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September 2021

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Greetings everyone. There's no one anywhere who hasn't been affected, to some degree, by Covid-19. The most obvious impact for the seminary is delay of remediation of our 'Leaky Buildings' condition. Less obvious is the human impact, psychologically, socially and spiritually. e.g. The diaconate ordination of three sixth-year students, scheduled for September 18, looks like being delayed. ... Christ warned his disciples that they would not be immune to the storms of life that buffet everyone at times. But he promised to be with them throughout, to relieve their anxieties and calm their fears. This begs the questions: 'Where in this Covid pandemic do we see Christ present with us, concerned for us still, committed to us yet?', and 'As he is for us, how can we be for each other?' ... Thank you for keeping the staff and seminarians in your cares and concerns; be assured of our prayers for you.

Stay safe, keep well and, as always, the peace of Christ be with you.

-Fr. Brendan Ward, Rector.

We started our first newsletter last year in lockdown and again we find ourselves in the same situation. . We have learnt from the last two years that nothing is certain and that we need to be resilient to change. Bishop Michael in a homily quoted Viktor Frankl from his book "Man's Search for Meaning".

Viktor Frankl, lived through four concentration camps, and wrote that, "the difference between those who survived and those who didn't was, the survivors had real purpose, something that was deeper than themselves, something that drew them on. They had something and more importantly, someone to believe in." For all those struggling, may they be able to draw on their faith to get them through.

Anastasia Brown - Office Manager

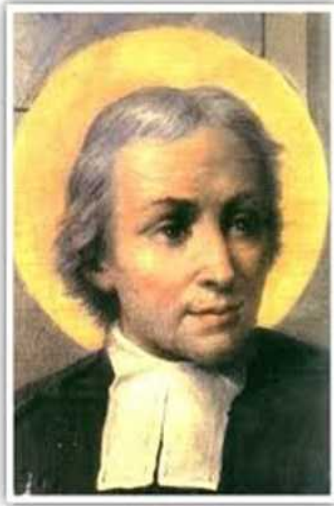
UPCOMING EVENTS

- ✝ Term four starts 5th September— Students currently in Dioceses due to Auckland lockdown
- ✝ Holy Cross Seminary Feast Day—14th Sept. Mass and feast day celebrations cancelled due to Covid.

DIACONATE ORDINATION

- ✝ Adam Kirkeby, Alfred Tong and Monty Bamford - Diaconate Ordination
Saturday 2nd Oct—Due to Covid location still be to decided— + Paul Martin SM Celebrant





SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
(1651-1719)

Forty years ago, in 1981, I began my teaching ministry in a sugarcane town called Ingham about 100km north of Townsville in Queensland. I joined the De La Salle Brothers the following year.

The De La Salle Brothers were founded in France in 1680 to provide a human and Christian education to young people, especially those who were poor and marginalized. The initial group of men who associated together to provide this formative education chose the name “Brother” not as a title of distinction but as a way of describing the relationship they wanted to give witness to. They wanted to be brothers to one another in community and older brothers to the students they taught.

Looking back over these forty years I have a deep sense of gratitude for the opportunities I have had to be a brother for others in various parts of the world. These forty years have flown by.

Why am I still a brother? Being a brother is who I am called to be. I have been sustained in my vocation through life giving relationships. It may sound like a cliché to say I have been richly blessed but that is the truth.

One of my favourite spiritual writers is the Dutch priest Henri Nouwen. One of the ways he describes prayer is to let the word of God descend from the mind into the heart and allow it to become flesh in us.

One of the scripture passages I keep returning to are the words that Jesus heard at his baptism, “*You are my beloved son with you I am well pleased.*” For me this is a reminder and an assurance that I am God’s beloved child and all those I encounter are God’s beloved children. At times, I admit, I have to act against my natural inclinations and live this reality with the eyes of faith. It is easier to love some people than others. Living in community with people of differing personalities and cultures continues to challenge me how I can be more loving. Henri Nouwen encourages us to be open to being taught by those to whom we are called to minister, just as Jesus allowed himself to be taught by the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24-30). In a similar way my own Founder reminded the brothers that they should see in each person and event, a sign and call of the Holy Spirit. The faces of many teachers, students and brothers I have lived with come to mind who have challenged me to be a better Brother and I am thankful for this.

Faith, service and community are three inherent values that inspire many engaged in the Lasallian ministry of human and Christian education. We are always in the loving and attentive presence of God while engaged in this mission.

This time of lockdown has allowed time once again to remember how God has been present to and with me throughout my life, a lot of times without me realizing at the time. Even without lockdowns it is good to find just a few moments each day to slow down and be still and be conscious of what you are thankful for and deepen your awareness that God is so good.



Brother Mark McKeon is the human formator at the seminary. He will be leaving the seminary and returning to Australia at the end of 2021. We have been blessed to have him on our formation staff with his vast experience and knowledge. His mantra has been —Live Jesus in our hearts forever!



**Every seminarian and every priest has a different answer to the question. What led you to priesthood?
For me it was different experiences and encounters, and a realisation of God's love for me.**



My name is Matt White. I am a third-year seminarian for the archdiocese of Wellington. I am a late vocation, having spent my working life as a high school teacher, prior to entering the seminary in 2018. I am the oldest and the wisest! of the thirteen of us training for priesthood, here at Holy Cross.

I was brought up in an average Catholic family and were taught prayers from an early age. My brother and I enjoyed our years serving as altar boys for morning mass. As we got older, we continued to pray at night before bed. Being Catholic was a normal part of life.

During my years at college, few of my classmates attended Sunday Mass. Yet I felt they were missing out on something. They challenged me on my belief, and I became hungry to learn more about my faith. I joined prayer groups and study groups and later become a regular every year at the Hearts Aflame Catholic Summer school.

Some years later, I knew I wanted to share the good news of God's love with others. I started to look for opportunities to help where I could in my parish. I became involved in the Life Teen youth ministry and became a youth leader. A new five-year program in the archdiocese, training Lay Pastoral leaders began, and I decided to join. Eventually, I would become a Lay Leader and look after a parish in the Hutt Valley.

During this time, I felt God calling me deep in my heart to be a priest. This happened slowly and gradually. I dismissed the idea several times making lots of excuses to myself not to do it, but God kept persisting. The turning point came five years ago when my Mum died very suddenly, in front of me. It was an early Monday morning, just before I was about to go to my teaching job at school. My heart was broken, and my world had been instantly turned upside down. Her passing was unexpected and led to a long time of grieving. Eventually I made the decision that I needed to try what God had been nagging me to do for quite a while and answer his call, to start training to become a priest. I realised that there was no point going through life always wondering if priesthood was what I was meant to do. It was a question on my mind that had to be answered.



Auckland Diocese celebrate the ordination of *Thomas Chaní Park*



Hamilton Diocese celebrate the ordination of *ISAAC FRANSEN*



A Journey to Freedom

Holy Cross Seminary Annual Retreat 2021

Alfred Tong (6yr Seminarian)

Each year all seminarians participate in an annual retreat under the guidance of the seminary's spiritual director. Fr Peter Murphy has been our spiritual director in 2021. Our retreat took place at the Franciscan Friary in Hillsborough. It was an opportune time for us to slow down, be still and

reflect in silence on our experiences of the first half a year. Our retreat theme was, "A Journey to Freedom". Inspired by the meditative tradition of John Cassian and the Benedictine Fr Laurence Freeman OSB, Fr Peter encouraged us to engage in the "work of silence". We came to experience that there can be challenges in undertaking the discipline of this prayer form. The biggest challenge seems to be disengaging from the continuous "chatter" of our thoughts. Distractions are experiences by anyone who engages in meditation. Fr Laurence Freeman encourages those who practice meditation to 'take it seriously', because the goal sitting in silence and stillness is an intimate encounter with God.

During the retreat we immersed ourselves into at least four sessions of silent meditation for 30 minutes. In addition, there were two sessions of 'meditative walking' each day of the retreat. Each day we gathered together for the Eucharist. As well as guided sessions from Fr Peter we also watched two movies highlighting the spirit of monastic life – Philip Groning's "Into Great Silence" (Die große Stille, 2005) and Xavier Beauvois' "Of Gods and Men" (2010).

To round off the week, many of the seminarians took the liberty of walking up One Tree Hill. Initially some of us found it challenging to sit still in silence for thirty minutes. However, we gradually discovered and experienced how nourishing silent prayer can be. After my years at the seminary, I can say that while all of the formal formation activities are important, it can be an easy thing to lose perspective. The time we give to silent prayer allows us to sharpen our vision so that we more see reality as God sees it and can then respond as God would have us respond.

SELECTION OF HAIKU & POEMS FROM STUDENTS WHILE ON RETREAT

In silence, I find my core,
And in my core is God.
In silence, I find my friend,
A friend that doesn't need my words,
Only my silent attention.
His presence embraces me like no other.

Handing my baggage
Hesitant like the rich man
God renews my life

The air in my lungs
Miles away compared to
The closeness of You

Into great Silence
Jesus indeed I can find
He Lives in my heart!

Jesus says to me -
It's ok to be anxious -
It's ok to just be.

Pastoral Reflection

Gerson Badayos.

Photo: Gerson &
Bishop Robin Leamy SM



This year, together with my fellow first-year seminarian, I have had the opportunity to engage in pastoral ministry one morning a week at the Little Sisters of the Poor in Ponsonby - a home for the elderly.

The tasks we are mostly assigned are to give a foot-wash/foot-massage to some of the residents and to engage in conversation with them. It has been a rewarding experience for us to assist the Sisters and the staff/volunteers and to engage with the residents.

Pope Francis encourages us all to immerse ourselves in the conditions and activities of others and become aware of their needs, to be able to listen and share and to empathize with them. There are some challenges with our pastoral work, especially in terms of communication, considering that some of the elderly struggle with their hearing. We also have to ensure we attend to the residents

with special care as many have physical vulnerabilities.

My time in this special caring environment has highlighted the importance of giving time to people, especially those who are marginalised in anyway. I am realising that those I minister with and to, have a lot to teach me as I continue in my vocational journey.



Cultural Night

A great fun night with everyone making a meal from their culture to share. Our mc started our night with impersonations and finished with card tricks. We had amazing music performed and sung by our very talented students. Our staff also joined in by performing. We finished off with a game of Titi Torea.



A milestone has been achieved, one accommodation block was completed and students moved in at the start of Term 3. Our C Block is now under remediation.

At the end of this year we will have to vacate the admin block and the staff will work out of the apartments until the work is completed July 2022. When the students return in 2022 we will have to change our usual mode of operation as we won't have a chapel, kitchen or dining room so it will be a year of challenges and changes ahead.



To all those who support Holy Cross Seminary, through prayer, supporting students in their pastoral placements and for those who support us financially. With your support we can train seminarians to be the future priests of New Zealand. We remember you all, in our prayers for all benefactors.

Annual Seminary Appeal

Each year the fourth Sunday of Easter is Good Shepherd Sunday and is designated as the 'World Day of Prayer for Vocations'. A special collection is taken up in parishes across all the dioceses on this Sunday; it is the main source of income for the training of seminarians in New Zealand.

Individual Donations

Individual donations made directly to Holy Cross Seminary greatly aid necessary funding for staffing and student education, formation, accommodation, teaching and administration needs and costs. Such donations are very appreciated and gratefully received.

Online Donations to:

Holy Cross Seminary Ponsonby

Bank Account - 06 0199 0093928 00

Please include 'Donation' as reference and your name and send us an email so we can send you a receipt.