

NOTRE DAME SEMINARY

Graduate School of Theology



God's Grace Through His Living Word

BIBLE MARATHON
2020



Inside

- Reflections During Lockdown
- Acompañó Mission Trip
- Save the Date



Very Rev. James A. Wehner
Rector/President

Dear Friends:

As you know, when the time came to make a decision about sending the seminarians home or keeping them at the seminary, the faculty discerned which would provide the seminarians the best formation experience. The mission of the seminary is to form strong and faithful pastoral shepherds for the Church. The safety of the seminarians cannot be compromised in maintaining this mission yet the mission itself cannot be compromised. Once local authorities implemented “stay at home” policies, the seminary initiated strict protocols in which staff and faculty were to remain at home, and resident priests and seminarians would lock down the campus. As a result of these protocols, everyone who remained at the seminary was safe, healthy, and secure. We were therefore able to continue providing the seminarians the best formation and care including the Liturgy, sacraments, community, classes, and spiritual care. This also gave us the opportunity to marshal spiritual forces at the seminary to be in solidarity with those who were sick, those who lost their jobs, those unable to receive the Eucharist, and those families experiencing stress and anxiety. The seminary was able to embrace a pastoral care that was spiritual in nature. Since we were able to retain our community for worship and liturgy, we emphasized to the seminarians the grace of receiving the Eucharist for those who could not – a spiritual and solidarity communion on behalf of others. As the semester was coming to a close, NDS was able to succeed in its mission even during a time of crisis. The Blessed Mother watched over and blessed our seminary community. Thank you for your support during these past months and know of our deep appreciation for all of our NDS friends. God Will Provide – Deus Providebit!

2020 PRIESTHOOD ORDINATION CLASS



First Row (L-R): Dcn. Desmond Ndikum, Dcn. John Joseph Bourque, Dcn. Miller Gomez, Fr. Jim Wehner, Dcn. Andrew Nguyen, Dcn. Rusty Bruce, Dcn. Daniel Duplantis Middle Row (L-R): Dcn. Mathew Dunn, Dcn. Andrew Killeen, Dcn. Cesar Sanchez, Dcn. Sam Bond, Dcn. Aristeo Berrum, Dcn. Juan Carlos Garcia Back Row (L-R): Dcn. Sylvester Adoga, Dcn. John Yike, Dcn. Javier Suarez, Dcn. Luis Duarte

Meeting Christ at the Border

by Vu Nguyen, Diocese of Dallas

In December, the First Theology class at Notre Dame Seminary spent a week in El Paso for *Acompaño*, our annual mission trip. True to its name, “I accompany,” this trip is an opportunity to encounter people in challenging pastoral situations in other parts of the world. An added factor on the journey was our clerical attire: when advancing from minor to major seminary, a seminarian often begins to wear the Roman collar as a sign of his stage in discernment.

Halfway through the trip, I met a teenager who had crossed the border alone. Although he knew no one, he recognized in our clerical attire the same Church that he had known from home. Speaking with him allowed me a glimpse of how a priest must feel when he is recognized not in his individuality, but in his identity as *alter Christus*, another Christ.

How this boy arrived to the United States is beyond my control. In my discernment to serve as a priest of Jesus Christ, however, I am not called to take a political side, but to care for the person who is in front of me, “for I was hungry and you gave me food...a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35).

To love another person as a child of God, regardless of his or her past, lifestyle, or status, is an obligation of the Catholic priesthood. In order to do this, we must detach from our own preferences so that the words of Christ are our first guide. In priestly ministry, there will be many opportunities to encounter those whose backgrounds are different from ours, or whose lifestyles we might not prefer. What will never

change, however, is that “whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40).



Theology 1 seminarians travel to El Paso, Texas for their Acompaño Mission Trip.



Seminarians and parish volunteers prepare lunch after learning about the history and cultures of the El Paso region.



Monsignor Arturo Bañuelas of the Diocese of El Paso leads a prayer service at the US/Mexico border, praying for a mutually beneficial solution to the border crisis.



Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, celebrates a combined Mass for ND Seminary and El Paso seminarians at their local seminary, dedicated to St. Charles Borromeo.



Seminarians conclude their visit to the US/Mexico border by offering private prayer over the Rio Grande River.



Reflections “From the Inside” of the NDS Lockdown

When a Stay at Home order was announced for all Louisiana residents in response to the pandemic, in an effort to preserve the formation community, Notre Dame Seminary imposed a strict lockdown protocol for all resident seminarians and priests. Here are some reflections “from the inside” of the NDS lockdown:

Briefly describe your experience inside the NDS lockdown.

“There has been some stress and anxiety with the uncertainties of the pandemic and the increasing civil restrictions, but the NDS community has really come together in solidarity during this period. The most calming part of it all has been the regularity of the schedule and the sacraments. We are blessed to be able to continue with daily Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Mass, and weekly Stations of the Cross and Rosary. It is in faith that we find our grounding. One of the most beautiful practices to come from all of this is encouraging each seminarian and priest to bring the people of God with them spiritually to the altar since the faithful are not able to receive Holy Communion sacramentally each day.” **Fr. Kurt Young**

“This lockdown... has been filled with abundant graces from Our Lord. I have personally said to several of my brothers that this has been a time in my life where I have been the most fervent in my prayer. I believe this is due to the amount of suffering that is going on in the world outside and in some of our own families, too.” **Anthony Romeo**

What has been the most challenging part of the lockdown?

“The most challenging part... is encountering the sufferings of the people in our city and beyond and not being able to physically minister to them.” **Fr. Minh Phan**

“Worrying about my family and my friends back home. Worrying about my mother who works in a hospital...and the possibility of her being exposed My father is worried about his work. My aunt and uncle were supposed to be received into the Church at the Easter Vigil....that must be put on hold. Many of the parishioners at my assignment have reached out to me, expressing their concerns and fears. It is hard to console them when I am so far away and, frankly, living so comfortably at the seminary. But the fact that I have a regular rhythm of life here helps me to ensure that their cares, concerns and situations are brought before our Lord, especially through the Liturgy of the Hours and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.” **Nick Nappier**

“During these days of sequestration, it has been a blessing for me to be with the seminary community, with the excellent priests and future priests. Nevertheless, there have been many difficult days when lay friends and family needed a priest, and I was not able to go to them.” **Fr. Joe Krafft**

What are the blessings that have come from the lockdown?

“Because of the lockdown, I have come to a greater appreciation of my role as an intercessor. I have been humbled by the fact that we are some of the few people in the world that still have access to the Sacraments.” **Nick Nappier**

“It has been a blessing for me to have more time to focus on formation. While there are obvious increased distractions due to the current situation of our world, there has been a great reduction of other distractions.... Life has been simplified and I feel more able to focus on the necessities of formation.” **Andrew Sanchez**

How has the NDS community been strengthened during this time?

“This time together has definitely strengthened the community by bonding us together with a common experience. Whenever something out of the ordinary occurs, the effect on a community is bringing people closer together over the shared experience. We have been together day in and day out. We have weathered this storm together. We have struggled together, and now we are closer and stronger as a community for it.” **Fr. Kurt Young**

“I think the community has been strengthened just by us doing things we have not had to do in the past....from serving each other at meals, to working the front desk, to cleaning the bathrooms and taking out the trash.” **David Doyle**

“What has helped us to overcome this situation is the fact that we have always been united as a community of brothers pursuing the same goal and building each other up. I think the lockdown has provided me with more opportunities not only to get to know my brothers a little better, but also to pray for them and minister to them in a special way.” **Dcn. Juan Carlos Garcia**

On a lighter note...

“At this point, I think all of us are getting a little stir crazy. I believe Deacon Javier drove around the circle 5-6 times yesterday while I was walking around out there...not really sure why.” **Nick Nappier**

“I spend more time by the sink washing my hands than anywhere else.” **Christopher Oraziaka**

“Since we are trying to avoid contact as much as possible, I have learned how to greet people using the *Wakanda salute*, from the movie Black Panther.” **Fr. Deogratias Ekisa**

“I think the Popeye’s (on Carrollton) has never had so much business from us (delivery only, of course!)” **Kevin Kolker**

Messages of comfort and hope for our NDS friends and family members...

“I know that others in our archdiocese and around the world have experienced greater crosses than what I have experienced during this pandemic, nevertheless, I know that God is with us, and when our crosses feel heaviest, it is then when God’s grace is more abundant. God did not give us the pandemic, but He has given us the grace to allow him to journey with us. A few gifts I have received thus far: to slow down, to recognize the gift and importance of God, family, and friends, and to take time to pray for others.” **Fr. Joe Krafft**

“We are not in this alone. We are going through this tough time together and despite your particular struggle, God is with you in it.... Unite your suffering to Jesus and remember that after the Crucifixion comes the Resurrection.” **Andrew Sanchez**

“I will always remember something a stranger said aloud as I was in the lobby of a hotel after Hurricane Katrina, evacuated with my family. He said, “I was poor once before and I’ll be poor again.” We are all experiencing the depths of our human poverty at this time. Part of that poverty is the awareness of our inability to change our circumstances, as we would like. Such poverty affords us an opportunity to see more clearly the presence in our hearts of Him Who never changes and Who never leaves us orphan, Almighty God. While so many things which are ordinarily seen have been taken away from us, now is the time, in faith, to reflect upon Him Who is unseen and yet is closer to us than the air we breathe and Who loves us more than we could ever imagine.” **Fr. Jeffrey Montz**

“We know that all things work for good for those who love God...’ (Rom 8:28). Cling to those words! There is a lot of suffering happening in our world right now, but God has not abandoned us. Although these sufferings may make us feel more isolated than the quarantine already does, through the Cross, they can become moments of the deepest communion with Christ and, through Him, with one another. Let’s have the mentality of St. Paul: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Col 1:24).” **Kevin Kolker**

“It seems that God is teaching us to strengthen our relationship with Him through silence and solitude.” **Fr. Minh Phan**

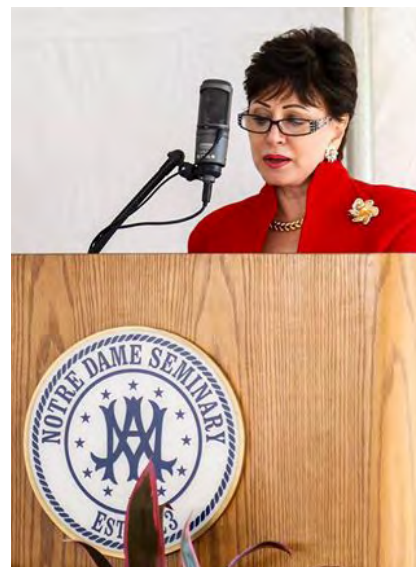
God's Grace Through His Living Word: BIBLE MARATHON 2020

by Taylor Sanford, Diocese of Baton Rouge

“**I** hereby declare that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time is to be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the word of God.” With these words from his recent motu proprio *Aperuit Illis*, Pope Francis instituted *Word of God Sunday*, the first of which we celebrated at Notre Dame Seminary by proclaiming the whole Bible from cover-to-cover right on our front lawn.

From Tuesday, January 28 through Saturday, February 1, about 200 readers came from over 60 different faith communities in order to take part in this great effort to bring God's Word anew into the streets of New Orleans. Many people gathered to listen to God's word being proclaimed all throughout the day and night. So many people expressed how the proclamation of God's Word affected their lives that week. One man told us he just had a couple of minutes to stop and listen on his way home from work, but the few words he heard were exactly what he needed to hear from God. One woman shared that she had been deeply hurt by the Church and that this was her first time attending a religious event in years. It proved to be very healing for her. One reader even testified that while she was proclaiming, her husband received a call that ended up being an answered prayer! We heard so many stories of God's grace breaking into people's lives through His living Word.

Pope Francis' vision for this celebration is to foster unity centered around



Mrs. Gayle Benson began the Bible Marathon proclaiming from the Book of Genesis.

The NDS Community gathers to kick off the 2020 Bible Marathon.



START
Tuesday
1/28 - 12:30PM
END
Saturday
2/1 @ 6:00 PM

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Christ, who is spoken of in all of Scripture: “The Bible is the book of the Lord’s people, who, in listening to it, move from dispersion and division towards unity.” We should strive therefore, “to strengthen our bonds with the Jewish people and to pray for Christian unity.” This we did as many different Protestant groups came to read and listen. We were even graced with the presence of a Jewish cantor from a local synagogue who chanted parts of the Torah in Hebrew. Many people experiencing homelessness also came to listen with us. For many who came, gathered as we were around the word of God, there was a deep experience of communion.

The Bible Marathon culminated in a candlelight procession into the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception

for the celebration of Candlemas. So following upon the reading of Revelation, where God’s heavenly city is unveiled, we ascended the front steps of the seminary to encounter Christ the Bridegroom in our participation here below in the Heavenly Banquet.

Pope Francis goes on in his document to say that, “a day devoted to the Bible should not be seen as a yearly event but rather a year-long event.” While this does not mean we will be setting up any perpetual reading chapels any time soon, it does mean that our time of more intense listening to the Word of God should lead us to be more receptive to hearing Him speak to us in our lives. So many days after the Bible Marathon is over, He continues to speak His words of love to us. Are we listening?



Archbishop Alfred Hughes closes out the Old Testament on Friday evening.



As a continuous Bible Marathon, volunteers proclaim all throughout the night. Here, Scottie Cabes reads from the Book of Exodus.



While listening to the live stream of the Bible Marathon, students at Holy Name of Jesus School in New Orleans looked up Scripture passages that teach how to live as members of God’s Kingdom.



*Theology 4
Deacons proclaim the Gospels by candlelight during the overnight hours.*



Members of the Young Adult Community volunteer as readers for a one-hour time slot.



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2901 S. Carrollton Avenue
New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

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SAVE THE DATE

CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON FOR PRIESTS

Friday, December 4, 2020

Mass at Immaculate Conception Church

Luncheon at The Roosevelt Hotel

GALA & AUCTION

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Notre Dame Seminary

*For more information, contact Caroline Thriffley in the Development Office
by phone at (504) 866-7426, ext. 375 or by email at cthrieffley@nds.edu*