



Vocations and Seminarians Newsletter

September 18, 2005

Diocese of Baton Rouge

Dates to Remember

- National Vocation Awareness Week – January 9-15, 2006
- World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life – February 5, 2006
- World Day of Prayer for Vocations – May 7, 2006

Dear Seminarians,

A catastrophic event on the scale of Hurricane Katrina often produces a numbing effect on the human psyche. Images of destruction and loss, widespread human suffering and displacement, confusion and violence are just too overwhelming to be processed and interpreted. We address the immediate concerns for food, shelter, medicine, and prayer, and then quickly seek a return to some sense of normalcy. Unfortunately, lives governed by faith do not allow for a hasty retreat from the discomfort caused by human suffering. Life in the aftermath of Katrina cannot and should not return to normal for those who live by the teachings of Christ.

Issues of poverty, prejudice, neglect, and selfishness now share an uneasy coexistence in our human consciousness alongside sentiments of compassion, heroism, generosity, and solidarity. While there are no simple solutions to these grave social injustices, we might at the very least repent of our complicity in the day to day masking of their existence. Why would any person of good conscience want to go back to a social system which allows, sustains, or perhaps even profits from the marginalization of others? God calls us to remain in this current state of moral and physical discomfort until we learn what it is God wishes to teach us.

Times like this remind us of the necessity of developing both an active and contemplative component to our lived faith. So many of you visited the shelters and churches and I am both proud and edified by the example you set for the priests and parishioners of our Diocese. You were able to witness to God's mercy in the midst of human suffering, even while many of you struggled with not knowing the state of your own personal affairs. Now you are preparing to continue your seminary formation on ground made holy by the contemplative prayer of generations of religious men. I pray that God may give you the grace to contemplate his presence and gain further insight into the significance of this life-altering event.

I will be leaving on Friday, September 23, for the annual convention of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors which is being held in Tampa, Florida. The convention begins with a special orientation and training session for priests who are new to this ministry, and then continues with workshops and presentations on different aspects of effective priestly ministry. I look forward to learning strategies and insights which will help me to serve you and the Church better. I am scheduled to return to Baton Rouge on the evening of September 30. Be assured of my daily prayers for you as you resume your studies.

In Christ
Father Matt

Meet Our New Seminarians

Mr. Joseph Hoang Vu began studies this fall as a first year philosophy student at St. Joseph Seminary College. Joseph is a Baton Rouge native and a parishioner of Sts. Anthony of Padua and Emanuel Le Van Phung Parish. His parents are both from Vietnam and he has two younger brothers and one younger sister. Joseph attended elementary school at St. Louis King of France, and high school at St. Michael the Archangel where he graduated with honors. During high school he was active in the computer club, Key Club, Beta Club, National Honor Society, campus ministry, and the math club. His interests include music, computers, and radio controlled cars. Joseph plays both the piano and guitar.

Joseph credits his involvement with campus ministry and parish youth ministry as influencing his decision to enter the seminary. He has been active in the youth groups of both St. Anthony and St. George Parishes. He especially enjoyed participating in fundraisers to help sponsor children's education in Vietnam, and the weekly music ministry sponsored by St. George Parish. While attending the Abbey Youth Fest hosted by St. Joseph's Abbey, Joseph toured the seminary campus and felt an unexpected urge to study for the priesthood. Thank you for saying yes to God's call, Joseph.

Mr. Dean Bryan Thompson II began studies this fall as a third year philosophy student at St. Joseph Seminary College. Bryan is also a Baton Rouge native and a parishioner of Our Lady of Mercy Parish. His family includes two step-brothers and two step-sisters who have become simply brothers and sisters to Bryan. Bryan and his family were heavily involved with scouting during the period of his childhood from ages eight to seventeen. He achieved the rank of Eagle Scout and credits scouting with helping to instill many of his core values.

Bryan was educated in the East Baton Rouge Parish gifted and talented program and finished at Baton Rouge Magnet High School. Although raised in the Methodist Church, Bryan's ongoing faith journey eventually led him to the R.C.I.A. classes at St. Jean Vianney Church where he became Catholic at Easter 1999. His faith developed further during two years of college at L.S.U., and especially during a Christmas pilgrimage to Rome sponsored by the Legionaries of Christ. Bryan entered the Legionaries' postulancy program that following summer, and spent three and a half years with their community discerning a religious vocation. His discernment ultimately led him back to the Diocese of Baton Rouge and to our own Office of Vocations. Welcome home Bryan.

Notre Dame Seminary to Relocate

As previously announced, Notre Dame Seminary will temporarily relocate to the campus of St. Joseph Abbey and Seminary College near Covington while clean-up and repairs are made to its Carrollton Avenue campus. Full-time faculty members are scheduled to report by September 26, seminarians on September 29 and 30, and classes are scheduled to resume on Monday, October 3, 2005.

In order to accommodate the additional students and faculty members, the monks of St. Joseph Abbey have granted Notre Dame Seminary full use of its Christian Life Retreat Center. The retreat center can house 40

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students and one faculty member, all in rooms with private baths. The remaining 44 students will be housed in Borromeo Hall, and other resident faculty will live in the Abbey guest wing.

The Notre Dame students will probably gather for morning and evening prayer in the retreat center chapel, and then join the wider community for Mass in the Abbey Church. However, the retreat center chapel will always remain available for liturgies specific to the Notre Dame community.

Notre Dame Seminary sustained flood damage to its basement area, and wind and rain damage to its roof, windows, and adjacent interior rooms. The moisture and loss of electricity also gave rise to mold in some rooms. A date has not yet been established for when the seminary community might be able to return to New Orleans.

Roster of Returning Seminarians

Third Theology:	Howard Adkins..... 59, St. Agnes
	Michael Alello..... 25, St. Jude the Apostle
	Cary Bani..... 47, St. Joseph Cathedral
	Chris Decker..... 24, St. Isidore, Baker
	Jason Palermo..... 25, St. John the Evangelist, Plaquemine
	Chris Redden..... 31, St. Alphonsus Liguori, Greenwell Springs
Second Theology:	Jamin David..... 23, St. Ann, Morganza
	David Dawson..... 23, St. Patrick
	Andrew Merrick..... 24, St. Mary, New Roads
	Andy Thomas..... 31, St. Agnes
	Paul Yi..... 32, St. Theresa of Avila, Gonzales
First Theology:	Mark Beard..... 44, Our Lady of Mercy
	Paul Gros..... 23, Most Blessed Sacrament
Fourth Philosophy:	Brent Maher..... 21, Immaculate Conception, Denham Springs
Third Philosophy:	Todd Lloyd..... 22, St. Thomas More

L.S.U. Discernment Sessions

The Office of Vocations is coordinating an eight-part series at Christ the King Catholic Student Center to educate students on the process of discernment. The first three sessions will be held this fall on September 21, October 26, and November 9, 2005.

Father Matt Lorrain will facilitate the first session and introduce the theme of the entire series. Sister Lucy Silvio, CSJ, will facilitate the second session with the aid of a personality profile, and Mr. Mike Patin will direct the third session and share from his perspective as a married layman engaged in full time ministry.