



SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES SEMINARY  
*New Heart, New Spirit.*

March 2008

Dear Friends of Saint Francis de Sales Seminary,

In God's sense of time, it was only the day before yesterday that Mary Magdalene ran down the path leading from the cemetery, her hair streaming behind her, to announce the incredible news that the tomb was empty. The wonder of that discovery and the joyful peace of encountering the risen Christ captivated the lives of those who experienced Him. Mary Magdalene, Salome, Simon Peter, John, Andrew and all the others dedicated their lives and consecrated their deaths to the radical witness of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Is that same mission not the task of all the baptized, to be credible, joyful, generous, compassionate witnesses to the presence of the risen Christ in this world? If we truly allow the transforming power of Jesus' Spirit into our lives, no tomb of sin, despair, doubt or suffering can ultimately hold us bound. If we read the Gospel resurrection narratives carefully, it is clear that the stone is rolled away from the tomb, not so much to let Jesus out, but to let us in, so that we can see that he is not in that place of death. So too, God calls us to proclaim the emptiness and sterility of a life without him.

Given our cultural tombs of materialism, agnosticism, self-idolatry and lust, I find it continually amazing and inspiring that young people continue to respond to God's call in their lives. I look at our seminarians: their gifts, faith, struggles, hopes, convictions and failures and I see one common thread amidst all of their differences. Every single one is convicted that God has called him personally to give witness to the saving power of Jesus' death and resurrection because this event is the center of human history, the paschal mystery that serves as the lynchpin of a whole structure of meaning.

In his apostolic exhortation on seminary formation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Pope John Paul likens the seminary experience to the three years that the apostles shared in the earthly ministry of Jesus. Just as they lived, traveled, and ate with the Master; just as they listened to his preaching, witnessed his miracles and felt the magnetic power of his divine presence, so too men preparing for the priesthood spend these intensive years of formation with Jesus, united with Him in prayer and the sacraments, meditating on his Word, learning the central tenets of our faith, growing in a friendship of mutual identification with the Master.

I tell the seminarians often that their future role is not that of a bureaucrat. Yes, they need to be good administrators. Yes, they need to be attentive to the myriad details of parish structure and life, but this fidelity is only a part of their full vocation of giving witness to the risen Christ. Together with lay ministers, the bishops, religious and the parishioners, they will only be effective to the degree that the Paschal mystery remains at the center of their ministry. Every structure and service within the Church must serve that central mission.

My question this Holy Week is: how can we at the seminary and you in the parish more clearly and passionately hold up the Paschal mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection as the center of our life? Email your responses to [newheartnewspirit@sfs.edu](mailto:newheartnewspirit@sfs.edu).  
A Blessed Easter!

Very Reverend Donald J. Hying

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