



Vocations and Seminarians Newsletter

March 15, 2007

Diocese of Baton Rouge

Dates to Remember

- "Come and See" Weekend - March 30 - April 1, St. Joseph Seminary College
- Chrism Mass - April 4, 2007, 10:30 a.m., St. Joseph Cathedral
- World Day of Prayer for Vocations - April 29, 2007
- Serra Club Crawfish Boil - May 6, 2007, 4:00 p.m., St. Jude the Apostle Parish Hall
- Priesthood Ordination - May 26, 2007, 10:00 a.m., St. Joseph Cathedral
- Transitional Diaconate Ordination - June 9, 2007, 10:00 a.m., St. Joseph Cathedral

Dear Seminarians and Friends,

Occasionally the Vatican will publish lesser writings or addresses of the Pope which are less systematic than his pastoral letters and apostolic exhortations but more revealing of the man himself and his personal spirituality. This happened just last month when Pope Benedict XVI made a visit to Rome's Pontifical Major Seminary and had the opportunity to respond to several questions addressed to him by the seminarians. I was touched by the sincerity and personal tone of his answers and wish to share the following excerpts from his address.

Seminarian Claudio Fabbri, studying for the Diocese of Rome, asked the Holy Father to say something about his own time in the seminary. The Pope responded by saying that the structure and daily schedule of the seminary he attended in Freising, Germany, was probably not all that different from their own. He then spoke about some of his favorite subjects and personalities:

"Above all, I found St. Augustine's great humanity fascinating, because from the outset as a catechumen he was simply unable to identify with the Church, but instead had to have a spiritual struggle to find, little by little, access to the Word of God, to life with God, until he said his great 'yes' to his Church. This journey is so human...his theology conquered me in a very personal way."

"For me exegesis (of Sacred Scripture) was very important: we had two somewhat liberal but nevertheless great exegetes, also true believers, who fascinated us. I can say that Sacred Scripture really was the soul of our theological studies: we truly lived with Sacred Scripture and learned to love it, to converse with it."

"There were still no liturgical faculties at that time, but our professor of pastoral studies gave us great courses in liturgy, and at the time he was also Rector of the seminary, so the liturgy was lived and celebrated. Another interest was literature: it was obligatory to read Dostoevsky...then there were also the great French writers Claudel, Mauriac, Bernanos and also German literature. Another great love was music, as well as the natural beauty of our land."

Gianpiero Savino of the Diocese of Taranto sought the Pope's advice on how to handle the inner tension between wanting to serve God's people as a priest despite being mindful of one's weakness. Pope Benedict responded, "It is good to recognize one's weakness because in this way we know that we stand in need of the Lord's grace. We need an ongoing conversion...to understand that the journey after conversion is still a journey of conversion, that it remains a journey where the broad perspectives, joys and lights of the Lord are not absent; but nor are dark valleys absent through which we must wend our way with trust, relying on the goodness of the Lord. Therefore, also the Sacrament of Reconciliation is important."

"It is also important of course not to isolate oneself, not to believe one is

capable of going ahead alone. We truly need the company of priest friends and also lay friends who accompany and help us. It is very important for a priest, in the parish itself, to see how people trust in him and to experience in addition to their trust also their generosity in pardoning his weaknesses. It seems to me that this attitude of patience and humility can help us to be kind to others, to understand the weaknesses of others and also help them to forgive as we forgive."

A Bulgarian seminarian, Koicio Dimov, asked how one should respond to corruption in the Church and the temptation of careerism and unchecked ambition. The Holy Father answered, "the Lord knows, knew from the beginning, that there is also sin in the Church, and for our humility it is important to recognize this and to see sin not only in others, in structures, in lofty hierarchical duties, but also in ourselves, to be in this way more humble and to learn that what counts before the Lord is not an ecclesial position, but...to be in his love and to make his love shine forth."

Finally, transitional Deacon Marco Ceccarelli of the Diocese of Rome asked for advice regarding the post-ordination transition from seminary life to parish life. Pope Benedict responded, "It seems to me very important that we feel the need to be with the Lord in the Eucharist, not as professional obligation but truly as an interiorly felt duty, so that the Eucharist should never be missed. Another important point is to make time for the Liturgy of the Hours and therefore, for this inner freedom: with all the burdens that exist, it frees us and helps us to be more open, to be deeply in touch with the Lord."

"Next, it is important not to neglect communion with other priests, with one's companions on the way, and not to lose one's personal contact with the Word of God, meditation. Never lose either your friendship with priests, listening to the voice of the living Church, or naturally, availability to the people entrusted to us, because from these very people, with their suffering, their faith experiences, their doubts and difficulties, we too can learn, seek, and find God."

Words of wisdom from our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, gleaned from 55 years of priestly life and ministry. Since I surely cannot offer any more inspired or inspiring insights than these, I think I will leave it there.

In Christ,
Father Matt Lorrain

A Seminarian's First Visit to Prison

(Seminarian Kevin Piper is a second year undergraduate philosophy student for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, attending St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict, Louisiana. He recently volunteered to accompany Deacon Robert Kusch of St. Alphonsus Liguori Parish in Greenwell Springs on a visit to the Dixon Correctional Institute in Jackson, Louisiana. He shares the following reflection on his experience.)

"My home parish of St. Joseph in French Settlement might be small, but it has taught me many life-lessons. These lessons were learned mainly from participating in the youth group and their many activities. Some of the greatest lessons came from doing service projects which helped me to grow as a person. Doing service is now a passion of mine and helps me grow in my vocation to the priesthood."

"I recently had the chance to take part in prison ministry and it was an incredible experience. I met Deacon Robert Kusch at the diaconate ordinations in February and he mentioned that he does prison ministry every

Friday night. It was with his help that I was able to go with him to Dixon Correctional Institute. The visit centered on small group discussions of the Sunday Mass readings and closed with a Communion service."

"I was nervous and scared when I got there because I didn't know what to expect. Once I got inside, many of the inmates came up to me and introduced themselves. They made me feel welcome and my nervousness went away. We soon broke up into small groups and I went with Deacon Robert and a group of five men."

"The readings were from the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, and the passage which struck me the most was from Luke 6:37-38, which reads: 'Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.'"

"After we read the readings, we began to discuss what we got from them, and amazingly enough, the things I got from them were exactly the same as the things they got from them. I thought prison would be a vastly different world than the one I live in, but in some ways I go through the same things as the inmates. They expressed their dislike for being there, but also see it as a blessing because it opened their eyes to the mistakes they made. They now see how to handle situations better and how to turn to the Lord. They are not afraid to invite other prisoners to come to the sessions."

"Before the start of the Communion service, Deacon Robert asked me to prepare and give a small reflection. So I did and focused on the Gospel passage that I mentioned above. I thanked them for the opportunity to be there and how much they taught me. I mentioned that in doing service you also serve yourself because you receive so much from the experience. In my final words to the guys, I thanked them for their witness. Then during the prayers of the faithful, one of the guys said, 'God has his eyes on you and he will always be with you and to be patient because he is guiding you on the right path.' At that moment I thought I was going to cry because what he said really touched my heart."

"The inmates were incredible people and contrary to what others might think, they taught me a lot about myself from their experience of prison. The prisoners look back on the mistakes that put them in prison and imagine how they would handle those situations now. One guy said that when he began coming to the Communion Services on Friday nights he wouldn't care about being there, but now looks forward to it every week. He witnessed to me further by saying his parents began going to church again and he is now tutoring people inside the prison to help them to get their GED. They are examples of Christ to one another in prison."

"If anyone has the opportunity to participate in prison ministry, take full advantage of it because it is an incredible feeling to be able to give and also get so much back in return."

“Come and See” Weekend

St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict, Louisiana (just north of Covington), is sponsoring the final “Come and See” weekend of the school year March 30–April 1, 2007. It is open to all interested young men in high school grades 10 to 12 as well as of college-age, and is hosted by the seminarians and the Benedictine monks of St. Joseph Abbey. Participants experience something of the prayer and community life which characterizes the program of priestly formation at St. Ben. Arrival at the seminary takes place between 4:00 and 6:00 p.m. on Friday evening, and the weekend concludes with the 11:00 a.m. Palm Sunday Procession and Mass in the Abbey church. Please contact Father Matt or Ms. Mary Layman at the Vocation Office (225-336-8778) for more information or to register.

World Day of Prayer for Vocations

In 1963 Pope Paul VI designated Good Shepherd Sunday as *World Day of Prayer for Vocations*. The date for this year’s observance is April 29, 2007, the Fourth Sunday of Easter. Please refer to the catechetical and prayer resources which were sent to all of the parishes in the fall of 2006, or contact the Office of Vocations for an additional copy.

New Date for Serra Club Crawfish Boil

Each Spring the Serra Club sponsors a crawfish boil for the men and women from our Diocese who are in formation for the priesthood or religious life. The date for this year’s event has recently been changed to Sunday, May 6, 2007, at 4:00 p.m., at St. Jude the Apostle Parish Hall located adjacent to the church at 9150 Highland Road.

Ordinations – Spring 2007

Please mark your calendars now for two ordinations to take place later this spring in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. On Saturday, May 26, 2007, five men will be ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Robert Muench. Deacons Howard Adkins, Michael Alello, Cary Bani, Chris Decker and Jason Palermo are all scheduled to be ordained priests in a special 10:00 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral in downtown Baton Rouge.

Two weeks later, on June 9, 2007, we will celebrate the ordination of two men to the transitional diaconate. Seminarians Jamin David and Paul Yi are scheduled to be ordained deacons at a 10:00 a.m. Mass by Bishop Robert Muench, also at St. Joseph Cathedral. Classmate Andrew Merrick has opted to undertake a non-ordained Parish Internship before considering a petition for holy orders. Attendance at both of these ordinations is open to everyone, but please be forewarned that seating will be limited.

Weekend Assistance for Priests

The Vocation Director offers weekend assistance to the parish priests of the Diocese of Baton Rouge as he is able. As of this writing Father Matt has the following 2007 dates available: May 13 & 27; June 23/24; Aug. 19 & 25/26; Sept. 1/2; Oct. 13, 20/21, & 27/28; Nov. 3/4, 10/11, 17/18, & 24/25; Dec. 1/2, 8/9, 15/16, 22/23, & 29/30. Please give him a call at 225-336-8778 if he can help.

Contact Us

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Roster of Diocesan Seminarians

4th Theology:	Howard Adkins	61, St. Agnes, Baton Rouge
	Michael Alello	26, St. Jude the Apostle, Baton Rouge
	Cary Bani	48, St. Joseph Cathedral, Baton Rouge
	Chris Decker	25, St. Isidore the Farmer, Baker
	Jason Palermo	27, St. John the Evangelist, Plaquemine
3rd Theology:	Jamin David	24, St. Ann, Morganza
	Andrew Merrick	26, St. Mary of False River, New Roads
	Paul Yi.....	34, St. Theresa of Avila, Gonzales
2nd Theology:	Mark Beard	45, Our Lady of Mercy, Baton Rouge
	Paul Gros.....	24, Most Blessed Sacrament, Baton Rouge
Pre-Theology:	Peter Ai Dang	41, Sts. Anthony/Le Van Phung, Baton Rouge
	Al Davidson.....	53, St. Agnes, Baton Rouge
	Mark Gyan	52, St. John the Evangelist, Prairieville
	Matthew McCaughey ..	23, St. Thomas More, Baton Rouge
4th Philosophy:	Todd Lloyd.....	23, St. Thomas More, Baton Rouge
	Bryan Thompson.....	26, Our Lady of Mercy, Baton Rouge
2nd Philosophy:	Kevin Piper	20, St. Joseph, French Settlement
	Joseph Hoang Vu	19, Sts. Anthony/Le Van Phung, Baton Rouge
1st Philosophy:	Brad Doyle.....	19, St. George, Baton Rouge
	Joshua Johnson	19, St. George, Baton Rouge

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**One thing you can always do for a seminarian is drop him a line!
Every one of them would love to hear from you and know of your prayers and support.**