Notre Dame Seminary
Welcomes 41 New Seminarians

Notre Dame Seminary welcomed 41 new seminarians this past August with an enrollment of 112 – the largest enrollment in nearly 15 years. The community hosts seminarians from 20 dioceses and religious communities.

New Seminarians at NDS
Jason Johnston, Seminarian

On Sunday, August 17, 2014, Notre Dame Seminary welcomed 41 new men to its ranks for Orientation Week. These men represent eight different dioceses and two religious orders. Along with many of their families, they gathered for Holy Mass celebrated by our rector Fr. Jim Wehner, marking the beginning of their time of discernment at Notre Dame Seminary.

Throughout the week, Notre Dame’s faculty and formation staff led the new seminarians in informative conferences, while returning seminarians on the orientation team helped the newcomers get to know their new home and each other. They had the opportunity to experience Mass at St. Louis Cathedral with Archbishop Emeritus Alfred Hughes, and at the national Shrine of Our Lady of Prompt Succor with Fr. Joe Palermo. A visit to the shrine of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, beignets at Café Du Monde and a tour of the Ursuline Convent in the French Quarter were highlights of the week.
Ordination to Diaconate
Deacon Matthew Graham, Seminarian

I was ordained to diaconate on June 14, 2014 at St. Aloysius Catholic Church for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. I recently completed my 5 month diaconate internship at Our Lady of Mercy Parish, which is a vibrant and active parish with over 3,100 families. My time in the parish was a great blessing and an opportunity to apply what I have been learning during my time of formation and to continue to grow in the identity of what it means to be a priest. With such a large parish, I was able to assist at numerous liturgies, baptize five children, assist and lead several funerals and lead novenas along with adoration and benediction.

Welcome Back Deacons

One of the significant aspects of our pastoral formation program is the diaconate internship assignments. When the seminarians are ordained deacon at the end of the third year of theology, their bishop or superior assigns them to a parish until the end of October. Therefore, the deacons have nearly five months of pastoral experience. The pastor establishes a lay support group for the deacon comprised of staff, volunteers, and those involved with parish ministries. This group provides the deacons affirmation as well as support in those areas where the deacon can grow. The deacons then return to the seminary with an opening banquet. We saluted the deacons with toasts and addresses delivered by the other seminarians.

New Master’s Degree in Philosophy

The faculty has designed a two year Master’s Degree in Philosophy for qualified pre-theology seminarians. Seminarians who have already earned a college degree are required by the USCCB to complete a two year pre-theology program. The standard degree for this program is a Bachelor’s Degree in Philosophy (B.Phil.). However, because of the quality of our program, we petitioned the accreditation agency requesting that we also grant the Master’s Degree (M.A.), for those who qualify. We have 4 seminarians presently enrolled in this program. Notre Dame Seminary is now one of the only seminaries in the country who grant this degree. More information about this degree is on the NDS website: www.nds.edu.
Flag Football
Colten Symmes, Seminarian

Fall is here which means football season is rolling. Yes, LSU and the Saints may catch most of the state of Louisiana’s attention but Notre Dame Seminary is not missing out on the football action. Like many of the previous years, NDS puts together a flag-football team and participates in the Loyola University Intramural Flag-Football League. On Saturday afternoons, at a nearby public field, you can find seminarians battling it out on the flag-football field against other teams in the league. You can also find our Rector, Fr. Jim Wehner, and other seminarians supporting the team on the sideline. Last year, we took home the title and won the league. With the new men joining us this year, we are better than ever! NDS is all the more excited this year and we look to take home the championship again. The intramural league provides an excellent preparation for our most important game of the year, the Bonfire Game against St. Joseph Seminary College on the Northshore in which we came up short last year. As of now we are 4-0 in the league and look to continue in our success all the way - even to a big win in the Bonfire Game!

Mini-Golf Tournament
Adrian Aragon, Seminarian

On Friday evening, October 17, about ten teams of seminarians maneuvered their way through a makeshift mini-golf course, which meandered through the hallways and stairwells of the seminary, in an attempt to get the best score and lay claim to the first-ever NDS Mini-Golf Tournament trophy. The teams were creative in their strategies, and a combination of finesse and luck determined each team’s level of success in achieving their goal.

The tournament began at about 7:30 near the pool; each team made its way from there through the eighteen holes that the SA Social Team had ingeniously constructed out of SOLO cups. When the course was complete and the scores were added up the results revealed a three-way tie among the “Mississippi Irish,” “Those Guys,” and the “H-T Boyz.” The Team trophy went to the “H-T Boyz” team consisting of Cody Chatagnier, Paul Birdsall, JD Matherne, Brice Higginbotham, and Deacon Alex Gaudet. Congratulations, Houma-Thibodaux!

Back to School Bash
Braxton Necaise, Seminarian

On Friday evening, September 5, NDS’s Seminar-ian Association hosted a Back to School Bash to kick off the 2014-2015 academic year. Our very own Randall Edwards and Matthew Hoffpauir provided an array of cover songs and opened for Kristen Cady, a local entertainer and recording artist. Always a favorite here at NDS, Kristen took requests from behind her piano all evening, and kept the seminarians singing along to favorites old and new.

Following the live music, the seminary community enjoyed some friendly competition, playing Spot It and spades.
Joining the ranks of the faculty of Notre Dame Seminary this semester are Dr. Jennifer Miller, Mr. Michael Piazza, and Mr. Mario Sacasa. On Sunday, August 24, the three new faculty members took the Oath of Fidelity during evening prayer in the chapel, in the presence of God and the NDS community. In taking the oath, they promised: “In fulfilling the charge entrusted to me in the name of the Church, I shall hold fast to the deposit of faith in its entirety; I shall faithfully hand it on and explain it, and I shall avoid any teachings contrary to it.”

Interviews with New Faculty Members:

Mario Sacasa—Mr. Sacasa is the Director of Counseling Services and Assistant Director of Human Formation. He is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, both in FL and LA. Mr. Sacasa has made a career of integrating the Church’s anthropology and spirituality into sound clinical practice. Prior to his arrival at NDS, he was the director of the Catholic Counseling Service of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, where he saw clients and supervised interns in this integrated approach to counseling. He has delivered numerous retreats and lectures, applying the Theology of the Body to present day marital issues. As a counselor, his areas of specialization include: families, marriages, and men's issues, as well as the more general issues of anxiety, depression, etc. Mr. Sacasa states, "If I can sum up my professional mission, it has always been to find the appropriate integration between faith and counseling. Where do the two intersect appropriately and where do they not? As a professional, I have always tried to find that balance." Mr. Sacasa is married to his beautiful wife, Kristin, and together they share the joy of parenting their four sons.

Jennifer E. Miller, S.T.D.—Dr. Miller is a Professor of Moral Theology at Notre Dame Seminary. Originally from the Lafayette area, she earned her BA in theology from the Franciscan University of Steubenville, an STB at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, and an STL in moral theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. After a year of postgraduate studies at the John Paul II Pontifical Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, Dr. Miller began work on a doctorate in Catholic Social Doctrine at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, completing her STD in 2013. Dr. Miller states," In a way, I am here at Notre Dame Seminary because of my father. He was a seminarian at Immaculata Seminary for three years when it was still a minor seminary in Lafayette, so he entered when he was fourteen years old. He then attended St. Ben’s and completed his degree there. He took a break from his studies for prayer and discernment. Realizing he was not called to the priesthood, he married my mother. When I was little, my mother would read the morning Mass readings to us before school each morning and my father would give a historical-cultural exegesis and a call to evangelization. His theology and philosophy books were displayed in our home and always available to me. So I feel that I’m very much in debt in a way to the seminary community for the faith that I have received. I feel that this is my way of giving back and of thanking them for that."

Michael J. Piazza—Mr. Piazza is the new Director of Sacred Music at Notre Dame Seminary. He has a Bachelor of Music degree from Loyola University, a Master of Music degree from the University of North Texas, and M.Ed. from the University of Southern Mississippi. He has served on the faculties at the Interlochen Center for the Arts, LSU Lab School, Delgado Community College, has been a Louisiana Public Schools music educator for almost 20 years, and an active Catholic music minister in the Archdiocese of New Orleans for over 25 years. As Director of Sacred Music at Notre Dame Seminary, Mr. Piazza works with the Director of Liturgy in planning and implementing music for morning prayer, evening prayer, and Masses. He also works collaboratively with lay faculty, priests, and seminarians to prepare and lead worship services with musical accompaniment and vocalists. Seminarians serve in the music ministry, in practice and application, as organist, cantor, schola, and choir. When asked about his favorite organ or choral piece, Mr. Piazza states: "I love Bach’s Magnificat and Handel’s Messiah—and not necessarily just the Hallelujah Chorus, but especially some of the parts that are less well known. I also love the polyphonic sacred music from the Renaissance—Palestrina, Monteverdi, Josquin des Prez."
New Program by Catholic Leadership Institute Aims at Forming Seminarians as Good Leaders

David Frank, Seminarian

Anticipating the ever-growing burden of leadership that diocesan priests must shoulder in today’s world, Notre Dame Seminary recently incorporated into its formation program a new leadership conference for seminarians. From September 4-6, those in their first, second, and third years of theology participated in “Self Leadership: Versatility and Responsibility in Priestly Formation,” the first installment in a program taught by the Catholic Leadership Institute.

The program focused on helping the participants to understand three of the aspects of personality: one’s temperament or "DISCposition" (from "DISC" + "disposition," based on CLI’s own DISC model), values, and persona.

The three days of workshops were led by CLI leadership consultants Lucille Smith and Fr. Lou Vallone. Mrs. Smith comes from the Diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where she has worked for over fifteen years in various roles on the diocesan, parish, and school levels, including Director of Religious Education for the diocese. Fr. Lou Vallone is a priest of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Having served nine different parishes as a priest, six of which he served as pastor, Fr. Vallone brought a wealth of priestly leadership experience to the presentations.

Oktoberfest at the Seminary

Visitors to Notre Dame Seminary on Saturday, September 25th, might have wondered if they had bi-located to Germany as the staff and seminarians took a break from their studies to enjoy a taste of Oktoberfest, Rev. Wehner style. German music and the aroma of bratwurst sizzling on a grill filled the air as the sun bid farewell and the fun broke out. Suspenders, Paulaner beverages, and Alpine hats provided a brief respite from research papers, midterm exams and the rigors inherent in seminary life.

The evening was brought to a close with a friendly Blitzkrieg (capture the flag) game that was wages with water balloons and squirt guns. Many thanks to the Social Committee of the Seminarian Association for a refreshing night.
Tekippe Theological Forum

On the evening of October 10th, Fr. Peter Ryan, S.J., Executive Director of the Secretariat of Doctrine and Canonical Affairs at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, served as this year’s Tekippe Theological Forum guest lecturer. In his dynamic lecture, he called the seminary community to a more profound appreciation of the beautiful teaching of the Church that everyone is called to holiness, though in different and complementary ways according to their unique personal vocations. “This teaching is not new,” he said, “but it was lost sight of by many in the Church for quite a long time.” In explaining why that happened, he offered two arguments.

First, he described the influence of a view of reality, drawn from Greek philosophy, that fails to appreciate the centrality of material reality. “Since bodily life is obviously central to marriage,” he said, “when such a view influences theology, marriage is devalued.” He then considered the effect of a legalistic understanding of morality that fails to see that being fully moral means “being all one can be”—which of course is what holiness is. “To overcome legalism,” he explained, “one must not only avoid mortal sin (which is of course a crucially important starting point) but seek to do God’s will in all things by living out every element of one’s personal vocation. This means that one should seek the kingdom of God for the glory of God in precisely the ways God calls one to do so.” All the baptized do this, he said, by living out their kingly, prophetic, and priestly offices.

Institution of Lectors and Acolytes

Matthew Hoffpauir, Seminarian

Bishop Joseph Kopacz of the Diocese of Jackson presided at the annual Mass for the institution of lectors and acolytes Sunday afternoon, October 12, at Notre Dame Seminary.

Twenty-one seminarians were instituted to the ministry of acolyte, and another twenty-three to the ministry of lector. In all, these men represented 13 dioceses and 2 religious communities.

In the rite, each candidate is handed a symbol of the ministry to which he is being instituted, a bible or a ciborium with bread for the respective ministries, as the presider exhorts the men to fulfill the ministry faithfully.
Notre Dame Readies for St. Ben’s in Soccer
NDS Soccer Team

For three straight years, St. Ben’s Seminary soccer team has wreaked havoc on their senior counterparts at the Notre Dame Seminary. NDS skipper Anh Tuan Phan, also known as “The Legend” for his magical skills at virtually every sport, says, “St. Ben’s should be braced for a tough one this year!”

Already tested at two friendlies this semester, Notre Dame Seminary has recorded laudable improvement since their last game against St. Ben’s, in the spring of 2014. The New Orleans based seminarians first tried out their new line-up in September in Baton Rouge, beating their opponents 5-4. In early October, a friendly played in Laurel, Mississippi gave the team additional hope that they could bring home a win against St. Ben’s in the spring.

With excitement, Deacon Martinez-Patino, who took on the reins from the first coach John Bosco Nyirenda, said he looked forward to returning to the team after his diocesan internship, to work for the much needed redemption from the St. Ben streak. Like his teammates, the coach believes this is the time for Notre Dame Seminary! And in a special way, he and colleague Torres will see to making it a sweet moment on the soccer turf, for their sendoff to priestly ordination, since they have been part of the team that has suffered losses to St. Ben’s the last three years.

Chancellor’s Dinner
Monday, March 2, 2015 at Notre Dame Seminary
Business, Parish and Dioceses Advertisement
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<th>Underwriting Opportunity</th>
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<td>1. Bishop’s Suite Furnishings</td>
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<td>2. Refurbishing of Pool Pavilion</td>
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<td>3. Our Lady of Lourdes House Refurbishing</td>
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<td>(12 rooms at $400.00 each)</td>
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<td>4. Canopy for Eucharistic Processions</td>
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<td>5. Classroom AV/Technology Upgrade</td>
<td>(4 classrooms at $1,750.00 each) $4,000.00</td>
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<td>6. Torches for Eucharistic Processions</td>
<td>(4 torches at $250.00 each) $1,000.00</td>
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Your name will appear in the next edition of the NDS Newsletter as an underwriter to one of these expenses.