



SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES SEMINARY
New Heart, New Spirit.

August 2008

Dear Friends,

Every August 4, the Church celebrates the feast of St. John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests. Born in France in 1786, John experienced the terrors of the French Revolution as a child. His family's barn became the place of secret Masses, celebrated illegally by priests who refused to swear allegiance to the new, radically secular regime. John entered the seminary where he struggled greatly in his academic studies. Twice he was asked to leave because of poor grades, twice he was allowed to come back because of his perseverance. Newly ordained and assigned to a tiny hamlet called Ars, Fr. Vianney rebuilt the church whose roof had fallen in and lost no time in vigorously evangelizing his parishioners.

The core of John Vianney's pastoral ministry was the celebration of the sacraments, the passionate catechizing of both young and old, the preaching of missions and service to the poor and sick. For the majority of his priesthood, he rose at 2 AM, heard confessions until 6 AM, celebrated Mass, heard more confessions, spent many hours teaching the catechism, visiting the sick, working in an orphanage which he had founded and hearing more confessions until he went to bed at midnight. During those two brief hours of sleep, the devil kept him awake with all sorts of noise and disturbances.

John Vianney had such a gift for touching the hearts and souls of people, especially in the pulpit and the confessional, that soon more than 100,000 people were pilgrimaging to Ars every year to see and speak with the holy Cure. His life shows us what a difference one life radically dedicated to God can make. Today, Ars remains a place of pilgrimage, prayer and renewal. John Vianney's incorrupt body lies in a glass case in an immense basilica, built as an attachment to the humble, original parish church. The rectory in which Vianney lived is filled with his simple relics of clothes, books and furniture. A retreat center and a seminary stand as testimony to the ongoing inspiration which John Vianney's example gives to the formation of diocesan priests.

This fall, Saint Francis de Sales Seminary welcomes 36 men who continue to open their hearts, minds and lives to the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit as they move ever closer to the priesthood. Among them we welcome two Conventual Franciscan seminarians, Hans Flondor and Paul Schneider, who will be fully participative in our formational program, as they prepare for priesthood. In addition, Fr. Robert Joseph Switanowski, a Conventual Franciscan priest, will be residing with us, offering formation to Hans and Paul, as well as helping the seminary with sacraments and spiritual direction. Their presence is a great blessing to us and represents the first time in many years that a religious order has chosen our seminary as its place of priestly formation.

Seminary Sunday, our program of parish visitation to enhance consciousness and support for the seminary throughout the archdiocese, continues to go very well. I appreciate the readiness of many pastors and parish staff in their willingness to let us be present at all the Masses in their communities, to speak about the universal call of vocation, the particular call of priesthood and concrete ways that people can support our mission. Please pray for this upcoming formational year, as we continue to be molded to the image of Jesus Christ and his redemptive priesthood.

Faithfully in Christ,
Fr. Donald Hying

Previous issues of my New Heart New Spirit newsletter can be read on our website at <http://www.sfs.edu/nhns/index.html>.