

February 15, 2008

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Dates to Remember

- ◆ Diocesan Youth Conference – February 23-24, 2008, Catholic Life Center
- ◆ Abbey Youth Festival – March 8, 2008, St. Joseph Abbey
- ◆ “Come and See” Weekend – March 14-16, 2008, St. Joseph Seminary College
- ◆ Chrism Mass – March 19, 2008, 10:30 am, St. Joseph Cathedral
- ◆ World Day of Prayer for Vocations – April 13, 2008
- ◆ Serra Club Crawfish Boil – April 27, 2008, 4:00 pm, St. Jude the Apostle Parish Hall
- ◆ Priesthood Ordination – May 31, 2008, 10:00 am, St. Joseph Cathedral
- ◆ Transitional Diaconate Ordination – June 21, 2008, 10:00 am, St. Joseph Cathedral

Dear Seminarians and Friends,

This past Monday was the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, commemorating the 1858 appearance of our Blessed Mother to St. Bernadette Soubirous in France. In 1992, Pope John Paul II added the designation “World Day of the Sick” to this feast, encouraging Catholics to further their unity of prayer with those who are sick and suffering.

Priests are privileged to share in the healing ministry of Christ through visits to those who are ill, the sacrament of Penance, and the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Anointing of the sick may take place in a communal setting at Mass or in the smaller setting of a hospital room, and is almost always a moving experience for the priest, the sick person, and family members present as we pray for God’s strength.

The season of Lent lends itself to meditation on human suffering and sickness. I recently asked Father Kenny Laird of our Diocese if he would be willing to share a few thoughts about his life and ministry since being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2004. Father Laird subsequently resigned from full time parish ministry and now celebrates Mass for the residents of three of our area nursing homes. Here is what he wrote:

“Allow me to begin by saying that I am keenly aware and most grateful for the many people from around the Diocese who have been and still are praying for me. I honestly believe that this prayerful support has enabled me to accept MS, along with its limitations, and to be at peace with the disease.”

“After 30 years in parish ministry, and going on medical leave and then on to early retirement, I found myself waking up in the morning and asking myself, ‘what do you have to do today?’ It took a while to adjust to the lack of a schedule.”

“There is a tremendous difference between parish life and nursing home life. I go to St. James Place, Heritage House on Wooddale, and Guest House on Florida. The residents of each one are unique in terms of their mental conditions, physical abilities, and even their playfulness. When I spoke to Bishop Muench, he told me that the nursing home residents wouldn’t even notice the tremors in my hands because they tremble as well. He was right – I am no longer self-conscious about the tremors.”

“Besides having tremors in common, I also have to use a walking cane. So I fit right in again – me with my cane and them with their canes, walkers, and wheel chairs. At first, I was self-conscious of the walking cane but then the Lord reminded me that He needed

help in carrying the cross.”

“I still miss parish life and at times feel guilty for not contributing more, but then the Lord reminds me of my physical limitations and the peace returns.”

“As I progressed through the thirty years of active parish ministry, I would wonder where I would live when it came time for retirement. Well, the Lord took care of that. I live in a small garden home and enjoy it very much. But I remind myself each day that as much as I like the little house, the Lord has an even better place prepared for me in His heavenly kingdom.”

Father Laird’s experience is a reminder that priests are not immune from human illness or suffering. The sacrament of holy orders is intended to unite priests with Christ, both in His crucified body and in His glorified body. I pray that this season of Lent may provide the opportunity for all of us to delve deeper into the mystery of Christ’s redemptive suffering.

In Christ,
Father Matt Lorrain

Three Vocation Opportunities:

◆ “Come and See” Weekend

(For those interested in diocesan priesthood)

St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict, Louisiana (just north of Covington) is sponsoring the final “Come and See” Weekend of the school year March 14-16, 2008. The weekend is open to all interested young men in 10th grade through college, and is hosted by the seminarians and the Benedictine monks of St. Joseph Abbey. Participants are invited to experience the prayer and community life of a seminary community, and also get to know some of the guys who are studying to be priests. Arrival at the seminary takes place between 4:00 and 6:00 pm on Friday evening, and the weekend concludes with the solemn 11:00 am Mass on Palm Sunday. Please contact Father Matt or Ms. Mary Layman at the Vocation Office (225-336-8778) for more information or to register.

◆ St. Joseph Abbey Discernment Week

(For those interested in monastic life)

St. Joseph Abbey, a community of Benedictine monks in St. Benedict, Louisiana, will host a program for men ages 20 to 45 interested in discerning a call to monastic life. The program will be held during Holy Week, beginning on Wednesday, March 19th and concluding on Easter Monday, March 24th. Participants will pray and work with the monks as well as attend seminars on topics related to monasticism. Participants will also have the opportunity to celebrate the Paschal Triduum with the monastic community. Anyone interested in more information is asked to contact Brother Jude Israel, O.S.B., vocation director of St. Joseph Abbey, at either 985-867-2249 or brjude@sjasc.edu.

◆ “Find Your Path” Discernment Retreat

(For those interested in religious life as a brother)

The Brothers of the Sacred Heart are sponsoring a weekend discernment retreat on April 11-13, 2008, at the Rosaryville Retreat Center in Ponchatoula, Louisiana. The retreat is open to men ages 17 to 35.

The retreat will provide time for reflection, listening to God's voice, and discerning where God is calling you at this time. You will also meet other Catholic men who are at important, decision-making points in their lives. For more information or to register, contact Brother Chris Sweeney by calling 504-352-9940 or by email at brochris66@hotmail.com. Also, visit the brothers' website at www.brothersofthesacredheart.org.

Ordinations - Summer 2008

Please mark your calendars now for two ordinations to take place later this year in the Diocese of Baton Rouge!

- ◆ On Saturday, May 31, 2008, three seminarians will be ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Robert Muench. Deacons Jamin David, Andrew Merrick and Paul Yi are all scheduled to be ordained priests in a special 10:00 am concelebrated Mass at historic St. Joseph Cathedral in downtown Baton Rouge.
- ◆ Three weeks later, on June 21, 2008, we will celebrate the ordination of two men to the transitional diaconate. Seminarians Mark Beard and Paul Gros are scheduled to be ordained deacons at a 10:00 am Mass by Bishop Robert Muench, also at St. Joseph Cathedral.

Attendance at both of these ordinations is open to everyone, but please be forewarned that the anticipated crowds will leave seating very limited. Receptions will follow both ceremonies at the Catholic Life Center in Baton Rouge.

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 dates available in **2008**:

- ◆ May 10/11 & 18; June 1; August 2, 16/17, 24, & 30/31; October 4/5, 11/12, & 18/19; November 1/2, 8/9, & 15/16; and December 6/7, 13/14, & 20/21

Please telephone him at 225-336-8778 if he can help.

Contact Us

- ◆ Office of Vocations
Diocese of Baton Rouge
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- ◆ 225-336-8778

Fax

- ◆ 225-242-0342

E-mail

- ◆ vocations@diobr.org

Website

- ◆ www.diobr.org/vocations

Roster of Diocesan Seminarians

- ◆ 4th Theology: Jamin David25, St. Ann, Morganza
Andrew Merrick..... 27, St. Mary of False River,
New Roads
Paul Yi..... 34, St. Theresa of Avila,
Gonzales
- ◆ 3rd Theology: Mark Beard 46, Our Lady of Mercy,
Baton Rouge
Paul Gros 25, Most Blessed Sacrament,
Baton Rouge
- ◆ 1st Theology: Peter Ai Dang .. 42, Sts. Anthony/Le Van Phung,
Baton Rouge
Todd Lloyd .. 24, St. Thomas More, Baton Rouge
Brent Maher 23, Immaculate Conception,
Denham Springs
- ◆ Pre-Theology: Al Davidson 54, St. Agnes, Baton Rouge
Mark Gyan 53, St. John the Evangelist,
Prairieville
Matthew McCaughey.....23, St. Thomas More,
Baton Rouge
- ◆ 3rd Philosophy: Luke Ordogne.....23, Our Lady of Mercy,
Baton Rouge
Kevin Piper... 21, St. Joseph, French Settlement
Joseph Hoang Vu 20, Sts. Anthony of Padua
and Le Van Phung, Baton Rouge
- ◆ 2nd Philosophy: Brad Doyle20, St. George, Baton Rouge
Joshua Johnson20, St. George, Baton Rouge

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>

It is right for us all to encourage our seminarians in their decision. Consider writing a brief note to tell one how much you respect him for his choice to explore priesthood!

Father Lorrain and each of our seminarians will also willingly write a note of encouragement to someone *you* think might have a vocation! Personal contact and invitation is so very important – let the Vocations Office know if someone you know could use a spiritual nudge in the Lord’s direction!