



Adsum

Adsum is published by the seminarians of **Mater Dei Seminary** for the enjoyment of our families, friends, and benefactors.

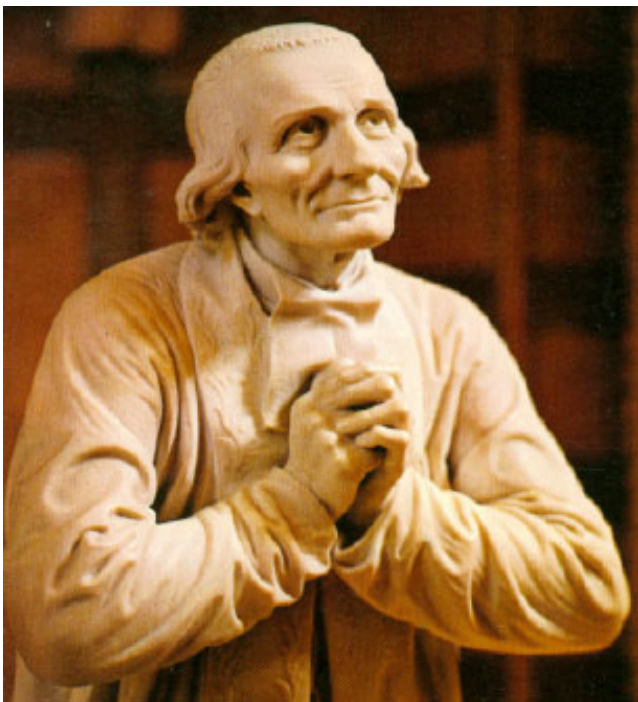
LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

In the month of August, there are many special feastdays: St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Lawrence, St. Philomena, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. One very special feast for our priests and seminarians is August 9, St. John Marie Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests.

This saint is unique in so many ways. He was very humble and simple and not as talented or gifted as his fellow priests, and yet his priestly work far surpassed that of most clergy, both past and present. Despite the saint's difficulties in the seminary and a long delay to finish his studies (due to a government oversight by which he was drafted into the military), St. John Vianney was ordained to the holy priesthood and assigned to the remote village of Ars, in southeastern France. Upon his arrival he discovered widespread laxity in the practice of the Faith, especially the neglect of Mass attendance on Sundays. By the time this saint's soul passed to God, Ars had been transformed into a model Catholic parish where the Faith was fervently practiced. How can this wonderful change be explained? What was the success behind his priestly work? It was his great life of prayer and penance which he heroically offered for the conversion of his parish.

As the news of his sanctity spread throughout France, distant pilgrims began to flock to his confessional and his pulpit for spiritual advice. Many great sinners were con-



verted through his priestly admonitions. In addition to his many hours of prayer, few hours of sleep, heroic penances (he ate only a simple diet of boiled potatoes), and many hours in the confessional, St. John Vianney was tormented by the devil at night. The saint recognized a certain pattern in these diabolical attacks. When they were more severe, he knew a great sinner would come soon to his confessional to be converted.

In 1987, I had the privilege to offer Holy Mass in the church of Ars and to venerate the confessional seat where St. John Vianney spent so many long hours each day. I also toured his rectory which was very poor and simple and where many artifacts used by the saint were still in their places. His saintly life is just one more reminder that God chooses "the weak and the foolish" of this world to confound the proud.

During the third week of July, we had our bi-annual priests' meeting in Omaha. Fr. Johannes Heyne flew from Germany to be present. Also during this week, the ceremony for the reception of novices was held. Two of our seminarians were clothed in the habit of the Congregation of Mary Immaculate Queen (CMRI) and received their new religious names. Timothy Geckle (Ohio) is now Brother Michael Maria and Marcellus Moylan (Hawaii) is now Brother Alphonsus Maria.

In less than two weeks our academy (K-12) will start classes for our twenty-third academic year. This year will see a record number of students, ninety-four in all. In less than a month, the seminary classes will begin with twelve seminarians. Needless to say, there are many preparations to be made in classrooms, as well as organization of books, and coordination of schedules. Fr. Gregory Drahman, CMRI, Fr. Gronenthal, and I teach multiple classes for the seminary and high school, which makes life interesting. Please remember to pray for our seminarians, your future priests!

With my prayers and blessing,
Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI

Father Connell Answers Moral Questions

by Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

Loot from Abroad

Question: Returned soldiers frequently approach a priest with a problem of conscience concerning their obligation to make restitution for objects they brought back from invaded enemy countries, having acquired them by methods which objectively could be classified as looting. Similar problems are presented by persons who have received such articles as gifts from soldiers. What norms should guide a priest in solving such problems of conscience?

Answer: So many varied circumstances could enter into cases of this nature, that only general principles can be given. In the first place, if a soldier took property belonging to civilians—watches, cameras, fountain-pens, books, etc.—without making any recompense, and knew at the time he was doing wrong, he may not keep the property. For, in such a case he is a possessor in bad faith, and may not profit by his acts of injustice. If it is impossible to restore the objects to those who were robbed (as is usually the case) he must contribute these articles (or their equivalent in money) to pious causes or to the poor. It is well to note that this principle applies even in the event that the articles in question were taken from a deserted house, since the inhabitants of such a dwelling are presumed to have left it only temporarily and not to have given up their claim to their possessions.

However, it is possible that a soldier took the goods of civilians in such circumstances that he did not realize he was really stealing. Perhaps he had the idea that it was permissible to keep what he chanced to find in a bombed building, and consequently was guilty of no formal sin when he acquired articles of value in this way. In the supposition that there is no hope of getting the objects back to their true owners, the soldier could now keep them, for he has been a possessor in good faith. The same is true of personal possessions, such as watches, money, medals, etc., taken from dead enemy soldiers. Strictly speaking, there should have been an effort to identify the dead man (from his “dog-tag”) so that these possessions could be sent to his relatives. However, if a soldier took them without any such effort, with the idea that he was allowed to acquire the articles for himself, he could now be allowed to keep them (presuming that these articles bear no marks whereby the family of the dead soldier could be located). It might seem strange to imply that Catholic soldiers could have been in good faith in regard to looting, but amid the excitement of war and the widespread laxity regarding the rights of the foe, such a condition could have been fairly frequent.

Those who receive articles as gifts from returned soldiers can presume that they were honestly acquired unless they have positive reasons for suspecting the opposite. If they have grounds for suspicion, they should not accept the gift, until they have made some effort to discover if the donor acquired it honestly, and if they find it was not so, they should refuse to accept the gift. If they accepted it with the realization that it may have been stolen property, they are doing wrong; and if later they discover that it was dishonestly acquired, they too must give it up—to pious causes, if the original owner cannot be found. However, if a person has accepted such a gift in good faith, and only subsequently becomes aware that the soldier who gave it to him had seized it as loot, he may keep it, unless he can find the real owner—which in most cases would be impossible. For, in such a case, he is in a situation similar to that of one who finds a lost article and cannot find the owner.

Adsum, a publication by the seminarians of **MATER DEI SEMINARY** for the reading enjoyment of friends and benefactors, is sent free of charge to all who request it. If you are interested, please provide your name and mailing address to:

MATER DEI SEMINARY
7745 Military Avenue
Omaha NE 68134-3356