Great Beginnings
Last a Lifetime:
90th Anniversary of NDS

Very Reverend James A.

As the Year of Faith soon concludes, NDS is celebrating its 90th anniversary this academic year. The first classes were convened on September 18, 1923. What began as a private meeting in 1920 at Archbishop Shaw’s house on Esplanade Avenue would result in the construction of NDS, providing the Church in the United States with a seminary that would truly prepare men to embrace the joys and challenges of ministry considering the circumstances of where the Church finds herself with the matrix of culture and society.

This year we opened our doors to 96 seminarians which included the 26 new men who arrived this past August. We welcomed new faculty members and staff to an already competent and highly qualified faculty who are providing our seminarians with a rigorous, realistic formation inspired by the New Evangelization.

This newsletter is an effort to capture some of the wonderful things happening at the seminary. It also provides you an occasion to learn more about our mission and even ways in which you can contribute spiritually and temporally to the mission of Notre Dame Seminary. With every new and passing year, a great beginning occurs in the life of the Church. When seminarians embrace their formation in a deliberate and urgent manner, great beginnings for them will last a lifetime. Thank you for your prayers and support. God Bless!
As summer began, I anxiously looked forward to my first formal parish ministry opportunity “back home,” in the Diocese of Shreveport.

Under the guidance and supervision of my pastor, Msgr. Earl Provenza, I participated in an extensive array of activities and ministries. In addition to serving weekend and daily masses, I also assisted with sacramental ministries in numerous baptisms and funerals. I made many visits to people in nursing homes and hospitals, and to home-bound members of Holy Trinity Parish. I also assisted the pastor, church staff, and volunteers, with RCIA class preparations, various research projects, and even training programs for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and for altar servers. Of particular note, I experienced the unique ministry opportunities of a downtown parish, such as working with the homeless and making visits to the incarcerated. Despite the rigors of busy parish life, I remained faithful to spiritual reading and a life of prayer.

Of all the experiences of my summer assignment at Holy Trinity, I believe the most fulfilling was getting to know the faithful – the members of our parish family. I encountered many people from diverse of backgrounds, in ways more rich and rewarding than my previous experiences as an underwriter and broker in the surety industry. I encountered Jesus Christ in ways I could not have expected, and I learned that by helping others, I received God’s help. The lessons I learned this summer will surely prove indispensable as I continue a life of ministry.
The Early Days of a New Life

Alexander Albert, Seminarian

Every September, the men of Notre Dame find themselves fully engaged in yet another year of formation, another round of classes. Yet, with each new Fall semester, they know that a very different kind of beginning is just that much closer. In view of this eventual change, I managed to catch up with two of our recent graduates, Fr. Andre Metrejean and Fr. Colin Braud, to get a small glimpse of the early days of priesthood.

So what’s priesthood like? Both priests enjoyed regularly celebrating Mass and hearing confessions, but the daily expectations can change drastically after that. Fr. Braud explains that “you never know who might call upon your help when you wake up in the morning.” Of course, different is not always exciting, it’s often a challenge. Fr. Metrejean rejoiced in “being a part of people’s lives” but noted that it means being a part of their pains and struggles as well as their joys. For Fr. Braud, this became very clear when HE was called upon one day to anoint his own father just before his final breath. In a fitting description of that moment, as well as the very essence of priestly sacrifice, he explained that it was “excruciatingly painful” as well as “beautifully amazing.”

How can a man prepare for something like that? How will Notre Dame Seminary help? Fr. Metrejean explained that the formators did a great job of impressing upon him their desire that he be a good priest. He explained that “they want you to take charge, and they give you what you need.” For him, and for the rest of the men at Notre Dame, it’s about shaping that priestly image and then trying to attain it, smoothing out the details with the guidance of the formators and the Holy Spirit. God be praised for these and all good beginnings, and may He bring each one to its fulfilment.

(Left to Right) Seminarian David Ducote, Fr. Andre Metrejean and Fr. Joe Krafft at 2013 NDS Commencement Exercises.
“Welcome to Notre Dame Seminary.” This phrase echoed the halls of Our Lady's house (NDS) as we made our way into our new home. This fresh start at Notre Dame became a source of enthusiasm for prayer, study, community life, and service. As new seminarians here at NDS, we were mostly strangers to each other, yet companions on the same journey and this journey is what had brought us together. There were new faces being seen, new friends being made, and new brothers becoming family in our new apostolic community. This year’s class of new seminarians varied greatly consisting of those both young and old, those transitioning from college seminary and those entering seminary for the first time, and even those coming from countries around the world such as Africa and Vietnam. Despite these differences, a bond quickly formed between us.

On Sunday, August 18 at 4:00 p.m., we filled the chapel with family and friends and began our Orientation Week with Holy Mass and a welcome from our Rector, Father Jim Wehner, priests, and returning seminarians staffing the Orientation Team. Orientation Week, stretching from Sunday to Friday, included conferences and talks full of information and inspiration. They gave us a great summary of formation here at NDS and insights into what was to be expected of us as well as the formation program. The Orientation Team did an excellent job balancing the week with social events and relaxation conducive for building relationships amongst the community.

Transitioning from college seminary to theology sets a serious attitude towards one's outlook of formation. This reality calls forth a great challenge in a seminarian. However, the maturity, discipline and zeal displayed by the men of the 2nd and 3rd year theology classes provided much encouragement. It was evident that these men loved Christ and His Church and it became contagious. I don't think there could have been a greater way to commence this new beginning.

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, November 2, 2013
90th Anniversary Gala & Auction
7:00 pm at Notre Dame Seminary
(Patron Party begins at 6:00 pm)

Friday, December 6, 2013
Notre Dame Seminary Christmas Luncheon
11:00 am at Church of the Immaculate Conception
Luncheon to Follow at The Roosevelt Hotel

Monday, February 10, 2014
90th Anniversary Celebration Dinner
6:00 pm in Schulte Hall at Notre Dame Seminary

For more information or to register for these events, please visit our web-site at www.nds.edu.
Just as Jesus sent out 72 disciples in the Gospel of St. Luke, Notre Dame Seminary sent out 19 seminarians this summer as chaplains in hospitals in Miami, Charlotte, Nashville, Chicago, Austin, and to many places in between those cities. Usually between the second and third year of theology, seminarians experience clinical pastoral education (CPE) while working and volunteering at hospitals and nursing homes. CPE is an interfaith professional education for ministry. It brings theological students and ministers into supervised encounters with persons in crisis. Out of this experience they gain a better understanding of ministry, an improved self-awareness, and sharper interpersonal and professional skills. At the beginning of the summer many went out a little scared, but as the summer days progressed each of the disciples/seminarians became confident chaplains comforting, affirming, and challenging patients. By being with patients in their suffering, their emergencies, their conversions, and hearing their amazing life stories, the 19 disciples/seminarians brought back inspiring stories of how God's grace acted in their lives and the patient’s lives. Ben Butler said, “CPE affirmed my vocation.” Br. Paul Mutisya commented, “Thank God for the grace of finding Christ in my true call.” Everardo Mora-Torres said, “God increased my trust in Him.” Stephen Lefort commented, “CPE was an opportunity to blossom in ministry.” James Smith remarked, “I experienced the gift of patience and resignation.” Daniel Martinez Patino commented, “I was able to reaffirm my vocation.”

Everardo Mora-Torres (left) and Chris Zavackis (right) in Clinical Pastoral Education at G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi.

**Congratulatory and/or Business Advertisement Options**

**90th Anniversary Celebration Dinner Program**

Monday, February 10, 2014

- $450 for Full Page Color Advertisement
- $225 for Half Page Color Advertisement
- $125 for Fourth Page Color Advertisement

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Dr. Thomas Neal is the new Academic Dean for Notre Dame Seminary. He brings to this position experiences in academia, leadership, mentoring, and spirituality. Dr. Neal has a doctorate in the area of spiritual theology, which has encouraged him to integrate his spiritual formation with intellectual formation. The Program for Priestly Formation, the U.S. Bishops' document that governs seminarian formation, states “The first task of intellectual formation is to acquire a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.” He finds this statement very powerful and states “This means that our firm dedication to academic rigor at NDS must be intimately bound up with equally firm commitment to facilitate an intimate encounter with God’s mystery that we explore in theology. That’s spirituality!”

The challenge for those in formation he recognizes is keeping a balance between academic studies and prayer with all the “busyness” of formation. Along with the required readings, papers, and tests, many seminarians are developing their new prayer life to integrate them. This challenge though can help the seminarians to grow in the virtues to acquire what Blessed John Henry Newman calls “the saintly intellect.” Dr. Neal says “That’s what we need, priests with saintly intellects, who have the mind of Christ!”

Dr. Neal feels very blessed to be here at Notre Dame Seminary in a challenging and fruitful position. He says “I feel unbelievably privileged to be allowed to serve in the work of priestly formation at a fabulous seminary. I take comfort that God seems to have predilection for using cracked earthen vessels.” Notre Dame Seminary welcomes Dr. Thomas Neal in his new role and the impact that he will have helping to integrate spirituality into the intellectual formation of the seminarians and faculty.
Notre Dame Seminary (NDS) continues to be devoted to forming priests for the Church and is into the second year of having Fr. Jim Wehner, S.T.D. at the head, steering the course of the seminary. In implementing certain aspects of the vision that Fr. Wehner has for the seminary, two priests were assigned to new positions. Fr. Deogratias Ekisa, S.T.D. was appointed Vice-Rector and Fr. Minh Phan, S.T.D., was named Director of Pre-Theology. Both priests look forward to fulfilling their duties in their new positions and being able to implement in their respective areas the further formation of seminarians.

With these new positions come new opportunities for Fr. Ekisa and Fr. Phan but also for the seminarians. Fr. Phan sees in his new position an opportunity for new seminarians to be guided by those who have been in seminary formation. “Pre-theology,” says Fr. Minh, “is like a novitiate within a religious congregation, preparing a seminarian to take that leap into theology.” Both other seminarians and the faculty and staff therefore play a role in the formation of those in the pre-theology program. Fr. Ekisa sees his position as one that “takes care of the nitty-gritty details of the seminary” and one in which he “gets to know the seminarians a little bit better and know their strengths and areas where they may need a little more help.” Faculty, staff and fellow seminarians therefore play a role in the New Evangelization as being of great importance in the current and future formation of priests, and we look forward to their hard work and dedication to God and his Church in their new positions.
Some Joys and Challenges of Diversity

Studying in a culturally diverse seminary definitely comes with its joys and challenges. Louis Carlos Valencia, a new seminarian who is originally from Columbia had this to say in English, a language he has been learning for only three weeks: “It is wonderful to be here! I don’t know English but my brother seminarians, the faculty and staff are very friendly and they are helping me to learn.” I am “wowed” by this guy’s English—he is no doubt a fast learner. And again, his words to me resonate with those of Peter at the Transfiguration event: “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three tents—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah” (Matt. 17:4). In fact, Louis stops short of proposing the erection of some tents, likely because he is enjoying the comfort of a recently renovated room in Shaw Hall where he lives with brother seminarians and formators including Archbishop Alfred Hughes.

All of the six seminarians I interacted with shared in this joyous splendor. Although this is not the complete story. As Francis Offia, a seminarian for the Archdiocese of New Orleans but originally from Nigeria puts it, “This place is good but very challenging. I miss my family and friends in Nigeria. The food here is different in a way.” Br. Dahn Nguyen, a Vietnamese seminarian from Missionaries of the Holy Apostles says, “It has been tough learning English and the struggle continues.” The English dictums, “Every rose has its thorns,” and “Every road has its hills and bends” perhaps sum it all up.

The Sustaining Factor

As to what keeps these seminarians going amidst all the challenges they face, Ramil Rebosura a seminarian originally from the Philippines but studying for the Archdiocese of New Orleans had this to say: “I would have packed my bags and gone back to the Philippines but I have tremendous support and encouragement from family, friends, brother seminarians, fatherly professors and formators. I also love the Church and I am committed to pursuing my priestly vocation. Daniel Martinez, a seminarian originally from Mexico but studying for the diocese of Biloxi, adds, “It is about embracing the spirit of humility and sacrifice.” Francis Offia agrees that, “it would be unbearable were it not for prayers, the grace of God and formators’ efforts to make this a home for us.”
Catholicity versus Diversity

The Catechism of the Catholic Church rightly expresses that, “the Church is the visible plan of God’s love for humanity, because God desires that the whole human race may become one people of God, form one body of Christ, and be built into one temple of the Holy Spirit (CCC #776). The Catholic Church therefore in her openness to all peoples, “from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues” (CCC #775), is inseparable with diversity. Diversity is part and parcel of the Catholic Church. It is however diversity in communion. Our role as evangelizers is simply to instill communion and unity in Christ in his fullness into the globalization arena and so transform the global village into a global communion- truly Catholic.

Notre Dame Seminary in her diversity is thus intentionally forming seminarians into true Catholic priests, building up their Catholic identity in a spirit of unity and communion in diversity, not merely “tolerance in diversity.” As Fr. James Wehner, Rector of Notre Dame Seminary recently explained to seminarians, “… this experience of authentic communio energizes our sense of mission…the Christian identity of the believer is linked to the Body of Christ.” In a phrase, NOTRE DAME SEMINARY IS TRULY CATHOLIC.

Conclusion

Studying in Notre Dame Seminary is thus truly a process of being helped to imbibe and live the catholic mind. Indeed, it is a process I choose to describe as, “ascending towards the Infinite One.” The Catholic mind defies and transcends limitations of tribe, race, national boundaries and culture, rising to universality/simplicity and thus, in a way approaching the Infinite One.

As a final counsel to my brothers, the wise man neither trashes the rose because of minor pricks of the rose-thorns nor gives up his trip home because of the tough bends and hills on the road. Moreover, it is worth remembering the ancient observation that, “the darkest hour of the night is dawn,” just hang in there! Grace abounds and perhaps that’s why the motto of our 90 year old seminary still stands high, loud and clear “DEUS PROVIDEBIT-God will provide.”

2014 ALUMNI DAY
FEBRUARY 27, 2014

All priest alumni are asked to please save the date for the 2014 Alumni Day to be held on Thursday, February 27, 2014. A mailing will be sent in December with registration materials and alumni dues information. Please update your contact information now, particularly your email address, to insure you receive this mailing and other important correspondence from Notre Dame Seminary. You may send your information to the Development Office by fax (504)866-3119; by email to ylacour@nds.edu; or by phone (504)866-7426, ext. 3740. We hope to see all of you on February 27, 2014.
NDS Welcomes Fr. Nile Gross and Fr. Philip Powell, O.P.

This Fall at Notre Dame Seminary, Fr. Nile Gross and Fr. Philip Neri Powell, O.P. took on new positions on the faculty. Fr. Gross, an alumnus of Notre Dame Seminary, begins his first year in the faculty as the new Director of Sacred Liturgy. In his second year teaching at the seminary, Fr. Powell, a Dominican priest from the Southern Province, takes on the position of Director of Homiletics.

In his approach to teaching liturgy, Fr. Gross wants to help “people to see the liturgy for what it is, which is that perfect prayer to God.” In addition to organizing the various liturgies at the seminary, he is also teaching a weekend course in the M.A. program.

Fr. Powell, who received his doctorate in English literature, emphasizes that “a homily is written for the ear.” To develop composition and delivery, he has incorporated one-on-one tutorials with each seminarian to discuss their practice homilies.

Both are already looking to the Spring semester and hope to offer elective courses—Fr. Gross on Liturgical Space and Time and Fr. Powell on Preaching in a Nihilistic Culture. The seminary is blessed to have both these priests as part of the faculty and community.

Fr. Nile C. Gross, S.T.L.,
Director of Sacred Liturgy

Fr. Philip N. Powell, O.P., Ph.D.,
Director of Homiletics

Underwriting Opportunities at NDS

1. Recreational Furniture for Seminarians — $2,855.80
2. TV Monitors for Classrooms — $7,829.96
3. Pool Landscaping — $945.00
4. Painting for Parking Lot — $650.00
5. Painting of Seminarian Bedrooms —
   (25 at $400.00 each)
6. Hallway Lighting (23 at $110 each) — $2,530.00
7. Repair of Processional Cross — $654.00

Should you be interested in underwriting any of these expenses, please contact the Development Office at (504) 866-7426, ext. 3740.

Your name will appear in the next edition of the NDS Newsletter as an underwriter to one of these expenses.
Help Our Lady’s Seminary

If you enjoyed this Newsletter, please consider a donation to Notre Dame Seminary to help defray the cost of printing and postage. For more information about Notre Dame Seminary, please contact the Development Office at (504) 866-7426, ext. 3740.
Recently, the New Orleans Chapter of Legatus hosted the NDS seminarians and faculty for the annual Vocations Mass and Dinner. It was a wonderful evening of fellowship and a celebration of the significant contributions made by the apostolate of Legatus in the New Orleans area. Pictured above (left to right): John Hunt, National Executive Director of Legatus, Archbishop Gregory Aymond, who inspired the membership and seminarians as the keynote speaker, and Legatus members Joseph Canizaro and Dominick Sciortino.