



Vocations and Seminarians Newsletter

February 15, 2007

Diocese of Baton Rouge

Dates to Remember

- Parish Vocation Committee Workshop - February 24, 2007, 10:00 a.m., Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center
- Chrism Mass - April 4, 2007, 10:30 a.m., St. Joseph Cathedral
- World Day of Prayer for Vocations - April 29, 2007
- Serra Club Crawfish Boil - May 6, 2007, 4:00 p.m., St. Jude the Apostle Parish Hall
- Priesthood Ordination - May 26, 2007, 10:00 a.m., St. Joseph Cathedral
- Transitional Diaconate Ordination - June 9, 2007, 10:00 a.m., St. Joseph Cathedral

Dear Seminarians and Friends,

It seems that I may have erred in my interpretation of the signs and portents surrounding the recently concluded NFL season. The parousia has been delayed yet again and the Saints did not cross over into the promised land. God allowed us to pause for just a moment on the banks of the river and gaze out over a beautiful land flowing with milk and honey before stopping our forward march and forcing us to remain in our earthly home on this side of the river. I am reminded of the Scripture passage: "For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines" (Hebrews 12:6). Oh how it hurts to be loved so dearly by the Lord!

This past weekend I attended the "Come Follow Me" vocation retreat sponsored by the Dioceses of Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Lake Charles. There were about twenty participants on the weekend, including three men from our own Diocese of Baton Rouge. The retreat was staffed by some twenty seminarians from the three dioceses, along with Father Aaron Melancon from Lafayette and Fathers Keith Pellerin and Danny Torres from Lake Charles.

We gathered three times each day for prayer, to introduce the candidates to the Liturgy of the Hours, and also heard talks from several of the seminarians describing their own journeys to the seminary. Each story was unique and yet somehow similar to the other stories of call, response, and continuing discernment. Vocation stories can never be recounted using only the past tense. There is always a present time updating of how the story continues to unfold in the life of the seminarian or priest. The passing of time provides a new context in which to further interpret the experience of God's grace at work in our lives.

Our own Father Shelton Fabre, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Baton Rouge, experienced an interesting twist in his own vocation story when he received a telephone call informing him of the Holy Father's desire that he become an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. God never allows us to become too comfortable in our lives of service in order that our faith commitment might continue to be strengthened. Father Fabre will be ordained a bishop on Wednesday, February 28, 2007, at 2:00 p.m. at St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans.

In honor of World Day for Consecrated Life celebrated earlier this month, I asked Brother Chris Sweeney, S.C., to write an article describing his call to religious life as a Brother of the Sacred Heart. Brother Chris works in vocation ministry for his religious community and you can read his article immediately following this letter. I am becoming more familiar with the vocation personnel for the dioceses and religious orders of our region, and have enjoyed getting to know all of them.

In Christ,
Father Matt Lorrain

A Vocation Story - Brother Chris Sweeney, S.C.

Brother Chris Sweeney, S.C., is a native of Most Blessed Sacrament Parish in Baton Rouge and the vocation director for the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. Here is the story of his call to religious life.

"When I was going to school at Catholic High I was involved in many activities, primarily sports and girls. Football, track, baseball, wrestling, student council and not to mention dating, hanging out with friends, and of course my family obligations took up most of my time. The last thing I was thinking about was joining a religious order. However, when I arrived at Southwest Texas State things changed rather quickly. The partying and last minute late night cramming took its toll. I actually did what most people talk about. I looked at myself in the mirror and really didn't like what I saw. I knew there had to be more to this life. It couldn't be all about materialism, sex, and drugs, which often led to feelings of loneliness and isolation. I had to ask myself the question in front of that mirror, 'What really makes me happy?' My answer to that question was, and still is, 'helping other people.' There is simply no greater feeling in the world. So, my response to this new perception was, 'how can I attain this feeling for the rest of my life?'"

"It just so happened not long after I went through this conversion of heart that I was heading to my parish church, Most Blessed Sacrament, with my family and was stopped by our pastor, Fr. Jerry Young. Out of the blue, he asks me if I would be a Eucharistic Minister for the parish. He had no clue what I had been through. You know sometimes when you're looking for a sign, there it is staring you in the face, and there God was. To make a long story short, well, not so long, my life had changed. I would, from that moment on, try to do what God wanted and not what I wanted."

"I was very active, but also a bit of an introvert. I just could not see myself giving a homily in front of a large crowd on Sundays. So after a period of time in discernment, I felt God calling me to the brotherhood. The life of a brother interested me because of their community life, regular prayer and mission work. Since joining the brothers I have been to the missions in Africa twice and I have worked in our home mission with the Navajo people in Arizona. I have taken care of the resident students in our dorm at St. Stanislaus and have also coached football and track at Brother Martin in New Orleans. To say God has blessed me would be an understatement. Though I am sure I would have been happy as a priest or a husband and father, God called me to a different life and I am happy I said yes."

"Come and See" Weekend

St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict, Louisiana (just north of Covington) is sponsoring a "Come and See" Weekend open to all high school seniors and college-age men who are interested in learning about seminary life and the process of priestly formation. It is designed similar to visits made to other college campuses which allow seniors and college transfers to experience something of campus life prior to selecting a college. The dates are February 22-24, 2007, Thursday evening through Saturday noon, and activities include attending classes and prayers with the seminarians on Friday. Please contact Father Matt or Ms. Mary Layman at the Vocation Office (225-336-8778) for more information or to register.

Contact Us

Office of Vocations
Diocese of Baton Rouge
P.O. Box 2028
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028

Telephone

225-336-8778

Fax

225-242-0342

E-mail

vocations@diobr.org

Website

www.diobr.org/vocations

Parish Vocation Committee Workshop

The diocesan Office of Vocations will host a training and enrichment workshop for all parish vocation committees on Saturday, February 24, 2007, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center (located directly across Marquette Avenue from the parish church) in mid-city Baton Rouge. This workshop is designed to offer training for both new and existing committees, and will include opportunities for participants to share success stories and ideas for use in other parishes. All parishes are invited to send two (or more) representatives to the workshop. Please call Ms. Mary Layman at the Office of Vocations (225-336-8778) to register so we can prepare enough materials.

World Day of Prayer for Vocations

In 1963 Pope Paul VI designated Good Shepherd Sunday as *World Day of Prayer for Vocations*. The date for this year's observance is April 29, 2007, the Fourth Sunday of Easter. Please refer to the catechetical and prayer resources which were sent to all of the parishes in the fall of 2006, or contact the Office of Vocations for an additional copy.

New Date for Serra Club Crawfish Boil

Each Spring the Serra Club sponsors a crawfish boil for the men and women from our Diocese who are in formation for the priesthood and religious life. The date for this year's event has recently been changed to Sunday, May 6, 2007, at 4:00 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle Parish Hall located adjacent to the church at 9150 Highland Road.

Ordinations - Summer 2007

Please mark your calendars now for two ordinations to take place this coming summer in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. On Saturday, May 26, 2007, five men will be ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Robert Muench. Deacons Howard Adkins, Michael Alello, Cary Bani, Chris Decker, and Jason Palermo are all scheduled to be ordained priests in a special 10:00 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral in downtown Baton Rouge.

Two weeks later, on June 9, 2007, we will celebrate the ordination of three additional men to the transitional diaconate. Seminarians Jamin David, Andrew Merrick, and Paul Yi are all scheduled to be ordained deacons at a 10:00 a.m. Mass by Bishop Robert Muench, also at St. Joseph Cathedral. Attendance at these ordinations is open to everyone.

Weekend Assistance for Priests

An important role of the Vocation Director is to offer weekend assistance to the parish priests of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. As of this writing Father Matt has the following dates still available for the first half of 2007: March 18 & 25; May 13, 19/20, & 27. Please give him a call at 225-336-8778 if he can help.

Roster of Diocesan Seminarians

Fourth Theology:	Howard Adkins60, St. Agnes Michael Alello26, St. Jude the Apostle Cary Bani.....48, St. Joseph Cathedral Chris Decker25, St. Isidore the Farmer, Baker Jason Palermo27, St. John the Evangelist, Plaquemine
Third Theology:	Jamin David24, St. Ann, Morganza Andrew Merrick.....26, St. Mary of False River, New Roads Paul Yi.....33, St. Theresa of Avila, Gonzales
Second Theology:	Mark Beard45, Our Lady of Mercy Paul Gros.....24, Most Blessed Sacrament
Pre-Theology:	Peter Ai Dang41, Sts. Anthony/Le Van Phung Al Davidson.....53, St. Agnes Mark Gyan52, St. John the Evangelist, Prairieville Matthew McCaughey.22, St. Thomas More
Fourth Philosophy:	Todd Lloyd23, St. Thomas More Bryan Thompson.....26, Our Lady of Mercy
Second Philosophy:	Kevin Piper20, St. Joseph, French Settlement Joseph Hoang Vu19, Sts. Anthony/Le Van Phung
First Philosophy:	Brad Doyle19, St. George Joshua Johnson19, St. George

Seminary Contact Information

Notre Dame Seminary and Graduate School of Theology

2901 South Carrollton Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70118-4391
Telephone: 504-866-7426
Fax: 504-866-3119
Website: <http://www.nds.edu>

St. Joseph Seminary College

75376 River Road
St. Benedict, LA 70457-9900
Telephone: 985-867-2232
Fax: 985-867-2295
Website: <http://seminary.saintjosephabbey.com>

All of our seminarians love to hear from you! Don't be shy about sending cards or letters of support!