



# Vocations and Seminarians Newsletter

April 15, 2007

Diocese of Baton Rouge

## Dates to Remember

- 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
- Notre Dame Seminary Graduation - May 10, 2007, 7:00 p.m., Seminary Chapel, New Orleans, La.
- St. Joseph Seminary Graduation - May 11, 2007, Baccalaureate Mass at 5:00 p.m. & Commencement at 8:00 p.m. St. Benedict, La.
- 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,

The seminarians and priests of St. Joseph Seminary College recently held their third and final "Come and See" weekend of the 2006-2007 school year. The weekend provides a wonderful opportunity for high school and college age men to visit the seminary and interact with others who are similar in age and considering a vocation to the priesthood. I was fortunate to attend this final "Come and See" weekend with two 11th graders from our Baton Rouge Diocese: Chris Melancon and Logan Roussel, both parishioners of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Convent.

Every visit to St. Joseph Abbey and Seminary College is also an opportunity to encounter the brilliant art of Dom Gregory de Wit, OSB, the Benedictine monk and artist who painted the abbey church and refectory (dining room). Dom Gregory was Dutch by birth but entered religious life at the Benedictine Abbey of Keizersberg in Louvain, Belgium. His first commission in the United States came from St. Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana in 1938. A short time later, he also accepted an invitation to paint the interior of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge.

St. Joseph Abbey was founded by monks from St. Meinrad Archabbey in 1889. The second abbot of St. Joseph was Abbot Columban Thuis, OSB, who was also of Dutch heritage. So it was only natural that the abbot and monks of St. Joseph invited Dom Gregory to paint their monastic refectory and church, beginning in 1946 and continuing for about ten years. St. Joseph Abbey recently published a book on the murals entitled "Living in Salvation" by Adam Begnaud, available through the Abbey gift shop.

The monastic refectory includes a mural of St. Benedict painted by Dom Gregory just above the doorway. St. Benedict holds a book in his left hand containing the two Latin words, *ausculta* and *pervenies*, which are the first and last words of the Rule of St. Benedict. The first word is translated "listen" from the first sentence of the Rule which reads "Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart." The last word is translated "you will arrive" and is taken from the end of the Rule, "...you will arrive at your heavenly reward." The overall effect reminds one of Christ as traditionally depicted in Eastern iconography: offering a blessing with his right hand and holding a book in his left inscribed with the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, Α (alpha) and Ω (omega), Christ, "the beginning and the end."

At one end of the refectory is painted a huge mural of the Last Supper, believed to be the largest in the world. It measures 732 square feet as compared with Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* in Milan which measures just 435 square feet. Opposite the Last Supper is a mural depicting a youthful Christ as the Good Shepherd. The abbot's seat in the refectory is located directly beneath this image of the Good Shepherd. It is a beautiful reminder of the nature of leadership as it is to be exercised within the monastery and the Church.

My favorite painting is a magnificent mural of the Risen Christ on the curved ceiling of the apse at the eastern end of the Abbey church. One sees Christ crucified and resurrected, encircled with a white garment and portrayed as the Rising Sun, the Light of the World, and the Living Bread come down from heaven. The background color is gold rather than blue indicating the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth, the Eternal City, radiant with the splendor of God (Revelation 21). The four Evangelists are symbolically represented by four interlocking winged circles, rendered in brilliant red, which lift high the Christ they proclaim.

In his book "Living in Salvation," Begnaud writes that "liturgical art should direct attention not to itself but to the mystery being celebrated." The genius of Dom Gregory is that the beauty and arrangement of his murals do direct one back to the praying of the scriptures, the sacrifice of the Mass, and the offering of oneself in service to Christ and others. May the same spirit of Christ, which inspired and guided Dom Gregory de Wit, also inspire, guide, and renew us during this season of Easter joy.

In Christ,  
Father Matt Lorrain

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## A Personal Reflection on Ordination

By Deacon Michael Alello

"Nearing the halfway point between my diaconate ordination and my priestly ordination, I pause to reflect on the special blessings of February 3 and the many still to come on May 26. I still remember clearly the morning of Saturday, February 3, as I prepared for my diaconate ordination. Everything was in place. I was actually able to get some rest the night before, and I arrived at the Cathedral to find everyone buzzing around taking care of all the finishing touches. The choir was warming up, the masters of ceremony were making sure everyone knew their parts, and people began to fill the seats of the Cathedral. Yet, amid all this hustle and bustle, there remained within me an unbelievable peace."

"We began to line up outside the Cathedral as friends and family ran to make it into the church on time. The choir began the entrance hymn, and as I arrived at the back of the Cathedral, the beaming faces of all gathered to celebrate greeted me as I made my way down the aisle to take my place next to my parents. There is so much that still seems to be a blur from that special day, but two things particularly stick out – the great calm that existed within me and the love of all those gathered."

"When I was invited to lay prostrate on the cool marble, I was overcome with emotion. The thought that all those gathered in the church were kneeling to pray for me and my vocation was an awesome feeling. Later, the bishop laid his hands upon my head to call down the Spirit, again, a beautiful experience. As the service progressed, I was greeted by the diaconate community and was especially touched to see many of my classmates. Then, my friend, Fr. Tom Gwozdz, SDB, vested me in the dalmatic and stole, signifying my diaconal character."

"For the first time, I was able to assist at the table during the Eucharistic Prayer. I had waited many years to actually 'assist' at the altar and did so with great joy. When communion was finished and we all returned to our seats, I took my place next to the bishop and for the first time, had a second for things to sink in. I was now ordained a deacon. What a great blessing! I offered the dismissal and away we went into a sea of loving

embraces from the many gathered family and friends.”

“With my priestly ordination approaching, now less than two months away, I prepare with steadfast prayer. I continue to ask God to create something new within me each day and to strengthen me on this journey of service to Him and His Church.”

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## 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.

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## 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 or 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.

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## Ordinations – Spring 2007

Please mark your calendars now for two ordinations to take place later this spring 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 two men to the transitional diaconate. Seminarians Jamin David and Paul Yi are scheduled to be ordained deacons at a 10:00 a.m. Mass by Bishop Robert Muench, also at St. Joseph Cathedral. Classmate Andrew Merrick has opted to undertake a non-ordained Parish Internship before considering a petition for holy orders. Attendance at both of these ordinations is open to everyone, but please be forewarned that seating will be limited.

**Spring 2008** – You might also wish to make a note on your calendar of the dates for our 2008 ordinations. Saturday, May 31, 2008, has been selected for our priesthood ordinations, and Saturday, June 21, 2008 has been selected for our transitional diaconate ordinations. Both ordinations are scheduled for 10:00 a.m. at St. Joseph Cathedral.

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## Weekend Assistance for Priests

The Vocation Director offers weekend assistance to the parish priests of the Diocese of Baton Rouge as he is able. As of this writing Father Matt has the following 2007 dates available: May 13; June 23/24; July 15 & 22; Aug. 19 & 25/26; Sept. 1/2; Oct. 13; Nov. 3/4, 10/11, 17/18, & 24/25; Dec. 1/2, 8/9, 15/16, 22/23, & 29/30. Please give him a call at 225-336-8778 if he can help.

## Contact Us

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[www.diobr.org/vocations](http://www.diobr.org/vocations)

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## Roster of Diocesan Seminarians

4th Theology:	Howard Adkins .....	61, St. Agnes, Baton Rouge
	Michael Alello .....	26, St. Jude the Apostle, Baton Rouge
	Cary Bani .....	48, St. Joseph Cathedral, Baton Rouge
	Chris Decker .....	25, St. Isidore the Farmer, Baker
	Jason Palermo .....	27, St. John the Evangelist, Plaquemine
3rd Theology:	Jamin David .....	24, St. Ann, Morganza
	Andrew Merrick .....	26, St. Mary of False River, New Roads
	Paul Yi.....	34, St. Theresa of Avila, Gonzales
2nd Theology:	Mark Beard .....	45, Our Lady of Mercy, Baton Rouge
	Paul Gros.....	24, Most Blessed Sacrament, Baton Rouge
Pre-Theology:	Peter Ai Dang .....	41, Sts. Anthony/Le Van Phung, Baton Rouge
	Al Davidson.....	53, St. Agnes, Baton Rouge
	Mark Gyan .....	52, St. John the Evangelist, Prairieville
	Matthew McCaughey ..	23, St. Thomas More, Baton Rouge
4th Philosophy:	Todd Lloyd.....	23, St. Thomas More, Baton Rouge
	Bryan Thompson.....	26, Our Lady of Mercy, Baton Rouge
2nd Philosophy:	Kevin Piper .....	20, St. Joseph, French Settlement
	Joseph Hoang Vu .....	19, Sts. Anthony/Le Van Phung, Baton Rouge
1st Philosophy:	Brad Doyle.....	19, St. George, Baton Rouge
	Joshua Johnson .....	19, St. George, Baton Rouge

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## Seminary Contact Information

### **Notre Dame Seminary and Graduate School of Theology**

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**Why not write a brief, encouraging note to a seminarian? Each one values hearing from you and knowing of your prayers and support.**