



Regina Cleri

A TIME TO REJOICE

Seminarians hear the news of the new Cardinal

By Victor Perez

It was the feast of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the 17th of October. It was 6:55 a.m. and many of us were coming down to Mass, which starts at 7:00. On the door of our dormitory, there was posted on the window a white piece of paper with red letters. "Pope Benedict has named... Archbishop DiNardo... Cardinal!" The seminarian behind me thought it was perhaps a joke. At Mass that day there were many smiling faces, and sure enough, at the prayer intentions there was a petition for God's blessing on the "Cardinal-Designate." Many seminarians had missed the sign on the door of their dormitory, and for them the prayer intention was their way of receiving the exciting news.



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A TIME TO REMEMBER

Seminarians remember the priests of Texas

By Victor Perez

At Cardinal DiNardo's press conference after being designated Cardinal, he mentioned the bishops, deacons, religious, and faithful who came before him who did the hard work in forming the Church of Galveston-Houston. The first bishop Jean-Marie Odin for instance, used to visit different churches on horseback all throughout Texas. Many times he traveled through Comanche territory and went over bad roads with little food. He returned to France to recruit priests for Texas. He told his potential recruits that if they came to Texas, "they might not have three square meals and a roof to sleep under but that they would always have the

cool dirt to sleep on."

We at St. Mary's have been remembering the past priests who have contributed to the Church in Texas, originally the Church of Galveston. On All Soul's Day, Fr. Brendan Cahill gave us his Rector's conference, which consisted of praying the rosary for five influential priests of the history of the Church of Galveston-Houston. He gave us a brief synopsis of their lives and then led us to pray for them and meditate on their example.

In Fr. Brendan's conference, he mentioned Msgr. Marius Chataignon, Frs. John Gleissner, William Steele, John Baptist Huynh Tran and Dennis Peterson. His main source for their lives is Fr. James Vander-

holt (St. Mary's Class of '57) of the diocese of Beaumont who came to give us a day of recollection on November 31. He has, as a hobby, compiled the biographies of many Texas priests.

Msgr. Chataignon served as an Army Chaplain during WWII and also was a close friend of General Patton. He was born in France, fought in the French Army, studied at St. Mary's in La Porte (the seminary's first location) and was ordained at St. Mary's Cathedral in Galveston in 1911. He served there under Fr. James Kirwin. General Patton sent him a special commendation stating, "You have demonstrated, at all times

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They Left their Nets and Followed Him...
Seminarians with a later vocation tell their story



“I feared that the attorney at the firm who hired me would be disappointed or even angry.

Instead, he came around his desk to where I was seated and asked if he could say a prayer with me.”



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One of the blessings of being at St. Mary’s is the rich life experience many of our seminarians have. Our community is a constant reminder that God calls men from all walks of life, with myriad personal histories, to serve him in the priesthood. In this article we hear the stories of several men who left successful careers, even later in life, to pursue God’s call. Sometimes their co-workers were surprised, and sometimes they were less than supportive, but more often, it seems, the men were surprised at the support and encouragement they received. Here are their stories, in their own words.

Deacon Tom Lam
4th Year Theologian

Most of my family, friends, and colleagues knew that I had wanted to be a lawyer since the age of eleven. So when I announced the news that I was going to leave my job at the law firm after just two years of practice to enter the seminary, I had a lot of explaining to do. My mother, although surprised, told me that she had been praying for a long time that one of her children would become a priest or a religious. My father was initially disappointed. Of his four children, I was his only son. In addition, my father, who gave up his career in Vietnam to immigrate to the United States so that his children could have the opportunity to pursue their own careers, was so proud of the fact that his sacrifice produced the first and only lawyer in the family. Thankfully, it took my father only two days to become excited about the idea that his son was discerning the priest-

hood, especially when he learned that I would still retain my status as a licensed attorney.

It was, however, the reaction of my supervising attorneys and colleagues at the law firm that most surprised me. I feared that the attorney at the firm who hired me would be disappointed or even angry. Instead, he came around his desk to where I was seated and asked if he could say a prayer with me. Within twenty minutes of leaving that meeting, I, as well as the rest of the members of the law firm, received on my desk a Memorandum announcing and congratulating me on my “life decision.” I left the law firm in Houston on a Friday and by that Sunday, I arrived at Holy Trinity Seminary in Dallas with my belongings packed in my car.

By way of epilogue, one year after I entered the seminary, my younger sister announced that she had been accepted to the University of California at Berkeley School of Law. Since then, she has graduated law school and passed the California Bar exam. So my father, who thought he was going to lose the only attorney in the family when I entered the seminary, ended up with two lawyers, proving that no matter what you sacrifice out of love for God, He can never be outdone in generosity.

Joe Doran
2nd Year Pre-Theologian

Before entering the seminary, I was the chief executive of an international trading company that I had directed for 25 years. We specialized in commercial food service equipment and service to the oilfield. We fur-

nished kitchens around the world, sometimes large enough to feed 10,000 people. I had the opportunity to work in Russia, Nigeria, Haiti, Kuwait, Korea, Scotland, and a score of other countries. I can honestly say that I had the best job in the world for me, bar one.

The first intimations that there was something better came through my involvement in lay ministry, both catechesis and social ministry. Increasingly, over ten years or more, I felt called toward a fuller commitment. I thought this call was still to lay ministry, but after the death of my wife, I began to take seriously the suggestion of friends that I consider the priesthood. The more prayerfully I did so, the more deeply I was called to discern a priestly vocation. Finally, with a sense of casting off into new waters, I applied and was accepted to be a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

My two sons traveled the road of decision with me, affirming my steps and encouraging me when doubts arose. My mother and sisters were enthusiastic supporters when I told them of the new direction I was taking. The greatest surprise to me came from the owners of the company that I directed. These were friends as well as colleagues who were invested in my business success. I regretted parting from them and feared that they might suffer difficulties and financial loss. That they greeted my announcement with joy and prayers of intercession was another confirmation for me.

Entry into the seminary has

... In Their Own Words

brought about a number of material changes in my life, but I have been amazed at how swiftly, easily, and completely they have been accomplished. From the time I arrived at St. Mary's, I have had a sense of being gifted in a remarkable way to be here. From this sense of gift has flowed a deep happiness and gratitude to the Lord.

Thomas Hawxhurst,
2nd Year Theologian

I was born and grew up in New Orleans, LA. That means I'm a Southern boy, though the Crescent City has its own take on that. I first came to Houston to go to college at the University of St. Thomas, and the four years I spent there changed my life. After graduating, I left Houston for a few years and spent some time in the US Coast Guard Reserve. That was fun--out to save lives, fix things and drive fast, while Uncle Sam bought the gas. But I quickly found my way back.

The landing spot was Incarnate Word Academy, where I taught Social Studies, mostly World and US History, for 13 years. It took a lot of energy and could be all-absorbing, but it was a blast, especially just getting to know the kids and being around them. Teaching and coaching meant life was a continuous stream of challenge and discovery and the two job titles fed each other. As a coach, I could demand more out of the kids in my classes and it meant that the lessons (for them and me) didn't stop when the bell rang. At practices, meets and on road trips (we went across the Southwest, as far as California),

the rolling adventure kept me literally jumping out of bed most mornings, just to see what was next. And each year, as some of the girls graduated and moved on, I was very blessed to become friends with and keep in touch with them.

Still, there was an empty space in my life. I helped out in my parish, Christ the King Catholic Church, teaching Confirmation classes for a couple of years, until it became a little too much like work. I was an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist and volunteered for different projects in the parish. But I missed my time in uniform, so when a friend invited me, I joined the Community Volunteer Fire Department, serving the Alief-Mission Bend area and was a firefighter-EMT for 10 years. It felt good to help people, especially on the ambulance, even though we were just a rolling band-aid. There were too many calls; the real problem was too big and complicated for us. Those times reminded me to pray.

I think it was the sense of things moving along that finally got to me and made me ask again if I was doing all that I could with what God has given me. It has been a great adventure! I loved what I did, but it wasn't enough, for the people around me or for me. So, I sought admission to St. Mary's to see what God would do.

Deacon Nock Russell
4th Year Theologian

I started with Walt Disney in 1971 working at the stroller shop on Main Street in Disney World. The company was big on promoting from within. My

main interest was with computers, so this was my aim. I did a stint in the confectionary, where I put on a show making peanut brittle. Because of me working in the confectionary there were a lot of girls that wanted to be my friend for the free peanut brittle. After six months I transferred to Data Processing, which was my career ambition. I was a computer operator for three years and then moved to my dream job of being a computer programmer. For the next six years, I worked my way up as project manager and was transferred to the corporate office in Burbank, CA, where I designed and maintained financial databases for the production side of the company.

It was at that time that my faith grew by leaps and bounds. I was active in my parish as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist and confirmation teacher for eleven years. On a Friday evening Mass during Lent, as the priest raised the Host, the Lord said to me, "You should be up there doing that." And I said, "Yes." That was in March of 2001. If I had stayed three more years at Disney I would have had a lifetime pass to all Disney facilities, but I felt the Lord's call was more important. I asked the Lord for confirmation that this was a message from him. The next Monday, Disney announced a layoff in my division. They were asking for volunteers, who would be rewarded with severance packages. I took this to be a sign. The second sign was how fast I entered into the seminary—it only took me five months!



"I think it was the sense of things moving along that got to me and made me ask again if I was doing all that I could with what God has given me."



“For me it was not a tough decision, even though a lot of people from my workplace tried to get me to stay.”



Second Career

I told people at work that I wanted to be a priest. I was surprised how many Catholics were in my office. I didn't come across anyone who thought it was a bad idea. Many people looked at me with admiration for making such a commitment, especially late in life. Frank, who was president of the Holy Name Society, said, "It is about time. We have been praying for you." In August of 2001 I found myself in the seminary.

After living a single life for 50+ years, adjusting to seminary life was different, yet I was able to move into it easily through my commitment to the Lord's call and prayer.

Thang Nguyen,

2nd Year Theologian

I started my career as a Service Technician at FedEx. My job was to troubleshoot, to repair,

and to document three out of five circuit boards: the power, CPU, and front panel boards inside the trackers which they used to scan the bar codes. My time was flexible because I had to go to school also. I worked at FedEx for three years, and within these three years I bought a truck and got it paid off before I decided to return to the Diocese of Corpus Christi as a seminarian. When my co-workers heard that I was about to leave, some Baptist ladies tried to convince me to stay. One of them said to me, "Are you crazy? Haven't you heard that priests abuse children? Why don't you get married and become a preacher? You can preach and you can have a wife also. It can keep you out of trouble like those priests." Cardinal Law's problems in Boston were also making the news at the time that I decided to go back to the Diocese. For me, it was not a tough

decision, even though a lot of people from my workplace tried to get me to stay. I believed that only God could satisfy the hunger and thirst which I was experiencing at that time.

Now I have found peace and joy in my journey to the priesthood. That peace is very important in any vocation, I believe, and more important in the priestly vocation. Without a doubt, that is the reason why, when Jesus first appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, the first words He said to them were, "Peace be with you" (Jn 24:36). It was an encouraging statement, but more than that, it gave them the peace they needed to persevere in carrying out the mission which the Lord Jesus Christ was entrusting to them. I have experienced this same peace in my journey of discernment for priesthood.

Remembering...

(continued from Page 1)

and in all places, outstanding zeal, sympathy, and efficiency." He won the Legion of Merit in 1943 for his outstanding service in North Africa and Sicily and the Bronze Star in July, 1944, and he was the first priest to celebrate Mass at St. Peter's Basilica after the occupation. Supposedly, Fr. "Chat" got tired of Patton cursing his staff and "stood up to him nose to nose and toe to toe and let him have it. While his staff froze, Patton grew silent, took a step back, turned to his staff and said, 'Like Mary said at Cana, 'do whatever this man tells you.'"

Fr. John Gleissner, also mentioned by Fr. Brendan, is famous

for beginning campus ministry to Texas A&M students. He was born in 1865 in a little village in Bavaria. He wanted to be a missionary, so he came to Texas and was ordained by Bishop Gallagher in 1889. He was appointed two weeks later as pastor of St. Martin's Church in Tours and established a school. Then he was sent to Hearne and its numerous missions- Groesbeck, Mexia, Navasota, Hempstead, Waller, Spring Creek, Milano, Rockdale, Caldwell, Frenstat, New Baden, Marquez and the Mexicans in the numerous missions of Leon County. Then he was sent to Bryan for a "temporary assignment." He was there 50 years. At St. Joseph's,

he saw a few young men in uniform who had walked six miles from A&M College to attend Mass. He approached the school and got permission to celebrate Mass in the old Chemistry building. He used a desk for an altar and heard confessions there too. In 1926, a chapel was finally built there. Many of our seminarians come from St. Mary's in A&M. It is important for us seminarians to appreciate what has come before us because it helps us to realize that we are a part of something much greater than ourselves. May God continue to make our hard work fruitful!

Living the Beatitudes

By **Zachary Webb**

During Thanksgiving break last November, seven seminarians from St. Mary's Seminary traveled to Mexico City on a mission trip. They spent four days working with the Missionary of Charity Brothers, whose ministry entails caring for the needs of thirty-two mentally and physically handicapped men. These men, whose ages range from fifteen to sixty years, possess comparably varying mental capacities that require constant personal assistance such as feeding, showering, and changing diapers.

The seminarians had the unique opportunity to enter into the daily work and prayer life of the Missionary of Charity Brothers. Every day began at 5:00 a.m. with morning adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, which allowed the Brothers to draw the necessary spiritual strength to serve the residents of their facility. The seminarians quickly discovered that the Brothers were able to serve the poor with such compassion and love because they themselves have first been filled with the unconditional love of Christ! Without this daily encounter with the Christ who "thirsts" for all souls, the Brothers would not be able to tackle the demands of their ministry with such zeal and joy.

Reflecting on his encounters with these men, **Kurtis Wiedenfeld**, seminarian of the Diocese of Austin, notes that "there were a lot of similarities with dealing with chil-

dren, except that these children were in their twenties and thirties. They wanted to play, they wanted your attention, they needed to be bathed and changed, and they had to be fed. So it was definitely a dirty job that put you in direct contact with certain uncomfortable realities of the human condition. However, there was also this simplicity and innocence about their life that calls to mind Psalm 45:16: 'You shall make them princes in all the earth.' These men, who seemingly had no useful purpose on this earth, are the true princes of the Church. These simple souls have a special place in the Divine Heart, which has a greater value than all the usefulness in the world."

Seminarian **Eli Lopez** of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston recalls how surprised he was when he first witnessed the spirit of joy in these residents: "They were full of life. They were the most loving and compassionate people I have ever been with. They showed me what true happiness was all about. I realized that we here in the U.S. are the ones who are poor—spiritually poor, that is. We are bombarded with materialism, and some of us accumulate so much material possessions and yet are still unhappy. I hope to let others know here in my community of the love and happiness that I experienced in the simple everyday activities of these men."

By observing how the residents responded to their caretakers with the innocence and joy of a child, the seminarians grew in

their awareness of Christ's presence in those who, like Christ, are rejected and unwanted by the world. Pre-Theologian **Thai Tran** of the Diocese of Little Rock recalls that "Our Lord's words, 'Whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me,' took on a whole new level of meaning for me. Caring for those men gave me the opportunity to see the image of Christ in their faces."

Veteran missionary **Justin Nguyen** of the Austin Diocese echoes his fellow seminarians' sentiments when he credits the Missionary of Charity Brothers with having taught them a lesson on how to love: "There are people who spend years in school to try to learn the meaning of 'love.' However, it seems to me that the Brothers naturally know how to love without learning from a textbook. The Brothers love by being the medium through which Christ's love is manifested to the people they serve."

The words of Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta resonate throughout the seminarians' missionary experience: "The poor give us much more than we give them." That is why Jesus described the poor in spirit as blessed—because these simple souls teach us how to inherit, along with them, the Kingdom of Heaven.



"They were full of life. They were the most loving and compassionate people I have ever been with."



What were they thinking?

A look at the thoughts of those present at the Diaconate Ordination

By Tom Lam

Dcn. Tommy Chen recalls the singing of the Litany of Saints, in which were added the names of the patron saints of those to be ordained, as a poignant memory: “As I was prostrating myself before the altar while the congregation called on all the Saints to pray for us, I was overwhelmed with a real sense that the whole Church was present there with me: the Saints in heaven and the People of God on earth.”

The principal celebrant of the Mass, the Most Reverend Daniel E. Flores, had been the formation director of these men while he served on the faculty of St. Mary’s Seminary prior to being ordained a bishop for the Archdiocese of Detroit. In his homily, Bishop Flores pointed out to the soon-to-be ordained men that “it is not surprising that many of the deacons of the early Church were martyrs for the faith because they were the public signs of the Church’s service to the People of God, particularly to the poor.” Hence, the good bishop reminded his once and present students of theology that Holy Orders as a Sacrament of the Church involves an outward, visible sign of an invisible truth.

The outward sign of the Deaconal Order is the manifestation of Christ the Servant seen in the visible acts of service done in the name of the Church. Along with proclaiming the Gospel and serving at the altar, a deacon is charged with the pastoral visitation of the poor and the sick. As a minister, a deacon brings to the liturgical experience his prayers for those whom he has

cared for, and he stands as a witness of the claim that the poor and downtrodden have on the compassion of the Church. During the summer prior to his ordination, Dcn. Cruz Calderon, in a whirlwind series of mission trips, traveled to Mexico, Honduras, Columbia, and Alaska. Dcn. Cruz remembers that while lying prostrate, “I prayed fervently for myself, for my family, and for all of those who had entrusted me with their prayers. Then I felt this wave of peace flood my heart.”

As the minister of the Sacrament, Bishop Flores recounts his unique perspective of being the instrumental cause of the sacramental grace of Holy Orders: “I remember at the time making the observation that the meaning of the Rite of Ordination, which confers the Sacrament of Holy Orders, speaks for itself, and accordingly, my role was to conform my mind and prayer to the words of the Rite.”

Behind the pews reserved for the family members of the ordinands were seated the seminari-

ans of St. Mary’s Seminary, many of whom would also in the not too distant future find themselves similarly lying prostrate before the altar. As he looked upon his elder brethren receiving the Sacrament of Holy Orders, First Year Theologian Zachary Webb recalls: “I was incredibly inspired by my brothers’ example of giving their whole lives over to the service of God’s people. I remember my heart burning with desire to be as generous with my own life in answering the call of Christ.”

To lie prostrate before the altar of God represents total submission to the Divine Will. And it is from this posture that, depending on the various perspective of those present at the Mass of Diaconate Ordination, one might be granted a glimpse into the invisible grace that underlies the sacramental mystery of Holy Orders.



“It is not surprising that many of the deacons of the early Church were martyrs because they were the public signs of the Church’s service to the People of God.”



From Left to Right: Dcn Tommy Chen, Dcn Chris Nguyen, Dcn Miguel Alvizures, Bishop Daniel Flores, Dcn Chris Plant, Dcn Tom Lam, Dcn Cruz Calderon

From the Desk of Fr. Cahill

Fr. Cahill shares reflections from his Rector's Conference

All baptized Christians have received the gift of healing, which each one practices according to his/her unique charisms and gifts. Create in the Seminary a community where each gift can be practiced and encouraged. With this statement I began my last Rector's Conference, reflecting on several experiences we have been privileged to have this spring. Specifically, the Seminary hosted a "Called and Gifted" Workshop (presented by the St. Catherine of Siena Institute) and hosted the Institute for Priestly Formation Winter Symposium (on the topic of Priest as Healer).

In both these workshops we had the opportunity to reflect on graces received and how we can put them to the service of the community. After reflecting on it I had to admit the times I have stifled the Spirit. One time when I was in the seminary I was going to have an arthroscopic knee surgery and a fellow seminarian asked if I wanted him to pray over me. I declined the offer, maybe thinking that God had other concerns and I didn't want to bother him. Whatever the reason, looking back on this event

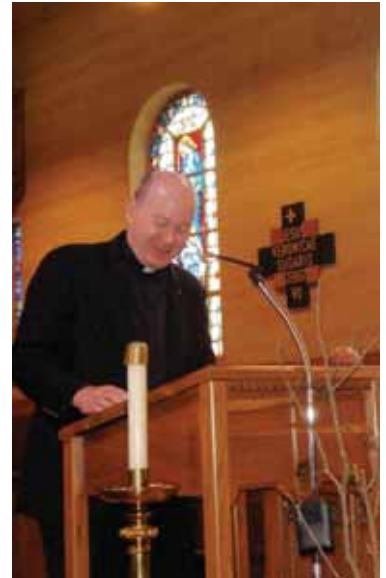
from over 20 years ago I realize I should have allowed him to pray for me. And the question changes from whether or not God has the time to whether or not I believe God heals. As I'm writing this we have just heard the Gospel account of the Fourth Sunday of Lent - the healing of the man born blind. Do I believe?

I shared another story with the seminarians at that Rector's Conference. A few years ago I was called to Texas Children's Hospital and asked to pray for the healing of a child who was not expected to live through the night. I was still uncomfortable with praying for healing and asked two seminarians to go with me, men who I knew were part of a charismatic prayer group. I went to the hospital and the scene was pretty desperate, as you can well imagine. I anointed the child and could hear the prayers of the seminarians rising up behind me. The child lived through the night and recovered. His parents, the doctors, the seminarians and I could testify that he was healed. Do we believe that God heals?

These two stories lead me back

to where I began this short article. It seems clear that we believe that in baptism each Christian has received a unique vocation and call, a unique set of gifts for the building up of the community. The baptismal waters and anointing flow into a life of holiness and witness, bringing the message of Christ to the nations. Preaching the Gospel and teaching the truth of salvation bring healing and wholeness to a world still broken by sin and engaged in a struggle with the powers of evil. Possibly a work of the evil one is the thought that creeps into our mind and begins to doubt that God really heals. It is a thought that can lead me to discourage a friend who offers to pray for healing. It is a thought that can lead me away from asking another for help and prayer when I really need it.

My prayer for each of us is that we can renew again our trust and confidence in the healing power of God and create a community where each gift can be practiced and encouraged. God bless you and thanks again for your prayers and support of our seminarians!



"My prayer for each of us is that we can renew again our trust and confidence in the healing power of God."

A Note from the President of the House Council - Hank Lanik

It continues to be my privilege to represent and serve the men at St. Mary's as the President of the Seminarian Community. We have a very active group of men that make up the house at St. Mary's. I am particularly proud of the outreach that is done on behalf of St. Mary's. Volunteering in parishes, giving vocations talks, sponsoring families at Christ-

mas, going on mission trips, marching at the Right to Life Rally in Austin - these are just a few of the activities that root us in our Christian call to service.

Thanks to the openness of our faculty, we have been able to introduce several student proposals this year that compliment our community life here at the seminary. One of these is the Called and Gifted program

from the Sienna Institute to supplement our formation program. Also, our new student kitchen is finally completed and is already serving the community life well.

We are indeed a community of action. Please continue to keep us in your prayers as we discern God's call to serve Him and His Church and be assured of our daily prayers for you.

Institution of Acolytes

Seventeen men commissioned to serve at the Table of the Lord

On October 7, seventeen men took a step closer to the altar being instituted into the ministry of Acolyte one of the steps on the way to the priesthood. Vested in cassock and surplice, the men knelt at the feet of Auxiliary Bishop of Galveston-Houston Joe Vasquez and received into their hands a vessel with bread while hearing from the Bishop the words: “Take this vessel with bread for the celebration of the Eucharist. Make your life worthy of your service at the table of the Lord and of his Church.” The men being instituted each replied “Amen.”

In the homily, the bishop exhorted them to humility and gratitude before God who had chosen them. He said that it is not because we are extraordinarily gifted that God has called us to this ministry; it is because it is His choice. He also told



them to not ask for more grace; but instead to accept the grace they had been given and trust in that. He referred to St. Paul: “My grace is sufficient for you.” Bishop Vasquez said, “We do not always understand why God has chosen you or me for this ministry. He knows the reason. We just need the willingness to say, ‘yes.’” He encouraged the men to have a spirit of reverence, love, and devotion for the Eucharist and approach this mys-

tery with humility.

The men who were instituted on October 7 are preparing to work this summer in various hospitals as chaplains-in-training where among other tasks, they will use the gift of their new ministry to bring communion to the sick. The same seminarians will begin their pastoral year at a parish next school year. Please pray for them at this crucial time in their journey.

*In the homily,
the bishop exhorted
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chosen them.*



From left to right: (Back Row) Br. Agustín Guzman, Jude Ezuma, Phong Nguyen, Bishop Joe Vasquez, Hipólito Santi, Erel Manzano, Paul Hudson (Middle Row) Hank Lanik, Allan Cacho, Jason Sharbaugh, Thang Nguyen, John Chavarria, Fr. Dean Wilhelm (Front Row) Brian Cranley, Kurtis Wiedenfeld, Arthur Unachukwu, Victor Perez, Jarod Hogan, Patrick Hartnett

Seminarians find fulfillment in their studies



By Vincent Anyama

When I was in pastoral year, the parishioners made me realize that they would like to get a feel of the kind of studies that seminarians go through. They often asked me, “do y’all take classes like every other regular university students or do you do something different for seminary training?” The straightforward answer to this question is to think quantitatively and simply say, “yes, we take philosophy and theology classes with other university students.” But reading between the lines it seems to me that the parishioners are really asking, “what is special about your studies that helps you come out prepared for such a marvelous work of the priesthood?”

Jonathan Raia, a third year theologian studying for the Diocese of Austin, describing his experience of taking classes for the priesthood says, “it is exciting to learn from different perspectives about the Word of God in Scripture, about the Trinity and Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, and about the Church and her history.”

While the seminarians of St. Mary’s Seminary attend theology classes with every other student in the University of St.

Thomas School of Theology, their studies are of a different kind, flavored by the sublime nature of what they are trained to do in society, to be spiritual leaders in par-

ishes, to be ministers of the sacraments to the people of God, and to bring the joy and excitement of a life filled with God’s love to our suffering world.

Deacon Daniel Liu, one of the fourth year theologians of St. Mary’s Seminary says, “the seminarian does not study out of curiosity, but rather from a desire to deepen his relationship with God, and that for me is more fulfilling.” He also pointed out that even after his ordination to the priesthood, he “will never stop studying” because his study is one of the different ways to deepen his relationship with God.

Thai Tran, a seminarian studying for the Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas in his first year of pre-theology was a student at Stanford University before he felt called to the priesthood. He said “I grew up going to public schools and then to Stanford

University. I thought I knew my faith very well until I came here. Theology has helped me to understand my faith better.”

As a pre-theology student, Thai is not only taking theology courses at St. Mary’s Seminary, but also philosophy courses, which are a pre-requisite for studying theology. He said, “philosophy is cool but not without theology.” Among all his classes, Thai said that he enjoys his Scripture studies best: “I really enjoy my Scripture course because it helps to bring to life the face of Christ. It also helps me to realize that both the richness and orthodoxy of Catholic theology depend on this essential relationship between us and Jesus. I thought I knew my faith very well until I came here. Theology helps me to understand my faith better.”

Due to the scarcity of priests in parishes, there is a sense of urgency to the studies of a seminarian. “Especially after a year in a parish [pastoral year], I approach my studies now with a heightened sensitivity to what the concerns and needs of the people in the parishes are. I am more aware of what will help me be a good minister,” says Mr. Raia.



“The seminarian does not study of out curiosity, but rather from a desire to deepen his relationship with God”

In Brief



From September 26 to November 4 of 2007, our seminary community supported the National 40 days for Life campaign to end abortion, co-sponsored by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and the Houston Coalition for Life. We were responsible for two one hour shifts on Wednesday nights. A good number of seminarians came out once a week to pray at Planned Parenthood on Fannin for an end to abortion. Others supported the cause through private prayer and sacrifices.



It has been customary for the transitional deacon classes to leave a gift to the community as a memento of their time of formation at the seminary. The transitional deacon class of 2007-2008 presented the seminary community with a beautiful chasuble in honor of the Blessed Mother to be used at Masses of the Blessed Virgin celebrated in the seminary chapel. The chasuble was used for the first time on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 2007. Pictured is Fr. Trung accepting the gift from the transitional deacons.



Dcn. Cruz Calderón and his family and friends helped us to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe by providing the "matachines," which are traditional dancers who wear indigenous-style costumes and dance to a tribal drum beat in honor of Our Lady. Thanks to Dcn. Cruz's family and friends for coming from Dallas for the event!



Morgan Tsvangirai, founder of the Movement for Democratic Change in Zimbabwe and leading presidential candidate, dined with seminarians during a visit to St. Mary's before travelling to New York to address the United Nations. St. Mary's Mission Committee, under the leadership of Joe Doran invited Mr. Tsvangirai to St. Mary's.



The end of the fall semester found the seminary giving a reluctant "farewell" to Bridget Wenk, the Director of Music at St. Mary's for more than 15 years. Her musical talents, generous spirit and hard work have certainly left a legacy in the memories and voices of several generations of seminarians and priests all across the nation. She now continues her ministry as Director of Liturgy and Music at St. Theresa Parish in Memorial Park. The positive impact she made on our community was reflected in the resounding standing ovation she received at the conclusion of the final music practice under her direction.

Around the Seminary



Will blazes a trail through the back woods.



Every Thursday night we play basketball for fun and to get ready for the legendary Archbishop's Cup against Assumption in San Antonio.



Arthur offers Peter the cake he stole from the Refectory.



Seminarians of Galveston-Houston prepare to serve Mass for Cardinal DiNardo.



Father Brendan leads the Palm Sunday Liturgy.



Fr. Trung and Fr. Jim full of joy at the thanksgiving meal . We are blessed to have such happy staff!



John slams a forehand topspin to Bro. Paul who returns it (into the net?)



Chris on his way to spiritual direction with Msgr. Elmer



Uche & Bro. Paul celebrate Christmas.

ST. MARY'S

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If you would like to visit the seminary, our Sunday Mass is open to the public. Mass is at 9:30 am on most Sundays when the seminary is in session. Please call to confirm the Mass schedule.

Six Seminarians Ordained Deacon in November



The Deacon candidates lay prostrate as Bishop Flores with the church and the Communion of Saints prays over them.

On November 10, six seminarians from three different dioceses were ordained to the Holy Order of Deacon: Cruz Calderon (Diocese of Dallas), Tommy Chen (Diocese of Victoria), Tom Lam (Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston), Chris Nguyen (Galveston-Houston), Christopher Plant (Galveston-Houston), and Miguel Alvizures (Galveston-Houston). They were ordained by Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Flores of the Archdiocese of Detroit, former vice-rector of the seminary. For these six men, the moments they lay prostrate during the Litany of the Saints allowed them an opportunity to reflect on their journey to the altar. For these new deacons, the receiving of Holy Orders involved a surge of emotions and a theological lesson in the mystery of the Sacraments. *For a look at the thoughts of those present at the ordination see What Were They Thinking page 6.*