

ST. JOHN VIANNEY COLLEGE SEMINARY: MARKING 50 YEARS OF FORMATION

In the midst of a very busy post-Easter Confirmation season here, I was very much looking forward to enjoying an evening of celebration in honor of the 50th anniversary of **Saint John Vianney College Seminary (SJV)**. As a proud alumnus (SJV-1985), I was delighted to observe this milestone. Following the close of Vatican II, the Archdiocese made a decision that was quite controversial—first, creating a college seminary program, but shortly thereafter, the sale of Nazareth Hall, the “minor seminary” located on the shores of Lake Johanna in Roseville. For more than forty years, this idyllic setting provided the backdrop for both a high school and the first two years of a collegiate seminary.

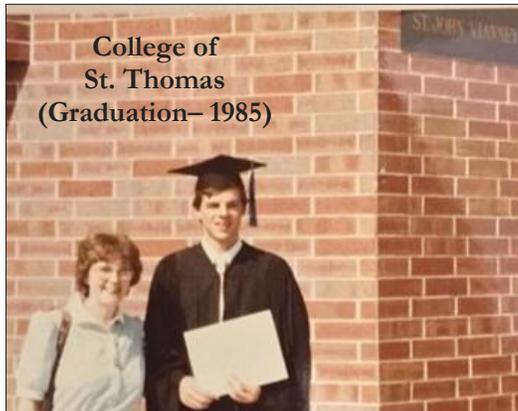
After six years at “Naz Hall” seminarians matriculated to The Saint Paul Seminary for six additional years of formation—two years of philosophy followed by four years of theology. But in 1968, the Archdiocese **consolidated the college program** under one roof, with the students taking classes at the College of Saint Thomas (all-male student body at the time). The High School division remained before its closing in 1970. This was clearly the right decision from the perspective of priestly formation, though I fully acknowledge the pain caused in losing the beautiful campus. The stunning chapel featured **Charles Connick stained-glass windows**, just as we have here at the Cathedral.

Northwestern Bible College purchased the entire campus in 1970, now named University of Northwestern (St. Paul), a private evangelical Christian college. The chapel has been maintained, and one can even see the Stations of the Cross throughout. The new owners were always and have always been very respectful of the campus’ Catholic roots. The administration building is in fact named “Nazareth Hall.” Following the sale, a total of eight years of formation is possible, four in college and four in the major seminary, both located on the campus of the University of St. Thomas. The purpose of a college seminary is one of both **discernment and formation**. The days of the high school seminary are largely in the rear-view mirror, as I believe it should be. Those critical adolescent years are best spent interacting with one’s peers (both male and female) in a more traditional learning setting, exploring the wide range of vocational possibilities.

Some would say that college seminaries have also outlived their usefulness, but here I would most vigorously disagree. The college years are critical in one’s formation in terms of Christian character and virtue. Some of our strongest lay leaders in this Archdiocese are former seminarians who discerned that priesthood was not their calling. However, the formation they received has forever strengthened their lives as Catholic fathers and husbands. It is **not a failure** when a young man discerns out of college seminary, nor is it required to be certain of one’s vocation to the priesthood before entering. In its fifty years, Saint John Vianney counts **more than 500 alumni priests**, two bishops, one Archbishop and even one cardinal.

For my part, I benefitted from the **valuable formation** I received while discerning whether I felt called to diocesan priesthood. I maintained two groups of friends— one amongst my fellow concert band members (I played the alto saxophone)— as well as my seminarian friends. I was quite content to “straddle both worlds” in the midst of my discernment process. By the end of my sophomore year, I felt a more certain calling. Daily Mass, spiritual direction, and a daily holy hour form the backbone of the spiritual formation offered today, and it is a vigorous program. The young men are immersed in the midst of their collegiate studies, and certainly are not shielded from the “real world.” They receive a much deeper formation in character and virtue than they could possibly receive anywhere else. This enables them to **listen to the voice** of the Lord and the promptings of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

While the majority discern vocations other than the priesthood, counting over 500 alumni priests is impressive. We can be proud of our college seminary and the fine work carried out there. When I served in the Vocations Office in the mid-1990's, I was in residence at SJV, this time as a priestly formator and floor dean. I count those four years amongst my **happiest days** as a priest. Any measure of influence that I was able to have was attributable to the zeal of the young men with whom I lived. They motivated me to be the very best and holiest priest possible. Even though I see some of them only occasionally, spread out as they are throughout the Midwest, the encounters are always positive when we reconnect. Please pray for our college seminarians, still in the early stages of their vocational discernment. Feeling the prayerful support of the faithful while at SJV meant the world to me— let us assure these men of our prayers today.



- Full House...almost! **Fr. Mark Pavlak**, Chaplain at Saint Thomas Academy, will **move into** the rectory following the completion of the school year. This will significantly shorten his Sunday commute! And he won't be alone on the third floor. **Fr. Joseph Bambenek**, pastor of St. Pius X in White Bear Lake, will be assuming new duties for the Archdiocese beginning in July. He too will take up residence in the rectory and will regularly assist here with some weekday Masses and confessions. I look forward to **welcoming them** both; however, the washing machine is mine on Saturday mornings!
- The Transcontinental Railroad was completed **150 years ago** when on May 10, 1869, the final spike was driven at **Promotory Point** in Utah territory. From there, the Union Pacific route originating in Omaha (Council Bluffs, Iowa) connected westward to existing rail lines reaching San Francisco Bay. Suddenly, passengers could enjoy a 1,912-mile continuous railroad journey. Railroad executive **Leland Stanford** (yes, a University bears his name) drove the final spike.
- **Students** at Catholic University of America **voted to block** the most frequently visited pornographic sites from the university's wi-fi access. I hope many other Catholic colleges and universities follow suit, as pornography presents a serious problem in the lives of so many young people today.
- In a culture in which "careers" take precedence over so many other aspects of life, today provides a perfect opportunity to **honor our mothers** for the tremendous sacrifices that they have made on our behalf. A mother gives of herself day after day, never counting the cost, but always looking out for her children. May they know of our tremendous love and esteem today.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel

Rector

Winter 1984
SAINT JOHN VIANNEY SEMINARY
 NEWSLETTER

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger Visits St. John Vianney

The year of 1984 marks the fifteenth anniversary of St. John Vianney Seminary, an anniversary which was honored with the presence of His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Cardinal, who was here on Feb. 12 and 13, celebrated Mass and delivered a lecture to the whole college community, as well as receiving an honorary degree from the college.

The Cardinal's visit fittingly began with the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday afternoon in the CST chapel. Krzhishoo, John Roach, Auxiliary

showed that a necessary relationship has always existed between the two, although the role of philosophy has often been attacked. The Cardinal pointed to the study of metaphysics "as the only real bond which joins philosophers and theologians." He further emphasized the relationship by showing that both philosophy and theology seek the answers to the same questions about man's existence, and both entail a love of the truth. While philosophy is truly fulfilled when it leads to the message of revelation, theology depends on philosophy and its methods for a deeper understanding of that message.

Cardinal delivers homily.