



SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES SEMINARY
New Heart, New Spirit.

September 2008

Dear Friends,

This month we celebrated the Triumph of the Cross, a feast that reminds us of the fundamental Christian paradox. In a recent Sunday Gospel, Jesus rebuked Peter for not understanding the mystery of the cross and Passion, for thinking that the Messiah will reign with earthly power and glory without any suffering. Then Jesus articulates the central paradox of the Christian mystery: whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself and take up his cross. Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Jesus performed amazing miracles, preached intriguing parables, forgave sinners, blessed children, fed the hungry and healed the sick, but in the end, his most creative, life-giving, redemptive act was the terrible and glorious “failure” of his crucifixion and death. Just when the whole inspiring, energizing mission of Jesus seemed to have shattered into a thousand shards of the darkest despair, just when Jesus’ tortured, crucified body had surrendered unto the coldness of death, our salvation was poised to find its completion in the power of the resurrection.

This Christian paradox of life through death, riches through poverty, abundance in emptiness, heaven through the cross, success through failure, finding through losing is a lesson and a mystery which we seem to need to learn over and over again. At some level, do we not all crave success, popularity, wealth, comfort and longevity, as this world understands such things? At times, we run from the harsh demands of the Gospel and the weight of the cross, because they are deathly unpleasant to our human sensibilities, while the things of this world feel so light and lively.

In his Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius of Loyola speaks of the need for detachment in the life of a Christian. We should cling to neither poverty nor riches, popularity nor shame, health nor sickness, a long life nor a short one, but only seek to know, accept and live the will of God in the present moment. Such detachment leads to an inner freedom which helps us to live the rich paradox of the Gospel, because we stop judging things from the world’s point of view. Wealth may not be the best thing for us if it leads us away from dependence on God. Sickness may be a blessing in disguise for us if it leads to a deeper faith and trust. The friendships, experiences and possessions of our lives take on their true value only in relation to whether they lead us closer to God or further away from Him.

We have lived the mystery of the cross here at the seminary as we have gone through so many changes. Former structures, programs, personnel and ways of doing things have given way to the new. While this process is never easy, I have been blessed to see fresh vitality and possibility spring up. I praise God for a wonderful start to this formation year and for all of the seminary’s benefactors and supporters. In gratitude, we will be praying during the whole month of November for your beloved dead and any other intentions you send us, using the attached form.

Peace and blessings,
Fr. Donald Hying