



# Vocations and Seminarians Newsletter

October 21, 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,

As you know, Andy Thomas recently made the difficult decision to take a leave of absence from his seminary formation. Andy is a 31 year old parishioner of St. Agnes Parish in Baton Rouge who was set to begin his second year of theology at Notre Dame Seminary. Prior to entering the seminary three years ago, Andy was employed as graphic artist, illustrator, and designer at Lamar Graphics.

Men choose to leave the seminary for a variety of reasons, including health issues, financial obligations, uncertainty in regard to celibacy, a desire for marriage and fatherhood, and many other legitimate causes. Since the process of becoming a priest is so lengthy in duration, it is not uncommon to witness the departure of one or more candidates almost every year of your formation. These departures can often produce feelings of sadness and loss, and even a rethinking of your own call to serve God as a priest.

I view it as providential that certain events in life force us to question or reexamine our commitment to a vocation, whether in priesthood, religious life, or married life. These periods of doubt and uncertainty can be terribly painful to endure but so beneficial to the strengthening of one's commitment to love. We are forced to reach deep down within ourselves to a place of communion with God to see if we are truly responding to his call or merely seeking our own selfish desires. It takes time, patience, prayer, and growth to find peace and resolution to these important questions.

Not too long ago, I suggested to a married couple that their nineteen year old son might be a good candidate for the priesthood. Although flattered by the idea, they quickly dismissed it on the grounds that their son loved women too much to be a priest. I probably caught them a little off guard when I responded that as vocation director, the only candidates I wanted were those who demonstrated a capacity for being in love. Rather than being an impediment to celibacy, I think an orientation to love, marriage, and family is actually a strong indicator of the suitability of someone for the Catholic priesthood.

So if during the course of your seminary formation you begin to doubt your call due to lingering thoughts of marriage, please resist the temptation to eliminate yourself as a candidate for orders, and instead interpret those feelings as essential to your ongoing development as a caring individual and future priest. The Church needs men with hearts open to love, and it is our understanding of our vulnerability and desire for wholeness which makes possible the living of a healthy celibate lifestyle. Say a prayer also for Andy that his leave of absence might be a time of fruitful reflection as he seeks to discern his calling in life.

In Christ  
Father Matt

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## Seminary Scholarship Funds

Twice each year, usually in January and July, *The Catholic Commentator* publishes a list of the contributions received during the previous six month period to any of the Seminary Scholarship Funds established by the Diocese. These funds are usually named in honor of a deceased pastor, family member, or group, and provide a means for parishes, organizations, families, and individuals to remember a loved one while helping to provide for the formation of future priests to serve our local Church.

The minimum deposit to establish a new fund is set at \$500. The historical practice was to allow the principal of a fund to grow to \$20,000 before the interest could be used to help pay for the education of our seminarians. That requirement has recently been discontinued and we are now able to use some of the income from the gift as soon as it is earned. The Seminary Scholarship Funds are now professionally and expertly managed by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

We currently have 58 named funds totaling \$1,900,000 invested through the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. While this is a remarkable sum to have accumulated over the years without the advantage of much marketing, we still have a long way to go before the income is fully able to cover the cost of tuition, books, room, and board for all of our seminarians. Depending on the rate of interest and the number of seminarians studying at any given time, we are still about \$2,000,000 short of being fully funded. This is a very worthy goal for the Vocations Office to help promote over the next few years.

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## Ministries of Reader and Acolyte

On Friday, November 4, 2005, at 7:00 p.m. in the evening, the first and second year theology students of Notre Dame Seminary will be instituted in the respective ministries of reader and acolyte. The liturgy will be held at St. Joseph Abbey Church in St. Benedict with Bishop Robert Muench serving as president. First year theologians Mark Beard and Paul Gros will be instituted in the ministry of reader, which formally entrusts them with the proclamation of the sacred scriptures in the liturgical assembly. Second year theologians Jamin David, David Dawson, Andrew Merrick, and Paul Yi will be instituted in the ministry of acolyte, which officially commissions them for service at the altar and distribution of Holy Communion. Reader and acolyte were considered *minor orders* in the period prior to Vatican II, but have now been designated as *ministries* by the Church.

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## Two Seminarian Gatherings in December

The annual Mass and lunch hosted by Bishop Muench for the seminarians and their parents has been set for Saturday, December 3, 2005, at 10:30 a.m. in St. Joseph Chapel at the Catholic Life Center. Lunch will be served in the Borders Dining Room immediately following the Mass.

The annual holy hour of prayer led by Bishop Muench with the seminarians is scheduled for Thursday, December 22, 2005, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in St. Joseph Chapel at the Catholic Life Center. The holy hour will be followed by supper with Bishop Muench, Father Matt Lorrain, and Sister Lucy Silvio, C.S.J.

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## Discerning Life Choices at L.S.U.

The Office of Vocations is coordinating an eight-part series at Christ the King Church and Catholic Center on the campus of L.S.U. in Baton Rouge to assist students in the process of discerning life choices. The first session was held last month and the remaining fall sessions are scheduled for Wednesdays October 26 and November 9, 2005.

Sister Lucy Silvio, CSJ, will facilitate the October 26 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 Catholic ministry. Each session follows a similar format: Mass celebrated at 6:00 p.m. in the church, followed by a light meal at 6:30 p.m. in the activity center, and then the presentation from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in one of the 2nd floor classrooms.

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## Thank You Serra Club!

The Serra Club of Baton Rouge recently held its Annual *Priests Day* at the Bluffs near St. Francisville for all the priests serving in the Baton Rouge Diocese. This marks the 17th consecutive year in which the priests were treated to a day of golf, tennis, biking, and fellowship with the members of the club which has as its mission to "foster and affirm vocations to the ministerial priesthood and vowed religious life." The day ended with an outdoor barbeque and door prizes for the 25 priests who were able to attend. Many thanks to the Serrans for their generous support of priests and vocations. The Serra Club plans to visit our seminarians on Thursday, October 27, 2005.

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## Roster of 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 the Farmer, 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 of False River, New Roads
	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
	Bryan Thompson.....	24, Our Lady of Mercy
First Philosophy:	Joseph Vu.....	18, Sts. Anthony/Le Van Phung