus](http://www.vcm.com/prospectus). Read it carefully before investing.**

Not all share classes are available to all investors.

**All investing involves risk, including the potential loss of principal.** In addition to the normal risks associated with investing, fixed income securities are subject to interest rate, inflation, credit and default risk. The bond market is volatile. Bonds and bond funds will decrease in value as interest rates rise and vice versa. Credit risk refers to the possibility that debt issuers may not be able to make principal and interest payments or may have their debt downgraded by ratings agencies. High yield securities may be more volatile, be subject to greater levels of credit or default risk, and may be less liquid and more difficult to sell at an advantageous time or price than higher-rated securities of similar maturity. The Fund may be subject to liquidity risk, which is the risk that the Adviser, in the ordinary course of business, cannot expect to sell Fund investments within seven days at a price that is acceptable to the Adviser. Mortgage-backed securities (MBS) and asset-backed securities (ABS) are subject to credit, prepayment and extension risk and may react differently to changes in interest rates than other bonds. Small movements in interest rates may quickly and significantly reduce the value of certain MBS and ABS. International investments may involve risk of capital loss from unfavorable fluctuation in currency values, from differences in generally accepted accounting principles, or from economic or political instability in other nations. Emerging markets involve heightened risks related to the same factors as well as increased volatility and lower trading volume. The value of your investment is also subject to geopolitical risks such as wars,

terrorism, environmental disasters, and public health crises; the risk of technology malfunctions or disruptions; and the responses to such events by governments and/or individual companies.

The opinions are as of the date noted and are subject to change at any time due to changes in market or economic conditions. The comments should not be construed as a recommendation of individual holdings or market sectors, but as an illustration of broader themes.

**Consumer Price Index (CPI)**, a popular measure of inflation and deflation calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, measures the monthly change in prices paid by U.S. consumers.

**The Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index** measures the investment grade, USD-denominated, fixed-rate taxable bond market. The index includes Treasuries, government-related and corporate securities, MBS, ABS and CMBS.

Index returns are for illustrative purposes only and do not represent actual Fund performance. Index performance does not reflect management fees, transaction costs or expenses. Indexes are unmanaged and one cannot invest directly in an index. **Past performance does not guarantee future results.**

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