

Seminarians of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg Newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 3 September 2021

Reflection from Oliver Omega



Oliver Omega
Theology 3
Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology

Returning to the seminary which is finishing its renovations, I was having issues with what seemed to be just hot water streaming out from the newly installed shower. So I asked assistance from the custodian to have it looked at. The plumber came and while there, he unexpectedly started a conversation, asking me about where I was from and whether I was studying for the priesthood. “*I have a question for you*” he asked “*So what makes Catholics right?*” I fell silent thinking and struggling how to answer the question, and I said that the answer to that question would be a long one. But it came to me that the short answer - for me - was because of Who started it. I went into explaining about how Our Lord Jesus had control over nature and therefore he was above and beyond nature. He was supernatural. He jumped in saying, “Yes, He is God”. As I was explaining to him about the messiness in the church right now, the human element etc., he jumped in again saying: “Yes, I think that is the problem. The Catholic Church is too strict!”.

I got the sense that somewhere, somehow, this man had a spiritual encounter and that something was brewing internally. Like the story of the rich man who went to Jesus and asked him how to have eternal life but walked away sad because he had many possessions, it seemed to me that this man was struggling. Perhaps something is holding him back. Reflecting upon this encounter, I later realized that I was there once. I have moved - and maybe just a little further than him in the bigger scheme of the spiritual life, but what also came to focus during my reflection was the importance and necessity of keeping that

movement going; that constant, gradual rebirth to be conformed to Christ. Every time we die to a vice, to a worldly attachment, or to ourself – the “I”, the ego, we are reborn in Christ. To me, I think it is not that the Church is strict. It just seems that way because the spiritual life calls for the giving up of the material life.

In the seminary, this journey of being reborn in Christ becomes highlighted, emphasized, and demanded because *there must be a cohesion in the work that the priest does; his ministry, and the life that he leads* (Haffner 2016, 16). But this journey of continuous conversion however is not only for the priest or for me, a seminarian, but to all who have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Like all material things, the material life has an expiry date. Hence, the necessity that we nurture the spiritual life. We must constantly consider: “What am I holding on to that is holding me back?”. We must constantly try to go deeper: to have that genuine love which manifests in charity; a Christ-like love, an obedient love, who gave up his will; his whole self, untethered, unattached, and unreservedly to the will of the Father. Alone, we cannot do it. We need grace which comes to us first and foremost from the sacraments; and it is all the more crucial that we return to the sacraments in our time. Our Lady Help of Christians, pray for us!

Source: Haffner, Paul. 2016. *The Sacramental Mystery*. Leominster, Herefordshire and USA: Gracewing Pub

Reflection from Christopher Pugh



Christopher Pugh
Pastoral Internship
St. John Brebeuf Parish, Winnipeg

Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

- 1 Peter 1:14-16

At the beginning of each seminary year, we are blessed to enter into a five-day retreat with a retreat master. During the retreat there are between two and three conferences a day on various topics and the rest of the day, apart from communal prayer and liturgies is spent in silent contemplation. The title of our retreat this year, given by His Excellency Bishop William McGrattan, was "I Will Give You Shepherds after My Own Heart." Throughout the nine conferences, we were given various reflections on different aspects of the vocation of the priesthood, such as the life of service, the priestly spiritual life, communal life, the importance of the Word of God and the Eucharist in the life of the priest and other subjects.

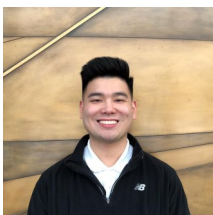
In my personal contemplation and reflection, a particular scripture passage, the one at the intro to my article, kept coming to mind. When I went on a discernment pilgrimage in 2010, each young man was given a scripture passage to memorize, and this was the one given to me. While praying, I could not get this passage out of my head and as I meditated further, I began to see how it was important to me, especially during this time of retreat at the halfway point of my seminary time, God willing. As a young man called to the priesthood, part of that call consists of having a zeal for the salvation of souls, and in order to act on and work towards that goal of salvation of souls, I saw the importance of leading a holy life myself.

The particular aspect of holiness that stood out to me during the retreat was the importance of a strong prayer life. Not only is a strong prayer life important for my own salvation, but a strong prayer life can connect me with God to help me on my mission for the salvation of souls. The prayer life of a priest, along with his sacramental life, is the most effective way to help him in his mission to others. Pope Benedict XVI, in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, writes: "In order to give greater Eucharistic form to his existence, the priest, beginning with his years in the seminary, should make his spiritual life his highest priority," and a major portion of this spiritual life is his prayer life (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 80). This stood out to me in such a powerful way that I made a new commitment to myself and to God regarding my prayer life and I am moving to make my spiritual life the most important aspect of my formation.

If I can speak to any man who is discerning a call to the priesthood at this time, may I suggest that this begin with a deep immersion into prayer and the sacramental life of the Church; nothing can help you discern better than to speak with the One who is calling.

I pray that the Lord be with everyone in their discernment to whichever vocation God is calling them and to sustain and reinvigorate those already living out their vocations.

Reflection from Vince Diestro



Vince Diestro
Philosophy 1
St. Joseph Seminary

Time flies. As I reflect on my first year in the seminary, it's crazy to think that I will now be in my second year in seminary formation. I have learned so much in a span of 8 months and it is something that I will never forget. I can truly say that in my personal discernment, humility was the reoccurring theme throughout my first year. Growing in self awareness was one area in which the Lord has shown me great love and care. Most especially in times where I found myself deep in prayer. It was in those moments where the Lord's love and mercy had overcome many of my doubts and anxieties. I was able to appreciate a lot of the things that the Lord has blessed me with throughout the year especially being away from family and friends. I perceived that the Lord was—and still is—calling me to trust Him every day.

During the summer, I've had the privilege to work at Assumption Cemetery. This certainly added another element of humility as I found myself surrounded by many of our brothers and sisters who have gone before us. I remember having gained a sense of gratitude in life during my time working there as I realized the

things in life I took for granted. In the long hours working at the cemetery, I was humbled to have the opportunity to pray for the faithful departed in times when I worked alone. Working at the cemetery has also provided a sense of solitude in which I never thought I was going to find working there. It gave me the time to reflect on my life and to grow more in gratitude and humility in the many gifts God's blessed me with.

Learning to grow in patience and trusting the Lord helped me in those moments overcome the temptation of pride in wanting to journey alone and recognizing God longing to be a part of every moment of my life—even in the smallest moments. Living with many of my brothers at the seminary has also been a humbling experience. In the conversations I've had with my brothers, it really helped put several things into perspective in my own discernment knowing that we are all here journeying together in deepening our relationship with God as we ultimately discern the call to the priesthood. As I continue formation in my second year, I look forward to the many more lessons and experiences the Lord has in store for me.

Prepared by the seminarians of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg

Please direct any questions or comments to Communication Services, Archdiocese of Winnipeg

communications@archwinnipeg.ca

(204)452-2227 ext. 225