

SEEDS of HOPE



FACING ANY TRIAL:
Seminarians band together
to overcome the Tough Mudder

From the Students of
St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary
Issue VI Spring 2013



NOW THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE...
by Rev. Matthew Worthen



FRIENDS 2013
A sell-out success!

THE ADOPTED GENERATION:
A People Whose Time Has Come
by Matthew Busch

A PERSPECTIVE ON HOUSE JOBS
"Anyone who would not work should not eat"
by Stephen Olson

LIFE'S ESSAY
by Rev. Mr. Viet Nguyen



A view of Mary's Home, inside the Church of the Annunciation

A Journey Through the Tough Mudder

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Mr. Joseph Plesko running through electrified wires. Photo courtesy of SVdP | pgs. 16-19

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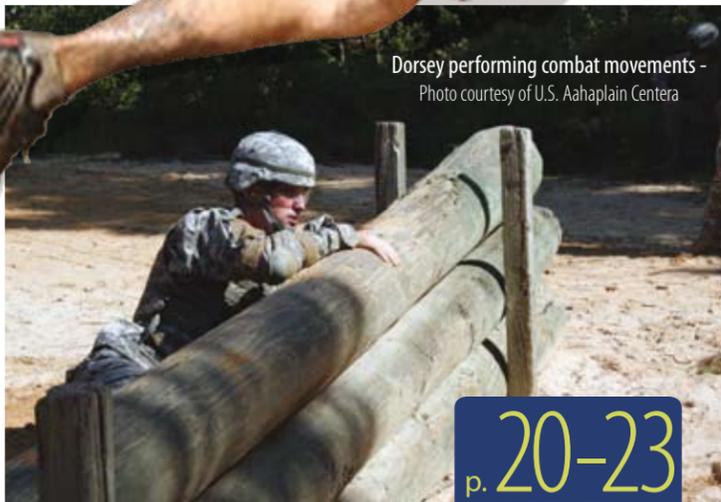
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Dorsey performing combat movements - Photo courtesy of U.S. Aahaplain Centera



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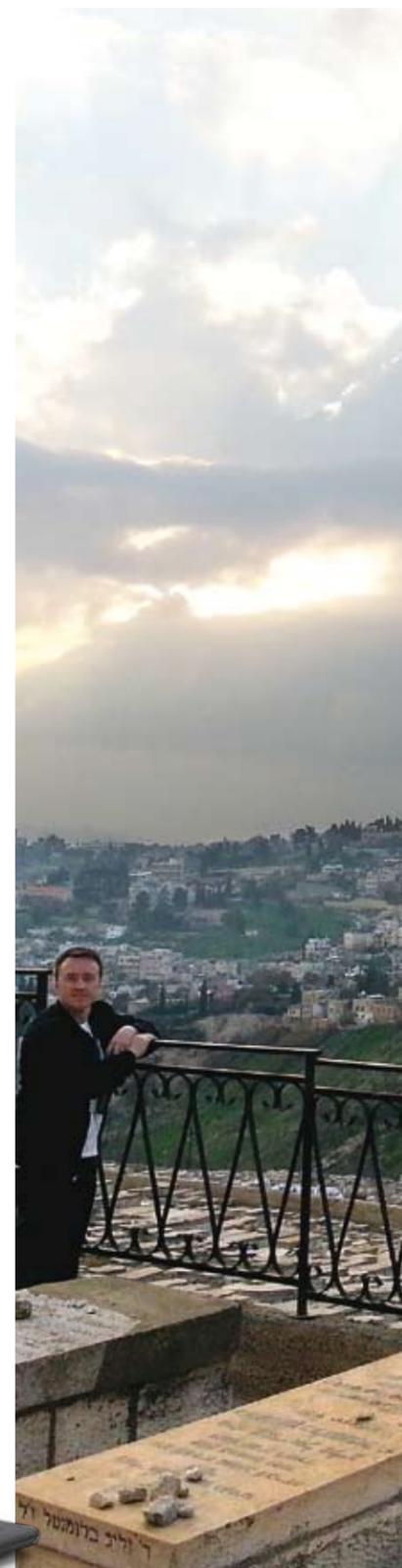
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EDITORIAL

REFLECTIONS FROM THE RECTOR

by Monsignor David L. Toups

Dear Friends of the Seminary,

With Pope Benedict XVI's announcement on the 11th of February, the question occupying the whole world is "Who will be the next pope?" By the time this issue of *Seeds of Hope* is published we will already know that answer, and I can already say with confidence that it will be the right man for our times. We believe as Catholics that the Holy Spirit is ultimately in charge of the whole process and that the "gates of hell shall not prevail" against the Church that Jesus Himself entrusted to us 2000 years ago (cf. Mt.16:18). The new pope will be a man of prayer, intelligent, cultured, balanced, multi-lingual, and will serve us with a shepherd's heart.

As you read *Seeds of Hope* some of you may be asking a similar question: "Who will our next priests be?" I offer the same list of qualifications that I gave above for our universal shepherd – these are the seminarians of Saint Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary. This issue points to the many facets and dimensions of this extraordinary group of men discerning God's call in Boynton Beach. They are men of prayer, wholesome, balanced, and ready to teach and preach in our ethnically diverse Church.

As we find ourselves in the days of waiting for our new pope's election, the men of our seminary are in their years of waiting as they are being formed to one day serve you as shepherds after the heart of Christ. Many of you know that we are experiencing growth like never before and the bishops of the State of Florida recently decided that now is the time for us to renew and reinvigorate our seminary to serve our Province for the next 50 years by giving us permission to renovate and expand our existing dormitories ... more to come in the coming months! Thank you for supporting our seminary and praying for our seminarians, faculty, and staff.



Msgr. Toups honoring Rita and Ernie Bono, Chairs of the 2013 Friends of the Seminary
Photo courtesy of Tom Tracy Photography



“BEHOLD I AM WITH YOU” *A Reflection on a Vocational Journey*

by Martin H. M. Nguyen – *II Theology (Orlando)*

“I was born, have lived poor, and wish to die poor”

These words from St. Pope Pius X are those which I often borrow to describe myself. I take great pride in it. However, to be completely honest, it was not entirely true about me.

“In fact, a few months prior to my secret baptism my father was killed by the communists. Then my paternal family, with whom my mother and I were living, and who were not Catholic, came to think that we were a great disgrace. So, at two-months old, they drove us out, forcing us onto the street for two weeks until we made it back

to my grandmother’s house. I spent most of my early childhood in the hectic and impoverished environment of a marketplace slum. Having said this, there was a period of time when my mother and I were not poor. That was, however, a period of time when we were not at all happy.”

At the age of ten, my mother’s business was very successful. She was running her company and making impressive income. We lived in a big mansion that could be spotted from a mile away. I was taken care of by two housekeepers, which, in the standard of the Vietnamese society, was quite stately. So, as we can nicely put, I was a complete spoiled brat. If I wanted breakfast at nine in the evening, I had better get my breakfast at nine in the evening.

I am not particularly proud of myself back then.

The Lord, meanwhile, had a different plan.

A drastic change happened. The business went down and we were left with next to nothing. At the age of sixteen, shortly after arriving in the United States, I found myself taking three jobs to pay for my rent and going to school during the day. It wasn’t an easy period of life, but it was formative for my character.

Something wonderful also happened. As a little prince, I thought little of God and religion. What was the point? I had everything; I didn’t need Him, or so I thought. But, now, as a young teen mopping floors and doing dishes in the back of a restaurant, I became aware that there were so many things beyond my con-



Martin with his mother, performing song in sign language for family weekend 2012 | Photo courtesy of SVdP

trol. I became aware that I need God to guide me, to protect me, and to help me. It was also the time the desire for priesthood, which had crossed my mind when I was little and I had quickly dismissed, returned. That desire grew stronger and stronger each day. In my senior year of high school, having visited the seminary twice, I made up my mind and gave Christ my “yes.”

The story, of course, did not end there. I went through with the application process and was formally accepted to be a seminarian for the Diocese of Orlando on April 4th, 2007. Two months later, mother, who was then working as a nanny for a family (irony?), lost her job and hence lost her place of living as well. We took refuge in a friend’s apartment in a rather shady area of the city. I thought of putting off seminary so that I could get a job

myself to support my family. Being somewhat proficient in English, I stood a better chance. Nonetheless, the voice of Christ calling me seemed incessant, tugging me in the heart which, all the more, made me feel torn. My spiritual director, at the same time, kept urging me to take a leap of faith and leave the rest to God’s providence.

It was one of the most difficult decisions I had ever made but I decided to leave for seminary anyway.

Almost six years had passed since I uttered my radical “yes” to the Lord Jesus. There have been as many sorrows and difficulties as there have been tremendous joys and fulfillment. I have not for once regretted my “yes” to Him. It is true that there are times, looking back, I couldn’t help asking myself, “Wasn’t the Lord asking so much of a seventeen-year-old?” There are also times, when the journey got tough, I felt doubtful if I could carry on with this “yes.” Those moments came and passed, what remained has always been joy and serenity. No, I have not for once regretted my “yes” to the Lord.

It has been an adventure, a very difficult adventure, but it has been a beautiful adventure with the Lord Jesus. I am grateful to be a part of it and sincerely desire, with his grace, to keep on going. It’s truly worth it. □



Martin serving Mass for Bishop Norbert Dorsey (December 13, 1929 – February 21, 2013) | Photo courtesy of Martin



Martin with some young visitors to SVdP from St. Matthew’s Parish | Photo courtesy of Martin.



Martin with deaf kindergarteners | Photo courtesy of Martin

NOW THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE..

by Rev. Matthew Worthen – SVdP Alumnus '11



Fr. Matthew Worthen (right) with sacristan before Mass | Photo courtesy of Rev. Matthew Worthen

Here we are offered a glimpse into the life of a priest, an alumnus of SVdP, who lives his relationship with Christ as a response to his humanity.



It was 11pm when I finally got home. It had been a long day and an even longer week. The situations, people and concerns of the past week weighed heavily on my heart. In that moment I was intensely aware that I had two options: to escape everything by turning to the internet or the TV, or to be attentive to the needs of my heart and to turn in prayer to the One who could help me to face the reality of my circumstances. This need for prayer was so great that I knew no other thing—no escape—would be capable of satisfying me.

During that time of silence, I happened to read an excerpt from Pope Benedict XVI on original sin: “Human beings have their selves not only in themselves but also outside of themselves: they live in those whom they love and in those who love them and to whom they are ‘present.’ Human beings are relational, and they possess their lives—themselves—only by way of relationship.” In light of the many factors that weighed on my heart I was deeply struck by the Holy Father’s gaze. In this gaze he helped me to understand more deeply my humanity: that

these relationships that arose from my ministry—and that were consuming my thoughts—were not a threat to me and my happiness as a priest. In fact, they were quite the opposite because they corresponded precisely to how God made me. While there were many difficult situations, these had been given to me by the Father to help me encounter Him; to help me be happy. My heart was suddenly filled with gratitude for these many difficult situations and for the presence of our Holy Father who helped me understand this. In that moment I realized how much of a Father and companion this Pope had been for me in my years of seminary formation and priesthood.

“In light of the many factors that weighed on my heart I was deeply struck by the Holy Father’s gaze.”

A few hours later I was awoken by my cell phone ringing at six in the morning. Pope Benedict XVI—this Father who’s guidance and affection I had just come to acknowledge and fully appreciate—had resigned!

Having been ordained for just shy of two years now—and still serving in my first assignment at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Pensacola, FL—people often ask what is my favorite part about being a priest. Certainly my thoughts go to the celebration of the Sacraments and the Mass. Beyond this though it

is the unexpected circumstances and events that arise every day of my priesthood that bring me great joy and challenges. Every day is different. Every day is a surprise. One night you are filled with gratitude for the Pope, and the next morning he resigns.

In the 17th chapter of John’s Gospel, we are given a glimpse into Christ’s prayer to his Father just before he undergoes his Passion and death. In that prayer Christ says: “Now this is eternal

life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” If I take serious my desire for eternal life then I must be moved to encounter and come to know this Jesus Christ—

every day!—who reveals to me the only true God. The newness, the seeming randomness, the surprises, that await me everyday I get out of bed are moments where Jesus Christ comes bursting into my life. Through the people and circumstances of my priestly ministry he refuses to allow me to ignore His Presence. Each of these circumstances is a challenge to live fully my humanity—in relationship as the Holy Father indicated—and in that I discover, all over again, the face of Christ. In His face I get a glimpse of that eternal life which is my destiny. □



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THE ADOPTED GENERATION: A People Whose Time Has Come

by Matthew Busch – III Theology (Pensacola-Tallahassee)

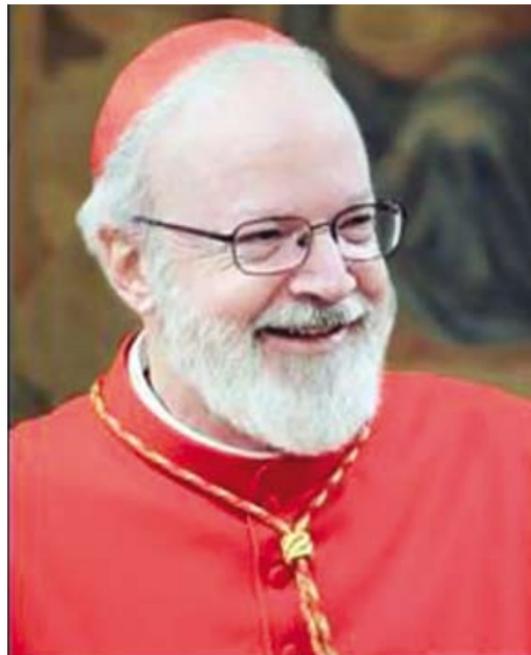


In the midst of the particularly frosty weather at this year's March for Life in Washington, DC, I notice a young girl wearing a cardboard sign over her shoulders: "I am ANA: Adopted Not Aborted." The message this young girl is spreading, I think to myself, fits in perfectly with the theme preached by Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception the night before.

January 22nd of this year marked forty years since the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision protecting the practice of abortion in the United States. Moses, in his forty-year quest to find the Promised Land, would by now have had his goal in sight. In light of this analogy, many of those gathered for this year's march in Washington found themselves asking: Where do we stand today?

Despite a *Time* magazine cover story in January declaring that abortion activists have "been losing ever since" the 1973 decision, the pro-life camp does not always feel that it is winning. The 55,000,000 abortions carried out in the United States since 1973, as Cardinal O'Malley pointed out in his vigil ad-

dress, are equivalent to the population of Italy. For an example closer to home, it is the combined population of New York and California. women who receive a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome choose to abort their child. In addition, less than one percent of women with an unwanted pregnancy opt to place their child with an adoptive family. That translates into 86 abortions for each adoption."



Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley who preached at an event at the March for Life this year | Photo credit Archdiocese of Boston

In short, the Cardinal called upon those present to help foster a new culture of adoption.

There is a particular challenge, however, to this task. Citing another report, O'Malley spoke to the critical fact that adoption is commonly seen as a greater evil than abortion:

"An unwanted pregnancy is perceived as equivalent to a 'death of self,' a loss of control over one's present and future... The second death perceived by the woman is the death of the child through 'abandonment.' A woman worries about her child being mistreated, abused, and neglected. She would perceive herself as a bad mother, one who gave her own child away to strangers. Basically the woman desperately wants a sense of resolution to her crisis, and in her mind adoption leaves the situation the most unresolved, with uncertainty and guilt for as far as she can see..."

The study goes on to show that abortion... is perceived as offering the greatest hope to a woman to preserve her sense of self. This is why so many women deeply resent our pro-life movement which they perceive as uncaring and judgmental. We have consistently focused on the safety of the unborn child while the pro-choice, pro-abortion activists focus on the woman in crisis. With almost 100 abortions for every adoption, we have so much more work to do.

For pregnant mothers, O'Malley borrowed from a famous story concerning Solomon in the first book of Kings (3:16-28): "Sometimes being a real mother means entrusting your child to someone

else so that the child will live." For the rest of us, he concluded: "Obviously, we must never abandon our commitment to the unborn child, a precious human being made in the image and likeness of God. But we must learn to focus more on the woman in crisis."

How do I myself react when I hear of someone becoming pregnant? Is it with alarm, suspicion, disappointment, indifference, or cynicism? These attitudes are entirely inconsistent with the truth that I believe, and the love I am called to share in Christ. For one who truly believes in the sanctity of human life from conception onward, there is only one proper response to this occasion:

"Congratulations."

Not one of meager tone, uncertain voice, or nuanced manner, but a sincere "congratulations" that rejoices at the miracle I've just been informed has taken place. Certainly the introduction of an entirely new and eternally unique human being into our society calls for nothing short of this, regardless of the circumstances of the pregnancy. A woman who is considering placing her child in an adoptive family must be recognized both for her bravery and for the pain she will undergo. She is deserving of our full support.

"It is not just about the lucidity of our arguments; it is about the

"One of the greatest challenges before us is to change women's perception of adoption as being a bad choice."

– Cardinal O'Malley

effect that our words have on others." In this observation O'Malley essentially summed up the cognitive dissonance that continues to baffle pro-lifers: that so many Americans

simultaneously hold that abortion is the taking of a human life, and that abortion should be legal. This will not change until adoption is appreciated as a noble and worthy part of God's plan for humanity.

"The most encouraging fact, of course, is that younger Americans are more pro-life than ever." At this remark a loud and sustained applause broke out throughout the basilica. As Moses himself must have done so many years ago, the Cardinal reassured the masses gathered. "We have been wandering in the desert for 40 years, but we are getting closer to the Promised Land."

Jesus, adopted child of the Holy Family, guide us.

Extending my hand to Ana, I tell her that I really like her sign. She smiles back at me from behind a fur-hooded coat. "I'd offer you my hand," she assures me, "but I'm afraid it would break off if I tried to move it right now." With that she continues the march, slowly but faithfully, toward the Supreme Court a snowy mile away.



Photo courtesy of Chris and Jeannine Busch

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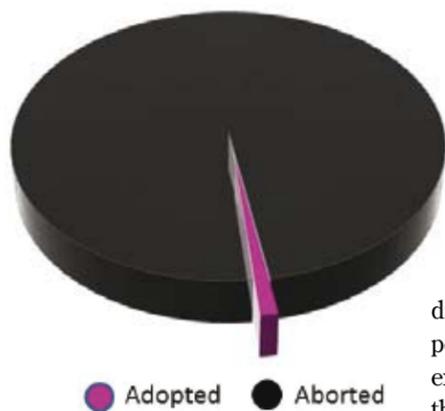
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Abortions per Adoption



Something has to change.

Cardinal O'Malley brought up several other sobering figures: 25% of all pregnancies in the US end in abortion. In New York City, 40% of all pregnancies, and 60% of pregnancies to black women, are terminated before birth. "We know that an estimated 92 percent of all

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TRAVELING THROUGH THE FIFTH GOSPEL

by Rev. Mr. Joseph Gates—*IV Theology (Venice)*

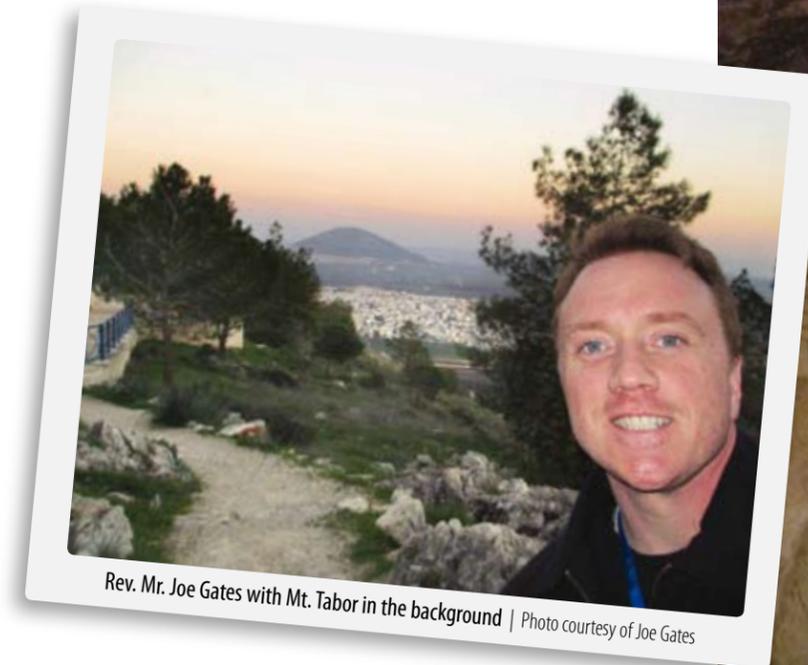
When you tell people that you are going to Israel, they will often tell you that you will never read the Bible the same again. Often Israel is called the Fifth Gospel, because the land itself speaks volumes to us about the realities of the world that we read about in the scriptures. The pilgrim who journeys to the Holy Land is literally surrounded by the lakes and rivers, mountains and valleys, and even stones that the people in the Gospels experienced 2,000 years ago. It was these geographical features, especially the mountains, that struck me the most as we traveled around the Sea of Galilee. Huge formations of weathered rock rise all around the region of Galilee and you can't help but be amazed that people actually had to travel over them, with no buses, cars or airplanes. I thought about Jesus walking to Jerusalem from Galilee, or Mary traveling to her cousin Elizabeth's house, or the journeys of Mary and Joseph to Egypt and Bethlehem. They had to travel by foot or by horse or donkey (this is no tour bus experience). It was really breathtaking to walk in their footsteps and see what trials these great historical figures went through in their travels to distant places.

Our first day we landed in Tel Aviv, and traveled to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to look at one of the harbor cities and small palaces that Herod the Great built, known as Cesarea Maritima. After spending time there, where St. Paul was given a hearing in 58 A.D. (see Acts 25:11-12, 13), we traveled to Mount Carmel and took in the breathtaking view on the chapel's roof that overlooks the Valley of Megiddo where many ancient battles were fought

(and consequently became the inspiration for the place of the final battle of Armageddon). From there our tour group descended down toward the region of Galilee. It was quite a shock to stand on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and think, "Jesus did 80% of his ministry here". It was very easy to realize, looking across the sea to the banks on the other side, how people would have traveled by boat or walked a few miles to where the famous healer and teacher known as Jesus of Nazareth was staying. Holy sites decorated the shores of this sea and were actually very close to each other. The holy sites that make up one side of this famous sea is the Mount of the Beatitudes, Peter's House in Capernaum, and the shores of Tabgha, where the miraculous catch of fish was performed and the famed post-Resurrection appearance (see John 21).

After touring the Sea of Galilee we went and visited Nazareth where the Church of the Annunciation dwells. It was quite providential that we arrived in almost the heart of Nazareth at Noon, and there on the bus, in the middle of traffic, we prayed the Angelus prayer in its native place. What most people don't realize is that these Holy Sites (Calvary, the Annunciation, the Nativity, St. Joseph's Workshop, the Birthplace of Mary, etc.) are actually cave like structures carved out of rock, with large Churches that were gradually built around them over the centuries to protect them. A home built into a rock is not what most people expect when they read the Bible, but seeing it changes your whole opinion on what life was really like back then.

After Nazareth our group traveled to the Mount Tabor, the place of the Transfiguration, where we had a Mass in one of the two small chapels dedicated to Moses and Elijah. The view from Mount Tabor was incredible and serene. After leaving Mount Ta-



Rev. Mr. Joe Gates with Mt. Tabor in the background | Photo courtesy of Joe Gates

bor we went to Beth Shean, a Roman City that was part of the Decapolis, one of the ten great cities of the world. Truly a site to behold, this ruined city of the Romans showed that nothing was impossible for Rome to build and one could only marvel at the intricacies of the architecture of the bath houses and Herculean pillars that decorated the main street. The monstrous marble slabs and intricate mosaic work was breathtaking. It was also here that I almost got run over by a herd of fifty sheep, much to my chagrin and the amusement of my fellow pilgrims. One does not expect a heard of sheep to come running through an ancient Roman city.

Later that evening we ascended into Jerusalem. I'll be honest it was one of the most moving moments for me. Our tour guide told us to prepare ourselves because we were getting ready to enter the Great City. A city that I had only read about in history books and heard mentioned at Mass. The Great Holy City came upon us, and it was beautiful. When daylight hit the next morning, it was amazing to see how close the houses were together. Jews, Muslims, and Christians lived in different sections in the Old City, which became a ghost town at night. Rising early in the morning (4:30 to be exact) you could enter the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and in the quiet of the morning imagine the events of the Passion and Resurrection unfold. Entering into this enormous church, you were immediately confronted with the marble Slab of Unction that smelled of fresh Chrism. Immediately to your right was Calvary. Climbing up about fifteen stairs you reached the top of Calvary where our Savior died. And taking a stone you could throw it and hit the tomb itself. They are so incredibly close together that you're shocked that the movies don't portray it as such.

Lastly, one of my favorite moments of the trip was going into the Church of St. Ann, whose acoustics are first class. Praying for a sibling of mine who had died, I arose out of the crypt of the Birthplace of the Virgin Mary, and an American Choir had just arrived and began to sing Amazing Grace. It was truly a grace filled few moments, ones that I will cherish for the rest of my life. □

A view of Mary's Home, inside the Church of the Annunciation. The words on the front of the altar read: Verbum caro hic factum est — the Word became flesh HERE. | Photo courtesy of Michael Caines



Rev. Mr. Joe Gates from a cemetery looking West onto the Old City of Jerusalem | Photo courtesy of Joe Gates.



Rev. Mr. Joe Gates at Cesarea Maritima | Photo courtesy of Joe Gates



Rev. Mr. Joe Gates assisting Rev. Bill Burton at Mass inside of the Tomb of Jesus in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the place of the Resurrection.
Photo courtesy of Joe Gates.



LOVE

by George Herbert

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.

"A guest," I answer'd, "worthy to be here";
Love said, "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, the ungrateful? ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee."
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.



CLIMBING EVEREST:

A Journey Through the Tough Mudder

by Jonathan Emery – III Theology (St. Petersburg)



Last fall, our new rector, Msgr. David Toups, introduced the idea of doing the Tough Mudder as a way for the seminary community to get healthy and build camaraderie in the house. Now, the Tough Mudder is a twelve-mile foot race containing obstacles every half-mile. These obstacles could include: crawling through mud, jumping off a tower into water, crawling through a pitch black tunnel, running through electrified wires, and (everyone's favorite!) swimming through ice water.

At the time I was about three hundred pounds, and my daily exercise routine consisted of walking the couple hundred feet between the chapel, cafeteria, classrooms, and my room. I had never jogged more than maybe a quarter of a mile in my entire life, and that had been in high school! I was NOT inclined to do this Tough Mudder thing, so when the Rector asked me if I was going to do it, I told him "NO!" However, God had other plans, because later that day I came across James 1:2 on two different occasions. That passage says: "My brothers, consider it **pure joy** whenever you face any sort of trial..." (my emphasis). My first thought was: "Yeah right! Pure joy in the face of trial, easier said than done. That's like finding pure joy in the Tough Mudder!" That was the moment when I got this nagging sensation that God wanted me to do the race, the same kind of tugging down deep that I'd felt before when he called me to the seminary. I knew resisting was useless. I signed up for the Tough Mudder.

We had two priests and twenty-three seminarians sign up, so we divided into four teams in order to make it easier; that way we didn't have to stay in one large group, but each team was to stay together. We only had slightly over three months to train, and for a long time I was un-

From the left: Msgr. David Toups, Joe Plesko, Jonathan Emery, Felipe González and Elixavier Castro, all deep in the mud of the Tough Mudder | Photo courtesy of SVdP

certain how I was going to make it through. Some of the guys who weren't doing it joked that I was going to die. However, the men who were training for it were a great help and inspiration! Time after time I was surprised at how one would slow down in order to jog with me, give me advice, work with me in one-on-one training, and not quit! I gained strength from them and God as I began to see why the Rector wanted to do this for both health and camaraderie. After months of training, I decided I would have two goals: (1) complete every obstacle and cross the finish line, and if possible, (2) not be the last team to finish.

Then the day came. As soon as we arrived, I began having serious apprehensions. All I could think about was that we had four hours and twelve miles ahead of us! ... We gathered at the starting line; they blew an air horn, and we were off. A lot of people began running pretty hard; I knew I needed to maintain my pace, so I got over to the side and jogged slowly. My team quickly fell far behind the others, and after about two miles I gave up hope of ever seeing the other teams before the finish line.

So we jogged and crawled through the mud, and jogged and swam under barrels floating in a pond, and jogged and crawled over/under walls made of pine trees, and jogged some more. Then we jumped in pure ice water. And we jogged some more. After all that, we had only completed three miles – just a quarter of the course.

During the next three miles, I noticed a haze settle upon my mind. I knew I just had to keep going. I stopped thinking about the end and instead became aware only of what my body was doing: "right foot, left foot, in through the nose, out through the mouth, right foot, left foot..." Around mile six, we reached something called the "Mud Mile." We

met here another seminarian taking pictures. We asked him about the other teams, and he told us that they had all passed through there a while ago. Ah well, so much for goal number two.

We continued on. Once again my mind stopped processing things, but now the miles started feeling faster as we had more distance behind us than ahead of us. Right after mile eight we hit the "Berlin Walls" which were about eight feet high. There were two of our other teams! We joined them and together got over the walls. Maybe we wouldn't be the last one over the finish line after all!

On we slogged through the miles of mud and obstacles until we reached the second to last obstacle – "Everest." This was a fifteen-foot high quarter pipe, with the challenge being to run up the curved side of the pipe, grab the top and pull yourself up. By itself, this wouldn't have been so bad, but after all we had been through (to this point, eleven miles and approximately twenty obstacles), there just wasn't much left to give! This was the obstacle I had been most concerned about, but I braced myself and ran at it full speed. I came pretty close, but even with help from the top I ended up slipping back down. I tried repeatedly, but each time I had just a little less energy than before. Some prodded me to just walk around. But I couldn't give up now, not when we were so close to the end. So I gave it another try, but again I failed. I lost hope and was about to walk around when Msgr. Toups and the rest of my team, inspired by my determination, encouraged me to continue. Together we devised a plan that involved some guys supporting me from below and others pulling me up from the top. Giving it every last bit of energy I had left, we managed to get my arms over the top. As I dangled over the edge, they told me to give it just a little more, but I didn't have anything left and I went limp in exhaus-

"...there just wasn't much left to give!"



Deacon Benjamin Lehnertz with Luis Salazar in the background (in black) | Photo courtesy of SVdP

tion, but I didn't slide down! My weight was mainly being supported by the four guys who were holding me in place. It surprised me that they were willing to go through so much effort, even beyond what I had to give, in order to make sure I made it. After just a second's rest, I made another effort. I was able to swing my right leg up high enough for some of the guys to grab it, and soon I was able to roll over onto the top.

From Everest, we were only a couple hundred yards from the finish line. After running through some electrical wires, we came to the end. That was an amazing feeling – knowing that it was all behind me, and that with the help of my brothers, I had conquered the most physically demanding task I had ever set myself to accomplish. And I actually really enjoyed doing it!

In the days following, I couldn't help but reflect upon how much this experience had been like my own vocational journey to the priesthood. At first, I didn't really want anything to do with it, but I couldn't resist the gentle tug of God's call. Seminary has been eight long years in which I have been tested in almost every way, but God and my friends have gotten me through all of it. And in the end, I really have enjoyed my time in seminary, often not in spite of my struggles, but because those struggles forced me to grow in ways that have made me a better person, while greatly enhancing my quality of life. I wouldn't trade my experiences in the Tough Mudder or seminary for anything! □



Seminarian Michael Hartley after an ice filled obstacle | Photo courtesy of SVdP



III Theologian Bryan Holtz overcoming an obstacle | Photo courtesy of SVdP

SERVING GOD AND COUNTRY:

Becoming an Army Chaplain

By Chris Dorsey

Pastoral Year (Orlando/Military Services)

Seminaries are meant to form and prepare men for the challenges of the priesthood. During the seven to nine year duration of seminary, we learn about philosophy, theology, the sacraments and how to minister to the people of the Church both in the classroom and in various assignments over summers. So, how did I wind up eating MREs (meals ready-to-eat) and crawling under live weapon fire? Well, for me that falls under the “learning how to minister to the people of the Church” section of preparing for the priesthood. I am a Co-sponsored seminarian, meaning that I am studying towards the diocesan priesthood for both my home diocese, Orlando, as well as the Arch-diocese for the Military Services. God willing, I will not only be a diocesan priest, but also a Chaplain for the United States Army.

In order to be prepared for this special ministry to soldiers, I spent the summer in Chaplains Basic and Officer Leadership Course for 13 weeks of training in Ft. Jackson South, Carolina. There I joined five other Catholic priests from around the country in a class of 135 ministers and seminarians of different faiths training to be Army Chaplains. The class, chaplain instructors, and platoon sergeants contained Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, and probably every Christian denomination you can think of.

Upon arrival to the chaplain school, we were split into four platoons of about 35 each. Almost all our time in the coming weeks were going to be spent with our platoon so I was a little nervous when

“I am blessed to be able to represent both God and Country in my calling.”

I discovered that I would be the only Catholic in mine. Things only got further from my comfort zone as we were assigned our battle buddies, someone we were supposed to keep track of at all times and learn as much as possible about (you could be given pushups if you did not know answers to questions about your battle buddy). Mine was a five foot tall, 96 pound Buddhist from California, formerly an actual Buddhist monk in Thailand. Despite my initial fear however, I was amazed at how few faith based arguments occurred and how supportive an environment my platoon became. Being able to work together and rely on each other was important not just for the training we were about to take part in, but will continue as we call on each other to help minister to soldiers in the future.

Now, Chaplain’s Basic is not the same thing as boot camp, but that does not mean it is easy either. Chaplains must meet all the same physical requirements as anyone else in the army and to this end, every training day began with me waking up around 4 AM in order to have time to say my morning prayers and be in formation and ready for physical training by 5. Physical training, or PT, would alternate between running days and “muscle failure” days (including lots of pushups, sit-ups, and planks) with both more than living up to their names. Most days I was drenched with sweat and tired before the sun was even up.

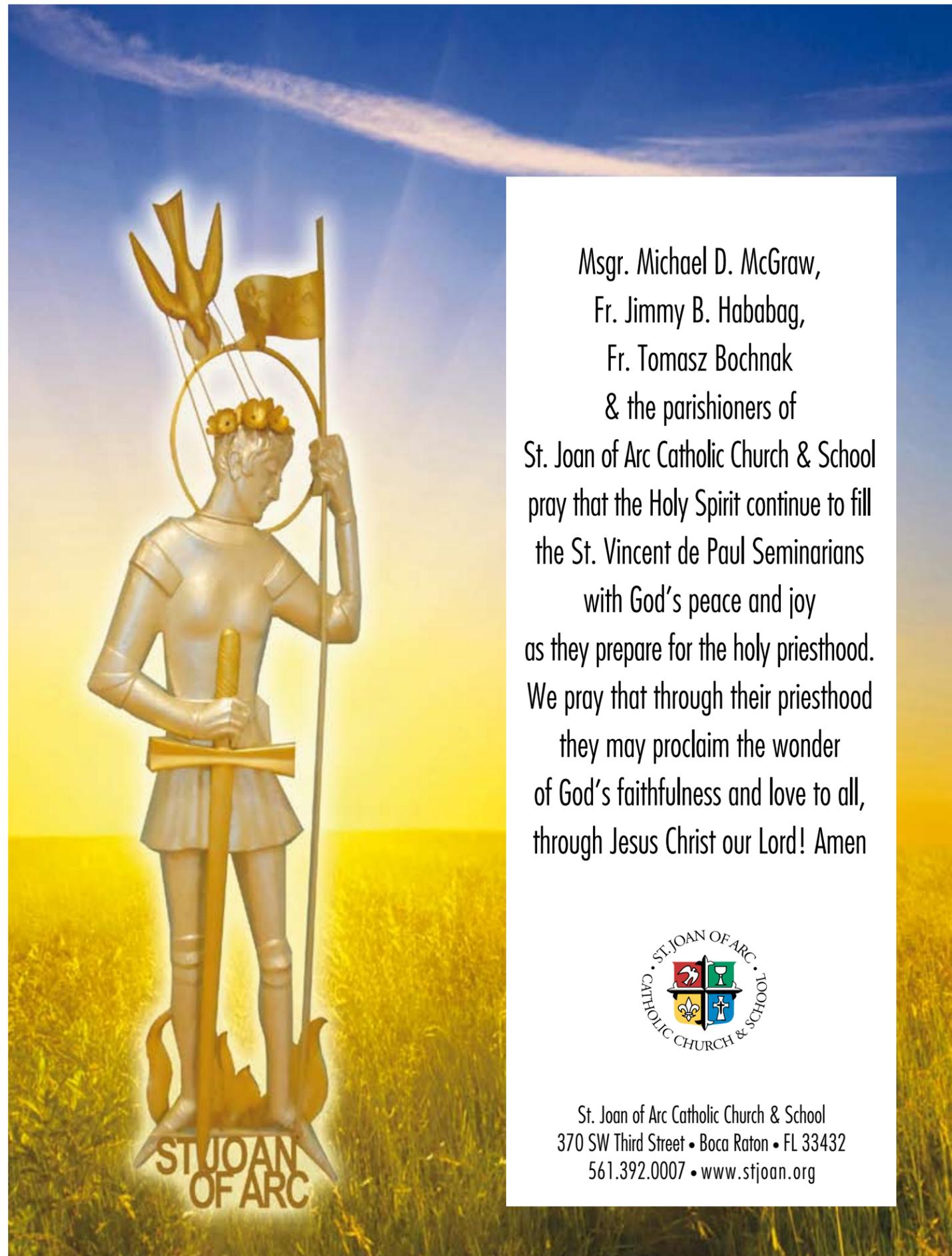
After PT, we would have just enough time to shower and change into our uniforms before forming up by platoon to begin the days training. For the first four weeks we focused on learning to be soldiers. We completed multiple obstacle courses, learned to march, how to treat wounds in the field, how to assemble and



Chris Dorsey at Graduation | Photo courtesy of Chris Dorsey

use a radio, we completed day and night land navigation courses and even learned to move in combat under fire and (with considerable discomfort) how to put on a gas mask in a room full of CS (tear) gas. This is also the phase of training where we had to memorize a ton of information and history about the Army as well as one particular division assigned to your platoon, for mine it was the 101st Airborne division. We were expected to know all of the information and could be quizzed at any time through written test or surprise questioning. Written tests had to be passed, but if you did not know the answer to a surprise question it was time for more pushups. These weeks were physically and mentally grueling, but at the same time it was awesome to actually be doing all the “army things” that I’d seen and heard about.

After these initial weeks, we moved on to more chaplain specific training. This training was still widely varied and included everything from how to brief the commander and write memo’s to how to conduct religious services in the field and services



Msgr. Michael D. McGraw,
Fr. Jimmy B. Hababag,
Fr. Tomasz Bochnak
& the parishioners of
St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church & School
pray that the Holy Spirit continue to fill
the St. Vincent de Paul Seminarians
with God’s peace and joy
as they prepare for the holy priesthood.
We pray that through their priesthood
they may proclaim the wonder
of God’s faithfulness and love to all,
through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen



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Dorsey (left) at a Ruck March | Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Chaplain Center

When I began my journey towards the priesthood, I never would have imagined the opportunities I would follow that would bring me to where I am today. I am proud to be an Acolyte for the Catholic Church and a Chaplain Candidate for the U.S. Army and while there will be times that following and progressing in both paths will be difficult, I am blessed to be able to represent both

God and Country in my calling. At this point in my journey, I would like to ask you, the reader, for prayers. Prayers for me as I continue in seminary are appreciated, but prayers for Chaplains and the men and women of the Military as they offer up their lives are necessary. These are people who truly understand a life of service for others and deserve all the support we can give them. □



Morning PT (Dorsey penultimate row and close) | Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Chaplain Center.



Dorsey leading a Commemoration Service | Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Chaplain Center

for fallen soldiers. We were also trained in counseling soldiers, certified in giving retreats to single soldiers as well as couples and marriage retreats, and how to contact other chaplains for help in ministry. These are just a few of the subjects we were instructed in, but hopefully enough to give you an idea of the breadth of our education. The summer ended with a week in the field which brought together and tested us on everything we had learned through our training.

As a chaplain I will be called upon to minister to not only Catholics, and the difficulties they face, but soldiers of all faiths. Looking forward to this it was important to not only learn to work together with, but also build friendships with, the other chaplains. Chaplains perform or provide, if they cannot perform what a soldier needs religiously (for example the sacraments), they find someone who can. The outcome of this is that rather than competition, chaplains are brothers and sisters in ministry who help each other in order to better help soldiers. My best friends in training were a Southern Baptist minister, a United Brethren Minister, a Christian Scientist, and a Lutheran seminarian (two men and two women respectively). Through these friendships, my understanding and knowledge of ministry has grown. I was able to hear all of the other chaplains in my platoon preach and they in return, they got to hear my first two homilies ever given in front of people (the feedback was supportive and helpful). The scale of interreligious dialogue that took place in training was an opportunity I can't imagine receiving at any seminary or church.



Dorsey with other chaplains before gas mask training | Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Chaplain Center



A PERSPECTIVE ON HOUSE JOBS

by Stephen Olson
III Theology (Pensacola-Tallahassee)

Growing up in a large military family, there were always plenty of chores to be done around the house. As soon as I was old enough, I worked out a verbal contract with my parents: I would empty the trash cans around the house, the kitchen trash as needed, and carry the big cans down our long driveway to the end of the street biweekly. The big payoff was \$.25 per week. At the end of the week, I could walk to the neighborhood convenience store with my older sister and go buy candy with my vast new wealth. The novelty soon wore away, \$.25 didn't go as far as it used to, and I began to look for other ways to earn a bigger allowance.



Seminarian Rafa Macias cleaning the newly remodeled refectory at SVdP | Photo courtesy of SVdP



Seminarians (from the left) Fenley Saint Jean, Angel Ortiz, Jackson Reeves, and Joe Plesko doing the dishes | Photo courtesy of SVdP

What does this all have to do with the seminary? Those early steps which developed in my first seminary – the home – built up my sense of growing responsibility, dependability, and accountability. People often ask me what it is like to live at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary. It is like living with 85 brothers in the same house. Part of that – what we call Human Formation – is about everybody pitching in to help according to his abilities. The seminary is home to many events which require planning and manpower to host. If we did not get organized about who-does-what, the results would be terrible. Even St. Paul had to admonish the community of Thessalonica, “Anyone who would not work should not eat” (2 Thes 3:10b). We fulfill our part by being assigned House Jobs. These can range from liturgical duties, such as sacristan, to the mundane, such as mail carrier or even, yes, taking out the garbage. With everyone doing his part, things run smoothly around campus.

Many semesters ago I was assigned to work as a sacristan. After the initial wonder of learning what an aspergillum is used for and how to tie a cincture without it getting knotted up, I began to appreciate the time it takes to set up and close down for a liturgy. Showing up extra early (sometimes missing sleep) and staying back (sometimes being late to meals) began to take a toll. “*I am missing out on time for prayer and studies,*” I once thought. But then a grace-filled awareness came over me. I was putting vestments back in their place, and keeping things in order. “*This is just like taking care of Jesus’ bedroom.*” Sometimes things would even just seem to disappear when they were needed.

“...everybody pitching in to help according to his abilities.”

Another seminarian from the Archdiocese of Miami, Philip Tran, described to me his variety of House Job opportunities since he entered the seminary 5 years ago: “I went from Master of Ceremonies, which tells bishops where to go during liturgies, to maintenance of the Carroll Building, including scrubbing toilets.” Other House Jobs include library assistant, helping serve food in the kitchen, washing dishes, cleaning classrooms, campus security, and maintaining shared common spaces around campus.

In my encounters with priests, I often find them reminiscing about their seminary days in relation to what house jobs each of them had. Fr. Remek Blaszkowski, a priest of the Diocese of St. Augustine, is our Assistant Dean of Students and a former student of SVdP. He describes his former house job, the position of Guest Master, as one that helped him to appreciate the importance of hospitality and the need to be both organized and flexible. These traits serve him well in his ordained service, and they were developed and formed here at the seminary.

Though House Jobs are not innately spiritual exercises, they allow us to be better-balanced individuals, more geared toward service for others, and adopt a sense of ownership of our beautiful campus. I am reminded of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, whose life expressed that we are not all asked to perform great tasks but little tasks with great love. Not bad for one whose House Job in heaven is now Doctor of the Church! House jobs also offer ways to work in teams and to cooperate with our staff to help bring about the mission of priestly formation. □

LIFE'S ESSAY

by Rev. Mr. Viet Nguyen
IV Theology (St. Petersburg)



Rev. Mr. Viet Nguyen | Photo courtesy of Viet Nguyen.

Dear friends,

A complete written essay is one that includes the following elements: (1) Introduction, (2) Development, and (3) Conclusion. In the Introduction, the most essential and difficult thing to do is to compose a Thesis Statement and its Supporting Points. The Development is where you develop your ideas based on the Thesis Statement; and this part consists of several Paragraphs. The Conclusion restates the Thesis Statement and concisely reinforces the supporting ideas in different words.

If you look at a person's life, you'll see the similarities between how one leads their life and how you write an essay. In general, each and every one of us has to go through the three stages of life: the introduction, the development, and the conclusion. In reality, some children died not long after they were born. We don't have an opportunity to learn about their Thesis Statement. For the rest of us, we have good enough conditions to complete our essays of life. Yet some never do.

Some people spend most of their lives looking for a Thesis Statement. They should have written it when they were eighteen. Unfortunately, many never found one, and they are still working

on it in their 50s or even 60s. Such a life is like an essay without a Thesis: ideas are impulsive and unorganized. That is a life without goals, purposes, or ideals.

Some came up with a Thesis Statement at an early age, but didn't know how to develop it. They hold on to their ideals for the rest of their lives but have no clues on how to turn those ideals into specific and useful actions. They live in their dreams and would die in their dreams. Their essay lacks development, and thus it is incomplete.

Some write two or three Thesis Statements in their Introduction. Because they have too many Theses, they would develop their lives in different directions at the same time. That is why they may get lost in a restless and confusing life. Though they may manage to reach the Conclusion, they would fail to reveal their focal point. Such is an off-track essay.

Some compose a wonderful, specific Thesis Statement for their Introduction. Yet when they develop it, challenges loom, problems arise, and unfavorable conditions show, etc. Discouraged, they would return to their starting point to erase their original Thesis Statement, and try to work on another. Unfortunately, time for the essay is limited. They have to turn in their incomplete essay, one without a conclusion.

Some succeed with the Thesis Statement, yet their Supporting Points are not coherent with the Thesis. These people say one thing but do another. Their actions don't match with their words. They say their ideals out loud, but their lives are different stories. Such is an illogical essay.

Dear friends, a purpose or ideal is as essential for your life as is a Thesis Statement for an essay. This Thesis Statement helps you stay on the Theme, keeping you from going astray. That's how important your life's ideal is.

As you start your college life, it's time for you to work on your Thesis Statement. If you haven't found one yet, don't hurry into the Development. Don't start your actions or the "construction" of your life until you have found a purpose or an ideal. Don't simply jot down whatever comes to mind. Life and time don't allow opportunities for you to come back to erase your Thesis Statement and start all over again!

Once you have found your purpose/ideal, don't hesitate to develop it. Divide your road ahead into stages, like how you develop your Thesis into Paragraphs. Be patient enough to develop one by one, and never let anything discourage you. Complete each paragraph with care before starting work on another. That way you won't get lost or go off track. Try to achieve your goals, whatever happens. Just like the way your other sentences support your Thesis Statement, all your actions should go hand in hand with your life's ideal or purpose.

I wish you the chance to complete your whole essay, to write the final words of your Conclusion. I wish you the ability to write wonderful, specific, clear, profound, legible, logical, and meaningful essay of life. □



FRIENDS 2013 *Huge Success!*

For the first time in St. Vincent's history, the annual Friends of the Seminary benefit was a sell-out success with more than 240 friends and supporters in attendance. Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami, presided over solemn vespers and the investiture of Rev. Msgr. David L. Toups, Rector and President. At the close of vespers, the *St. Vincent de Paul Award* was presented to Msgr. James F. Fetscher, an alumnus, and member of St. Vincent's first ordination class in 1968. "It is right that we honor one of the seminary's pioneers, one who has persevered in an exemplary way in his priestly vocation from the day the seminary opened until now," said Msgr. Toups. Dr. D. Michael McCarron, Executive Director of the Florida Catholic Conference was also honored with the *St. Vincent de Paul Award* for his generous witness to Christ, his expertise in the forum of public policy and for faithfully representing the teachings of the Catholic Church, most especially the Gospel of Life.

Following vespers, guests enjoyed a cocktail reception, silent auction and formal dinner. Msgr. Toups expressed gratitude to the sponsors of this year's event, among them, Mrs. Catherine "Sis" Murphy, *Vespers* sponsor and friend of the seminary for over 30 years. Honorary Chairs, Rita and Ernie Bono from the mother Diocese of St. Augustine were recognized for their commitment to the seminary and the success of this year's event. "There is nothing more vital to the future of our Church, than

priests to administer the Sacraments. It is a true blessing for Rita and I to be able to give these men, who felt the call to priesthood, the opportunity to discern their calling." said Ernie.

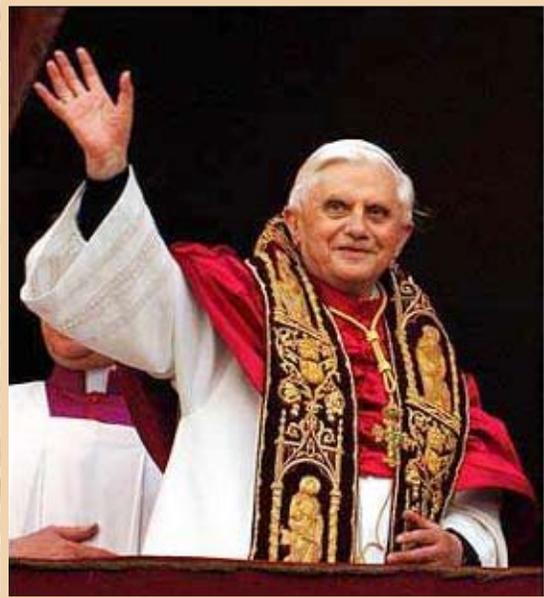
Since 1984, *Friends of the Seminary* has raised in excess of \$1.9 million to support seminarian formation at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary. □



Photos courtesy of Tom Tracy Photography



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The Students of Saint Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary

But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.

- Matt 13:8

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Thank you!



From the seminarians at
St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary,
Boynton Beach, FL