

Adsum

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LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

The months of February and March are always good days for solid class time with our seminarians. In the fall, there were days off: October 11, the feast of the Divine Maternity; November 1, All Saints' Day; and the long weekend for Thanksgiving. Then in December the seminarians had their Christmas break for two weeks. So now, the seminarians have two months of uninterrupted classes.

The seminary classes are divided into two groups according to their level of studies. The first group is called the Philosophate because the seminarians cover two years of philosophy, besides their other classes in Latin, Greek, Sacred Scripture, ecclesiastical history, and introductory dogmatic theology. This is the level at which nine of our seminarians are, either in first or second year of their Philosophate. The second group is called the Theologate because the seminarians primar-



Blessing of Candles on the feast of the Purification



Justin Schoenwandt enters the seminary as a CMRI postulant

ily focus on moral theology and Canon Law for the next four years. Three of our seminarians: Frater Anthony Short, CMRI, Carlos Borja, and Nino Molina are in the Theologate.

The books used in the seminary are standard seminary textbooks used in the past by seminarians prior to Vatican Council II. On one of my visits to Fr. Francis Leblanc in Arizona, he inquired what textbooks our seminarians used in Sacred Scripture; I answered the volumes of *Scripture Studies* by Fr. Steinmueller. Fr. Leblanc responded, "That's the book I used in the seminary." On another occasion, Fr. Dominic Radecki and I visited Fr. Schell, SJ, in southern California. He also inquired what texts we used for Canon Law; I answered that we used *Canon Law—A Text and Commentary* by Fathers Bouscaren and Ellis, SJ. Fr. Schell looked at me and said, "I knew Bouscaren and Ellis." What I particularly appreciate about the Canon Law book by Bouscaren and Ellis is that there are frequent references to the five volumes of

Canon Law Digest which contain the most recent decisions of the Popes, Holy Office, and the Sacred Rota. This provides decisions on practical cases which help seminarians understand the application of Canon Law to concrete situations.

In the area of moral theology, our seminarians use several standard moral theology books: *Moral Theology* by Fr. Henry Davis, SJ, *Moral Theology* by Fathers Jone and Adelman, OFM, *Moral Theology* by Fr. Prummer, OP, and various moral theology books written by Fr. Francis Connell, CSSR (whose *Moral Questions and Answers* is found on the back of our Adsum). For sacramental theology, the seminarians use the book *Administration of the Sacraments* by Fr. Halligan, OP; he taught sacramental theology in the Dominican Order and was well known by Bishop McKenna, OP.

As Mater Dei Seminary has held classes for twenty-two years (since 1989), we have developed extensive tests in all areas of studies, especially in philosophy, dogmatic theology, moral theology and Canon Law. Although seminary classes keep Fr. Gregory Drahman, CMRI, and I busy, having all the textbooks and having covered the material multiple times has greatly facilitated our work.

Nevertheless, the business of the seminary is to form holy priests. The seminary schedule has been fundamentally the same for twenty-two years. Daily Mass, weekly confessions, recitation of the Divine Office, recitation of the Rosary, meditation, and spiritual reading provide the necessary graces for our seminarians.

The good thing about our present group of seminarians is that they are young and more docile to spiritual and academic formation. Most of our seminarians are graduates from Mater Dei Academy and have had the benefit of Catholic education which has provided a solid foundation for their seminary training. Although Fr. Gregory and I are very busy with our pastoral responsibilities in the Midwest and teaching classes in our high school, God has blessed us with good health to maintain the seminary.

With the Holy Season of Lent “just around the corner,” let us remember that this penitential season provides us with a great opportunity to atone for our past sins and also to “chastise the body and bring it into subjection,” to use the words of St. Paul the Apostle. St. Louis De Montfort in his treatise, *The Friends of the Cross*, beautifully expounds on the necessity of all Christians to practice mortification, to renounce the world and to follow our crucified Savior and His Sorrowful Mother on the Way of the Cross. I highly recommend this booklet for our readers.



Brother Pius Maria, CMRI, with Rambo, the Bishop's new dog (Buster, the Bishop's dog, died in his sleep of old age)

In addition to the recitation of the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, we also have the wonderful devotion of the Stations of the Cross. Tradition tells us that this devotion has its origin from Our Blessed Mother, who would walk the streets of Jerusalem, following the same route that she walked when she followed her Divine Son to Calvary. The saints tell us that meditation on the Passion is one of the most meritorious spiritual exercises that we can perform. Let us plan now to make time during the season of Lent to recite weekly the Stations of the Cross in addition to our daily Rosary. As for Lenten spiritual reading, my favorite book is *The Passion of Christ* by Archbishop Goodier. This author traveled to the Holy Land and spent long periods in meditation in order to wonderfully harmonize the four Gospels and give us tremendous insights into the public life and the Passion and Death of Our Lord.

May all of you have a very grace-filled season of Lent and grow in your love for Jesus Crucified and His Sorrowful Mother!

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

The Life of St. Gabriel, Passionist

When we consider the lives of the saints, we may fall into the mistake of thinking that the saints were born saints. However, this is not the case for some of them, and in particular, St. Gabriel the Passionist. His friends called him “the dude” because of his immaculate grooming. They also nicknamed him “the dancer” because at parties he didn’t hesitate to dance with as many girls as were available. He was popular with his companions because he was witty and could readily make them laugh. With his vivacious nature, he fitted right in with the “Lords of Spoleto,” a gang of classmates whose idea of fun was marching through the streets laughing, joking and instigating boisterous stunts, often while enjoying a smoke on the side to prove their maturity.

Does this sound like one of those students who is more of a “party-goer” than a scholar, more of a potential candidate for juvenile hall than for a diploma? Well, oddly enough, the student described was at the time in the process of becoming a candidate for sainthood. Yes, seventeen-year-old Francis Possenti, the son of a well-to-do civil official in Spoleto, Italy, found his enjoyment in many of the pleasures of frivolities of youth. But the fun-loving side of his character was offset by his integrity, piety, and natural talents. He was an able scholar with a quick mind and tenacious memory, enabling him to earn the most envied prizes the school had to offer, the gold medals of philosophy and honor. The religious principles that had been instilled into him, both in his home and Catholic schooling, exerted an influence on him, such that he did not neglect his religious duties of prayer, attendance at Mass and frequent confession and Communion.

Furthermore, he fostered a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Doubtless, these Catholic practices preserved in him a high moral standard. He remained pure in mind, heart and speech, and his chastity of soul and body was reflected in his very facial appearance.

While the world was trying to entice Francis into its service, God was beckoning to him in the opposite direction, that of His service. The instrument God used to make this call heard was the reality of death—the experience of his own narrow escape from death, not once, but twice. Twice on the threshold of death from illness he promised God that he would leave the world and consecrate his life in a religious order as a priest. Twice the world enticed him and he broke his promise.

A third call reached him during a procession in which a famous icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary was being carried through the streets of Spoleto. As the sacred picture passed the spot where he was kneeling, his eyes met those of the

image. As he gazed spellbound, in the depth of his souls he heard a voice say, “Francis, why do you remain in the world? It is not for you. Follow your vocation!”

That brief moment changed the course of his life. All procrastination ended and he answered the call without delay. In September 1856 he entered the Passionist Order. One year later he made his religious profession, taking the name Gabriel, vowing to live according to Our Lord’s evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. He then proceeded to take up clerical studies in preparation for the priesthood. He distinguished himself by the practice of heroic virtue, not manifested by doing extraordinary feats of heroism, nor by working astounding miracles, but by constant virtuous fidelity to the ordinary obligations and duties expected of any religious and cleric, fulfilled with extraordinary faith, diligence and purity of intention. By the

power of God’s grace he gradually died to self-love to live for love of God alone.

His constant progress in virtue in a short time can be attributed to the firm resolutions he made, inspired largely by his fervent devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to His Passion, and to the Sorrows of Mary, whereby he received abundant graces to remain faithful to those resolutions. After six years in the religious life, at the age of 24, after suffering greatly with patient resignation, he died peacefully of consumption on February 27, 1862.

On May 13, 1920, Pope Benedict XV officially proclaimed him a canonized saint, citing Gabriel Francis Possenti as “the new patron of youth for the Universal Church in this 20th century,” stressing that what he achieved is “a lesson and inspiration to us all.” What specifically is that lesson? I think it is well summarized by Cardinal William

Connell: “To live an ordinary life dedicated to God’s glory, that is the lesson we need most in these days of spectacular posing and movie heroes. And that an ordinary life, lived only for God, quite simply, quite undramatically, but very seriously, each little task done with a happy supernaturalism—that such a life means sainthood.”

But the life of St. Gabriel has an added lesson for those young men who are also being called by God to follow in the footsteps of his vocation, and who, perhaps, like him are attracted by the incitements of the world. To such, the example of young Gabriel can serve as a magnet to draw them away from the world’s allurements and inspire them with courage and resoluteness in responding to God’s invitation: “Young men... love not the world.... because all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life... And the world with its lust is passing away, but HE WHO DOES THE WILL OF GOD LIVES FOREVER.” (1 John 2:14-17)



Father Connell Answers Moral Questions

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

The Way of the Cross

Question: In order to gain the rich indulgences attached to the Way of the Cross, is it necessary to add a *Pater, Ave*, and *Gloria* (Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father?)

Answer: No. All that is required for making the Way of the Cross and gaining the indulgences attached to this devotion is that one pass from station to station, meditate on the Passion of Our Lord, and perform this devotion without too great interruption between the different stations. When a considerable number of persons are making the Way of the Cross together, it suffices that a priest go from station to station and say some prayers, while the others join with him from their places. It is even permitted to have the prayers said from the pulpit by another priest, if the one performing the devotion could not be heard. A similar “group method” of making the Way of the Cross is permissible in religious communities with one of the members (not necessarily a priest) going from station to station. But it would seem that the indulgences would not be gained if this method were followed by a group of lay persons.

The Pastor and Invalidly Married Parishoners

Question: What obligation has a pastor toward those parishioners who are living in an invalid marriage?

Answer : A pastor undoubtedly has grave obligations toward parishioners involved in an invalid marriage. He would be guilty of neglecting his duty if he failed to do anything for them or argued that he can wait until they come to him with their problems. Our Lord expects him to go in search of these strayed sheep, even if they themselves do not seek his assistance. When he finds out that a couple living in his parish, one of whom (at least) is a Catholic, are not validly married, he should visit them and see what can be done to rectify the situation. There are thousands of Catholics in our land today living in invalid unions that could be validated (either through the fulfillment of the prescribed form or through a *sanatio*) if some zealous priest interested himself in them. In many such cases the non-Catholic party could be induced to make an honest study of the Church’s claims, if the priest gave this person a kindly and straightforward talk.

Of course, there are many other invalid unions that cannot be rectified, usually because of the impediment of a previous marriage bond. But even in such cases the pastor should not neglect the couple. He should not, indeed, make any compromise with the situation by treating the couple as a properly married pair, or by cloaking over the fact that they are living in sin and that as long as they continue to live as husband and wife their sin cannot be forgiven by God. But by fervent and kindly admonition he might be able to induce the couple to separate or (if the requisite conditions are present) to live as brother and sister. Even if he does not succeed to this extent, he should urge the couple to pray for divine help and mercy, and let them know that as soon as they resolve to return to God, the way will be made as easy as possible.

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