

February 16, 2009

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Dates to Remember

- ◆ "Come and See" Weekends, St. Joseph Seminary College - February 26-28, 2009, and April 3-5, 2009, St. Benedict.
- ◆ Diocesan Youth Conference - March 7-8, 2009, Catholic Life Center.
- ◆ Abbey Youth Festival – March 21, 2009, St. Joseph Abbey.
- ◆ Diocesan Convocation for "Called By Name" – March 29, 2009, Catholic Life Center.
- ◆ Chrism Mass - April 8, 2009, 10:30 am, St. Joseph Cathedral.
- ◆ World Day of Prayer for Vocations – May 3, 2009.
- ◆ Serra Club Crawfish Boil – May 3, 2009, 4:00 pm, St. Jude the Apostle Parish Hall.
- ◆ Priesthood Ordination – May 30, 2009, 10:00 am, St. Joseph Cathedral.

Dear Seminarians and Friends,

A sure and safe conversation starter when in the company of priests or religious is to ask them about their time in the seminary or novitiate. I had lunch last week with the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady who live at Maryville Convent on Essen Lane, and it wasn't long before stories of seminary and novitiate life began to be shared. Memories of scrubbing floors, chopping wood, and a whole regimen of activities both practical and spiritual which were meant to instill discipline, service, and a strong notion of community in the hearts of future sisters and priests.

I mention this because the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome recently published the final report of its Apostolic Visitation of American seminaries and houses of priestly formation. The report is addressed to the Bishops and Major Superiors of the United States, and can be found on the Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocation page of the USCCB website at http://www.usccb.org/cclv/final_report.pdf. Individual reports concerning each seminary were also sent to the individual bishops and superiors who oversee the seminaries. The actual visits on which the final report is based took place from September 2005 to May 2006.

Pope John Paul II offered a beautiful description of the seminary in his 1992 Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests - *Pastores Dabo Vobis* ("I Will Give You Shepherds"). He wrote:

"The seminary can be seen as a place and a period in life. But it is above all an *educational community in progress*: it is a community established by the Bishop to offer to those called by the Lord to serve as Apostles the possibility of re-living the experience of formation which our Lord provided for the Twelve. In fact, the Gospels present a prolonged and intimate sharing of life with Jesus as a necessary premise for the apostolic ministry. Such an experience demands of the Twelve the practice of detachment in a particularly clear and specific fashion, a detachment that in some way is demanded of all the disciples, a detachment from their roots, from their usual work, from their nearest and dearest...In its deepest identity the seminary is called to be, in its own way, *a continuation in the Church of the apostolic community gathered about Jesus...*" (n. 60)

These words describe an experience of formation which extends well beyond the physical complex or academic curriculum. So an occasional study and critique of seminaries by an outside team of experts is both proper and beneficial, even if it also gives rise to a bit of fear and anxiety. I happily note that the current Visitation report provides a general positive conclusion. There are still improvements to be made, but the Apostolic Visitors found our seminaries to be healthy.

The visitors' commendations include the interest and support of bishops in regard to their seminaries, and the dedication and hard work of seminary rectors. The report also praises the quality of the seminarians, who are described as "generous, intelligent, full of zeal, pious, and faithful to prayer." It notes the emphasis given to the area of human formation, and the increased attention given to the "theology of celibacy as lived for the Kingdom." Finally, it also praises the academic standards of most American seminaries.

Areas identified for improvement in many places include a review and strengthening of the "Rule of Life" which guides seminarians in their development of holiness and wholeness. (For example, the "Rule of Life" for Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans can be found online at http://www.nds.edu/spiritual_formation.htm). The report also expressed a concern that formation for the priesthood be understood as a full-time endeavor, which includes weekends and summer vacation. Mindful of this, it reiterates that seminary communities are to gather for Mass, Lauds, and Vespers on weekends as well as on weekdays. It notes that Mariology and Patristics aren't always given adequate attention in every curriculum, and that the richness of Catholic teaching on moral issues often can be given better and clearer treatment.

The report concludes: "Let bishops, major superiors and rectors, as well as all who are involved in running the nations' seminaries and religious houses of formation, take comfort in the notable improvements that have taken place, and spare no effort in ensuring that those generous young men who offer themselves today for the priesthood – whether diocesan or religious – receive a formation that is equal to the generosity they are showing."

My own experience of the seminary was overwhelmingly positive, despite the imperfections of the institution and its individual members. For all its good though, no one aspires to be a life-long seminarian; it is a temporary yet important stage on the path to priesthood. Our goal is to help make those years of formation the absolute best they can be for the sake of our seminarians and the Church we love.

In Christ,
Father Matt Lorrain

"Come and See" Weekends

St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict, Louisiana (north of Covington) is sponsoring two "Come and See" Weekends on February 26-28, 2009, and April 3-5, 2009. The first date runs from Thursday evening through Saturday, and is specifically designed for high school seniors and college transfers so they can attend classes with the seminarians on Friday. The second weekend is the more traditional Friday evening through Sunday, and is open to all interested young men in 10th grade through college. Both weekends are hosted by the seminarians and the Benedictine monks of St. Joseph Abbey. Participants experience the prayer and community life of a seminary community, and also get to know some of the men who are studying to be priests. Arrival there takes place between 4:00 and 6:00 pm on the first evening, and the weekend concludes with 11:00 am Mass on the final day. Please contact Father Matt or Ms. Mary Layman at the Vocation Office (225-336-8778) for more information or to register.



Diocesan Convocation

A diocesan wide gathering of the candidates identified through the parish based "Called By Name" campaign has been set for Sunday, March 29, 2009, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the main auditorium of the Catholic Life Center. Keynote speakers for the gathering are Father Mark Thibodeaux, S.J., Director of Jesuit Novices in Grand Co-teau, and Sister Noel Toomey, O.P., Director of the Archdiocesan Spirituality Center in New Orleans. The schedule of activities will also include separate breakout sessions for men and women led by panels of priests, sisters, brothers, and seminarians.

Video Profiles

Various inspiring "CALLED BY NAME" video segments are now available on YouTube, including those profiling seminarian Joshua Johnson, Deacon Paul Gros, Father Matt Dupré, Father Than Vu, Father Michael Thompson, S.S.J., Father Gregory Boquet, O.S.B., Sister Renée Daigle, M.S.C., Sister Adele Lambert, C.S.J., Sister Georgeann Parizek, R.S.C.J., Sister Uyen Vu, O.S.F., and Brother Chris Sweeney, S.C. View them at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CatholicLifeTV>.

2009 Priesthood Ordination

Please mark your calendars for the ordination to the priesthood of Deacon Mark Beard and Deacon Paul Gros. The ordination Mass will take place on Saturday, May 30, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. at historic St. Joseph Cathedral in downtown Baton Rouge. All are invited to join Bishop Robert Muench, the priests and laity of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, as well as the family and friends of Deacons Mark and Paul for this special celebration. A reception will follow at the Catholic Life Center located at 1800 South Acadian Thruway, Baton Rouge.

"Search Your Heart" Retreat

The Brothers of the Sacred Heart are sponsoring a weekend discernment retreat on April 3-5, 2009, at the Rosaryville Retreat Center in Ponchatoula, Louisiana. The retreat is open to men ages 17 to 35.

The retreat will provide time for reflection, listening to God's voice, and discerning where God is calling you at this time. You will also meet other Catholic men who are at important, decision-making points in their lives. For more information or to register, contact Brother Chris Sweeney by calling 504-352-9940 or by sending him an email at brochris66@hotmail.com. Also, visit the Brothers' website at www.brothersofthesacredheart.org.

Contact Us

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Vocations to the Consecrated Life

Please pray for those pursuing a vocation to religious life. (And let us know of any others to include on this roster.)

Caleb Bernacchio (Christ the King) Jesuits

Sr. Mary Corripio (St. Aloysius) Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

Br. Augustine DeArmond (St. Thomas, Springfield) Dominicans

Lacey Flores (Christ the King) Carmelite Sisters of the
Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles

Christopher Iwancio (St. Aloysius/C.H.S.) Capuchin Franciscans

Kevin Piper (St. Joseph, French Settlement) Brothers of the
Sacred Heart

Roster of Diocesan Seminarians

♦ 4th Theology: Mark Beard 47, Our Lady of Mercy,
Baton Rouge
Paul Gros 26, Most Blessed Sacrament,
Baton Rouge

♦ 2nd Theology: Peter Ai Dang 43, Sts. Anthony/Le Van Phung,
Baton Rouge
Todd Lloyd 25, St. Thomas More, Baton Rouge
Brent Maher 24, Immaculate Conception,
Denham Springs

♦ 1st Theology: Al Davidson 56, St. Agnes, Baton Rouge
Kyle Gautreau 28, St. Mark, Gonzales
Mark Gyan 54, St. John the Evangelist,
Prairieville
Matthew McCaughey 24, St. Thomas More,
Baton Rouge

♦ Pre-Theology: Tim Hedrick ... 26, St. Thomas More, Baton Rouge

♦ 4th Philosophy: Joseph Hoang Vu 21, Sts. Anthony of Padua
and Le Van Phung, Baton Rouge

♦ 3rd Philosophy: Brad Doyle 21, St. George, Baton Rouge
Joshua Johnson 21, St. George, Baton Rouge

♦ 1st Philosophy: Logan Roussel 19, St. Michael, Convent

Weekend Assistance for Priests

Father Matt offers weekend assistance to the priests of the Diocese of Baton Rouge as he is able. Please call him at 225-336-8778 to reserve a weekend. Here are his available weekends in **2009**:

♦ March 28/29; May 9/10; July 25; October 3/4, 10/11, 17/18,
24/25, & 31; November 1, 7/8, & 28/29; December 5/6, 12/13, &
19/20