Newly Ordained Priests Find First Year Inspiring and Gratifying

It has been nearly a year since Seán Paul Fleming, Andrew Lauricella and Jeffrey Nowak were ordained as new priests in the Diocese of Buffalo. In that time, these alumni of Christ the King Seminary have taken on assignments at local parishes and are well on their way in their priestly journeys. While each priest brings different talents and gifts to their vocation, they share the experience of preparing for parish ministry at the Seminary. And each priest said the Seminary prepared them well.

Rev. Seán Paul Fleming was assigned to St. John the Baptist in Kenmore, NY.
Baptist in Kenmore where he serves as parochial vicar with Rev. Michael Parker, the pastor of the church. On any given day, Fr. Fleming will interact with the pastor, the parish pastoral associate, the director of faith formation, the school principal, and the youth minister, not to mention numerous parishioners. He noted that the collaborative model of priestly formation at the Seminary – whereby seminarians train and take classes with deacons and lay persons – has made the transition to parish ministry much smoother.

“The parishioners here take great ownership of not only their faith but of their parish community,” he explained. “They have been very open and very helpful in collaborating with me. They have helped me continue my own human and spiritual formation, and the focus on working together, that was stressed at Christ the King Seminary.”

Rev. Andrew Lauricella serves as parochial vicar at St. Vincent de Paul in Niagara Falls with pastor Rev. Robert Hughson. The faith community has two worship sites following the merger of Prince of Peace in the Town of Niagara, which adds to the challenge of ministering on the parish level. Fr. Lauricella said his Seminary training helps him in working with Fr. Hughson and the laity of the parish to get things done.

“In the short time that I have been a parochial vicar here, I could see that there was a lot to be done, with two campuses and so forth,” he explained. “The laity not only help but they make it possible – parish programs and other things could not happen without them. Having studied under the collaborative model at the Seminary was very reassuring to me as I started my parish ministry.”

Rev. Jeffrey Nowak had several new experiences to contend with when he was assigned as parochial vicar at St. John Vianney in Orchard Park. Rev. Robert L. Gebhard, Jr. had just been appointed new pastor at the parish, there was a new school principal and a new school secretary. Serving at the largest parish in Orchard Park with over 2,700 families, Fr. Nowak found his Seminary training to be invaluable.

“The Seminary taught us not only how to collaborate...
with others in the parish, but also how to delegate tasks and allow the people to use their gifts and talents to support the church,” he said. “When you start empowering the people, that is really what the church is – all of us gathered together to support Christ’s ministry.”

All three priests agreed that the dynamic of ministry in their parish can be quite different from another faith community. The culture may be different. There are often unique traditions. The pastors may have distinctive leadership styles. For these and many other reasons, Fr. Fleming, Fr. Lauricella and Fr. Nowak noted they are grateful that Christ the King Seminary gave them the education and tools they need for successful parish ministry. §

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The sort of complacency that I have just described can happen in every time and place. But the call to a Year of Faith and to a new evangelization in our time, in 2013, includes other dimensions that aren’t entirely exclusive to this year, but that have a contemporary tone to them. I am currently teaching a course at Christ the King Seminary on “A Theology of the New Evangelization.” The students and I are paying attention to these contemporary challenges.

For one thing, we recognize that we are living in a time that is characterized in some settings as

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“postmodern.” Actually, the world of “modernity” presents its own challenges. Back in 1987 an American Catholic priest theologian wrote an important book, “At the Origins of Modern Atheism.” Michael Buckley examined the way that the origins of the natural sciences in the 17th century metamorphosed into the themes of the Enlightenment in the 18th century, including anti-religious themes. The natural sciences more and more answered questions that previously had been answered by religious faith. The Enlightenment went on to claim, often enough, that human beings create their own meanings, and they don’t need any help from a specious religious faith.

Then in the 19th century some thinkers took things further. In my book of 2006, “Premodern Faith in a Postmodern Culture: A Contemporary Theology of the Trinity,” I highlight three thinkers, whom others cite as well, who strongly disparaged religious faith. Karl Marx saw religious faith as a power play to keep the masses in check. Sigmund Freud saw religious faith as an illusion, a psychological defense against the demands of nature and the shortcomings of human attempts at civilization. Friedrich Nietzsche said that human beings need religion to make their consciences feel comfortable, and thus to sleep well at night, without taking responsibility for making the world the way it is.

Little by little, these ways of thinking have filtered into the culture, not in their arguments so much as in the mood they have created, so that even people who know nothing of the scientific revolution or the philosophical Enlightenment or the actual thought of Marx, Freud and Nietzsche are influenced by them. It is in the air we breathe.

For those who take the message of Jesus and his Gospel seriously, the call is not to rant and rave against these thinkers and others who follow in their footsteps, but to study these thinkers and reflect on why faith remains as meaningful and valuable a way of life now as it was when the first Christians accepted the Gospel of Jesus. Here at Christ the King Seminary we face the challenges honestly, all the time and not just in this proclaimed Year of Faith, to examine how to read the Sacred Scriptures as the particular sort of literature that they are and with assurance that they are the Word of God, how to accept and understand the Apostles and Nicene Creeds as historical ecclesiastical events and also as genuine expressions of a faith that authentically responds to life’s deepest needs. We study the history of the Church honestly, recognizing that in each age the Church has been a community of faith that is at once saintly and sinful. We relate our faith thoughtfully to the moral demands of human living and to pastoral practice.

We do everything we can to help our graduates, priests and deacons and lay ecclesial ministers serve God’s people honestly and truthfully and lovingly, and show that religious faith, Catholic Christian faith, is the most meaningful way to live. We do not run away from the challenges. We answer them. Thus, we welcome the current Year of Faith and the call to a new evangelization. I am delighted to see that newly installed Pope Francis endorses and encourages this worldwide Catholic mission.

**SUMMER DINNER LECTURES RETURN**

**JUNE 12, 2013: SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF THOMAS MERTON: THE NEW YORK YEARS**
Using visual images and Merton’s words, we will reflect on his journey and spirituality as well as our own. Presented by Jan Sheridan.

**JUNE 26, 2013: THE POWER OF BIBLICAL STORYTELLING**
Come and discover new life in God’s Word and in your life. Presented by Carol Wolf.

**JULY 17, 2013: IRRELEVANT & INTOLERANT VS. CONTAGIOUS & COMPASSIONATE**
Explore how the witness of our lives produces an invitation to create with us a vibrant, dynamic and infectious mission in charity and action. Presented by Deacon Donald Weigel.

**JULY 31, 2013: WHAT’S UP WITH PURGATORY?**
Featuring an overview and history of the concept, arguments about its scriptural evidence, and an examination of the doctrine. Presented by Deacon Gary Andelora.

**AUGUST 14, 2013: THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS: PRICELESS DISCOVERIES**
Learn the impact of the scrolls on the text of the Old Testament and on our knowledge of a group of religious Jews around the first century AD. Presented by Sr. Marion Moeser, OSF. This lecture is fragrance-free.

All lectures will be held at Christ the King Seminary’s main dining room. Dinner is at 5:45; lectures are from 6:45–8:30.

For pricing information or to register, visit [www.cks.edu](http://www.cks.edu) or call Gayle Angelli at (716) 805-1438. Pre-registration is required.
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: SEMINARY EMBARKS ON ANOTHER STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

With seven task forces in place, Christ the King Seminary has launched a six-phased strategic planning process which will culminate in another five-year plan. The Seminary has targeted this September for the completion and presentation of the plan to its Board of Trustees.

Guided by its mission to educate candidates for the priesthood and diaconate as well as others pursuing a graduate degree in theological or ministerial education, three strategic priorities are guiding the work of these task forces: providing high-quality training and education in the truths and mission of the Catholic Church, promoting the prophetic and missionary work of the new evangelization, and growth. Each task force will work on one key functional area: academics, the programs of priestly-, diaconal- and lay formation, information technology, finances, facilities, and marketing/advancement.

Currently in the second phase, the task forces — made up of Seminary employees as well as leaders from outside the institution — are conducting in-depth examinations of their respective areas. They will then submit concrete goals and objectives to a steering committee which will review the work of each task force. Goals and objectives will be clarified, integrated and prioritized, phase three.

In phase four the refined goals and objectives will be sent back to their respective task forces where they will be developed into full-fledged Work Plans, complete with specific initiatives, targets, and performance indicators. In the penultimate phase the Work Plans will be integrated and the comprehensive strategic plan composed for presentation to the Seminary’s Board for review and adoption.

“We are fortunate in that we did a tremendous amount of work in our strategic planning process five years ago,” said Mike Sherry, Executive Director of Operations. “Additionally, we have just come out of a two-year self study in preparation for our Middle States Association and Association of Theological Schools reaccrediting process, so we started this process with a good foundation out of the gate.”

SPRING OPEN HOUSE

SATURDAY, APRIL 20
2:00 – 4:00 P.M.

TALK WITH FACULTY, PROGRAM DIRECTORS & STUDENTS:
❖ Learn about masters degrees in theology and ministry
❖ Find out about careers in ministry
❖ Look into classes for personal enrichment
❖ Get information on admissions and financial aid

TAKE A GUIDED CAMPUS TOUR:
❖ Repeating tours beginning at 2:00 from main parking lot

TO REGISTER OR FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Gayle Angelli, Coordinator of Events and Scheduling
(716) 805 1438 or gangelli@cks.edu
Or visit the events section at: www.cks.edu
SEMINARY TO HOST EXPANDED PARISH MINISTRY CONFERENCE APRIL 19-20

Several diocesan departments and Christ the King Seminary are excited to sponsor a parish ministry conference, Catholic on Purpose: Becoming a Church That Matters to All, April 19-20 at the Seminary’s East Aurora campus. The conference is part of the Diocese of Buffalo’s Year of Faith series.

The program consists of three separate modules: Module 1: Seeing with New Eyes – Viewing the Parish from the Outside > In (Friday a.m.); Module 2: Grace is Our Purpose (Friday p.m.); and Module 3: A Church Bigger Than Boundaries: Our Response from the Inside > Out. Interested persons may attend one, two or all three modules.


Program details and registration forms can be found on the Seminary’s web site at www.cks.edu or by visiting www.evangelizebuffalo.org.

REV. DRILLING TO FACILITATE RETREAT

Rev. Peter Drilling will lead this summer’s Seminar Retreat, Becoming a Servant–Minister After the Mind and Heart of Jesus the Servant, July 7-12. The retreatants will be invited to pray about the servant Christology of Mark 8:22-10:52. Lectio divina, imaginative prayer, and contemplation will all be encouraged. Each morning, Fr. Drilling will give a presentation on one section of this part of the Gospel, as an invitation to reflect on how the retreatants are continuing to be formed as disciples of Jesus and ministers of his Gospel. Afternoon sessions will focus on conversation among the retreatants on discernment of their engagement with this Scripture.

Anyone interested in the retreat can visit www.cks.edu for a brochure and registration form, or call Douglas George at (716) 655-7091.

RECENT FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS

Rev. John P. Mack, a faculty member at CKS who has been on educational leave, received his Th.M. (Master of Theology) and S.T.L. (License in Sacred Theology) from Regis College in Toronto this past November. The S.T.L. is an ecclesiastical degree recognized by the Roman Catholic Church and enables Fr. Mack to teach at the seminary level. Fr. Mack is currently in the doctoral studies program at Regis.

A copy of his thesis, “Catholic-Methodist Dialogue: Convergent Understandings Frank Zagrobelny, member of the Aurora Council Knights of Columbus, and member of the board of trustees at Christ the King Seminary, leads parishioners from the Northern Erie Vicariate on a campus tour this past fall.
UPCOMING EVENTS AT YOUR SEMINARY
(All events at Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora, NY unless otherwise noted)

APRIL 19&20
Parish Ministry Conference | Catholic on Purpose: Becoming a Church That Matters to All

APRIL 20,
2-4 pm
Open House

MAY 10,
7:30 pm
Commencement

MAY 13
Summer classes begin

MAY 31
10th Annual Rev. Merrick Bednar Memorial Golf Tournament | The Links at Ivy Ridge, Akron, NY

JUNE 1,
10:00 am
Ordination to the Priesthood | St. Joseph Cathedral, Buffalo

JUNE 4–6
Diocese of Buffalo Priests Convocation

JUNE 15,
10:00 am
Ordination to the Permanent Diaconate | St. Joseph Cathedral, Buffalo

JULY 7 TO JULY 10/12
Directed Retreat

JULY 7–12
Seminar Retreat – “Becoming a Servant-Minister After the Mind and Heart of Jesus the Servant”

AUGUST 26
Fall Graduate classes begin

SEPTEMBER 16
Fall Continuing Education classes begin

OCTOBER 2, 6:00 pm
Curé of Ars Awards Dinner | Hyatt Regency, Buffalo

OCTOBER 25, 7:00 pm
Ordination to the Transitional Diaconate

**OUR STUDENTS DEPEND ON YOU**

Our alumni and friends are the backbone of our future – giving us the support to continue our mission of educating our priests, deacons, and lay ministers. With grateful hearts, we ask for your gift to this year’s Spring Appeal so that our students can complete their studies and go out to minister to parishioners across our communities.

If you do not receive a Spring Appeal letter by mail, please use the envelope included in this newsletter. To give online, visit www.cks.edu.

**SEMINARY RECEIVES REACCREDITATION**

Subsequent to our September 2012 reaccreditation visit by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the Seminary was recently notified by ATS that we have been reaccredited for a period of seven years, until fall 2019.

Faculty member Rev. Xavier Seubert, OFM and Oleg Bychkov have recently edited the new book, “Beyond the Text: Franciscan Art and the Construction of Religion.” The book is set to be released later this spring by Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University.

From historical, social, textual, theological and philosophical perspectives of art, the essays in this volume probe the art and visual culture of the early Franciscan movement to reveal insights and nuances of the life and power of this revolutionary phase of the Catholic religion.

The book may be purchased directly from Franciscan Institute Publications (www.franciscanpublications.com).

“Beyond the Text: Franciscan Art and the Construction of Religion,” is available in the Seminary library. Congratulations Fr. Mack!

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The book may be purchased directly from Franciscan Institute Publications (www.franciscanpublications.com).
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10th Annual
REV. MERRICK BEDNAR
REGISTRATION
INFO ONLINE AT
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OR CALL
(716) 847-8373

FRIDAY
MAY 31 2013
THE LINKS AT IVY RIDGE