

Inside: Benedict XVI Writes the Foreword for a New Book on Vatican II. One of Our Brothers Writes a Chapter.



BROTHERHOOD of HOPE

PRIMUM DEUS · DEUS SOLUM

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2008

S BY FR. PHILIP MERDINGER, BH
tanding majestically on the hills of Brighton, at the western city limits of Boston, St. John's Seminary is one of two institutions of the Archdiocese dedicated to the formation and training of future priests. Established in 1884 with its imposing stone buildings and handsome architecture, this seminary has seen some 3,000 priests ordained to the service of Boston and other dioceses in New England.

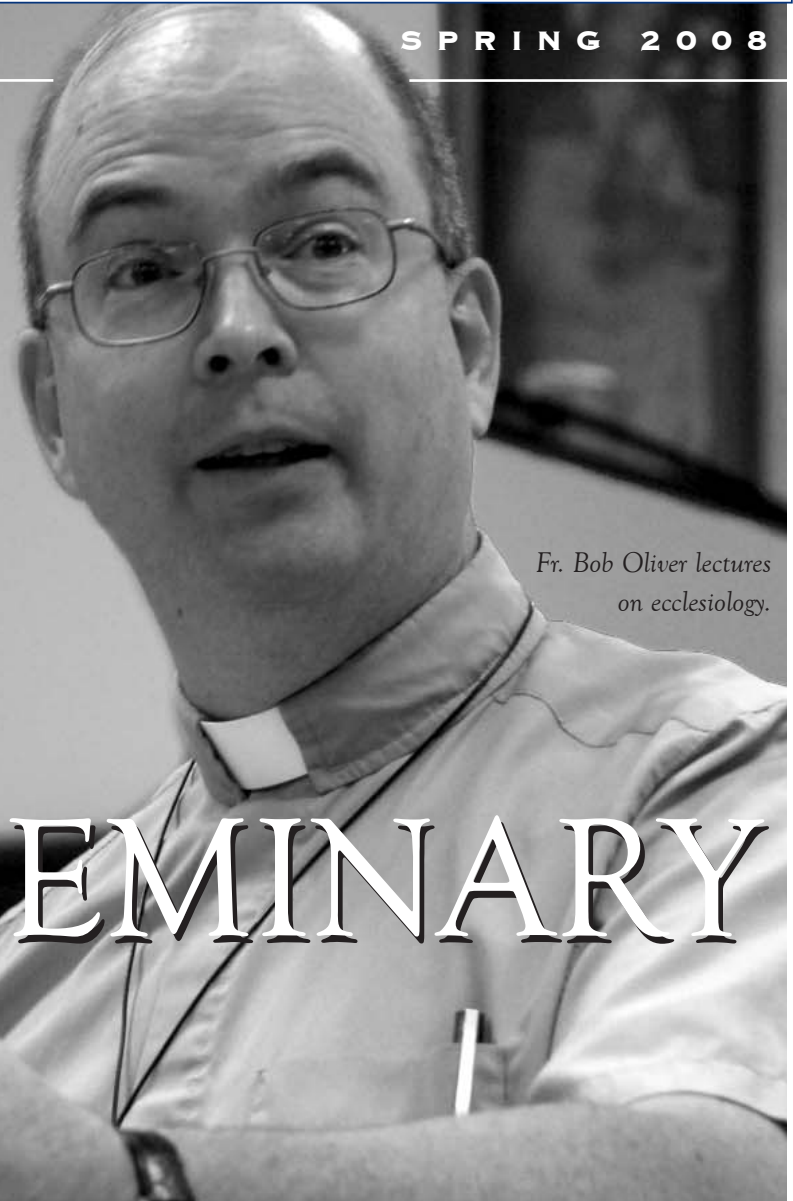


IN CLASS. Fr. Philip responds to a question on the catechism.

– to fulfill a long held desire for priesthood. Ordained together in 2000, Fr. Paul now directs the campus ministry at Boston University and Fr. Bob is a professor of theology and canon law at St. John's. In fact, in view of a doctorate earned previously at the Gregorian University in Rome, Fr. Bob began teaching Ecclesiology at the seminary even before his ordination.

Having completed my service as Head of the Brotherhood, I was invited to St. John's in 2004 to serve as a spiritual director. In 2006 I began teaching in the pre-theology program. Thus, in the Archdiocese our Brotherhood has a role in forming future leaders not only at two major campuses – Boston University and Northeastern

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Fr. Bob Oliver lectures on ecclesiology.

SERVING AT SEMINARY

Fathers Bob Oliver and Philip Merdinger offer spiritual and intellectual formation to future priests as members of the faculty at St. John's Seminary in the Archdiocese of Boston



SEMINARY

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

University – but also at St. John’s Seminary. Serving there also reflects our charisma and documents which state: “We wish to encourage others committed to or preparing for clerical celibacy.”

Fr. Bob and I are privileged to work with the seminarians in two different yet complementary ways: he as a professor and faculty advisor, I as a spiritual director. Dr. Oliver addresses the public sphere of a seminarian’s life and, with other faculty members, votes in the step-by-step advancement of a man toward Holy Orders. As a spiritual director and confessor, my work is limited to the ‘internal forum’ of conscience. Both roles are integral to seminary formation.

With two doctorates – Ecclesiology and Canon Law – Fr. Bob serves the Archdiocese and the larger Church in many ways. In addition to his heavy teaching load he has spoken to gatherings of Bishops in both the USA and Canada on issues ranging from the protection of minors to the place of lay associations in the Church. He serves as an advisor to many new associations and movements of the laity, and he also represents the Cardinal at the yearly gathering of the Neo-Catechumenal Way in Rome. Amid his many responsibilities somehow he manages to do some professional writing – like the book refer-



enced in this newsletter, or the two other books that he is developing.

For myself, I’ve been honored to address conferences of lay men and give retreats to priests and seminarians. I also have the joy of assisting at some of the twice-yearly college retreats sponsored by our Brotherhood, and I continue to serve in other pastoral roles within our community.

So, as you can see, in this adventure of the Holy Spirit the Brotherhood of Hope has been graced by that same Spirit to touch the lives of many young people, especially as they are in the process of making life-defining decisions. May our service at universities and in seminary be pleasing to the Lord Jesus and useful for the advancement of his Kingdom. †



MARATHON MEN

CONTINUED FROM INSIDE

own capabilities. I found they were much greater than I thought.”

In all, we ran over 500 miles on the road. In the process we not only strengthened our bodies but we solidified our ties of brotherhood. Sophomore David Ruffner told me that going through this trial side-by-side with other men formed a “bond of unity in us.” “I feel I can run longer and do more when we’re running together,” said Ruffner.

Finally, the day of the New Jersey Marathon arrived. Though we had athletes of varying abilities, the men decided to run as a group - pushing, pulling and carrying each other to the finish line. Due to a sudden health issue a day before the marathon, I was unable to run the Marathon with the men on race day. A week later, however, I completed the Long Island Marathon with the full encourage-

ment and support of this newly formed band of brothers.

Looking back at the experience we realized that the greatest challenge was not the marathon itself but the faithfulness required for training. Chris Joseph, a junior, saw this connection with the spiritual life: “If we don’t put in time to train, we’re not fooling anyone but ourselves. Just like prayer. You gotta put in the time to complete the spiritual journey.” Andrew Rodriguez wrote, “As we passed the half-way point (of the marathon) I thought about how privileged I am to experience the Eucharist - what I’ve held in my hands and been able to feed myself. And how fortunate I was to know the guys and train with them. These blessings made the distance behind me and the distance ahead of me seem insignificant. I was very thankful and in awe of God’s blessings. I prayed that everyone could feel as blessed as I felt.”

St. Paul, who served as a sort of spiritual personal trainer on this mission, wrote that none of us lives as his own (Romans 14:7). In our pursuit of heaven, the ultimate marathon, we don’t run alone. We need the support of good community to encourage us and even to carry us on when we think we cannot go a step farther. It was a great feeling to complete the marathon. I’m not going to lie: it was also a great feeling not having to run anymore. That water at the finish line never tasted sweeter! How much greater will be the joy that awaits us when we have come to the finish line of our spiritual marathon and enjoy the sweetness of Heaven! †

WE NEED YOUR HELP.

The Brotherhood of Hope gets its support through the monetary earnings of its members and from the donations of benefactors. Since most of us work for sacrificial wages or for no pay at all, please consider becoming a financial sponsor so that our fruitful missions can continue. Our website offers convenient electronic giving options. Your prayers and support are greatly needed in our evangelization.

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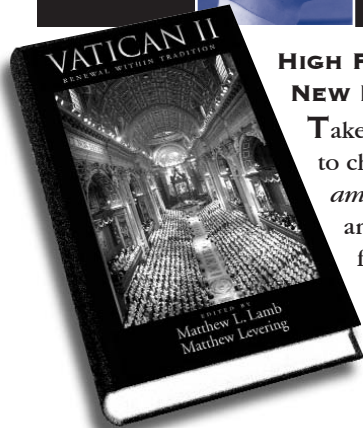
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AROUND THE BROTHERHOOD



SHARING OUR VISION



HIGH PRAISE FOR NEW BOOK

Take a minute to check out amazon.com and search for a new publication entitled, *Vatican II: Renewal Within*

Tradition. It's a collaborative effort by numerous scholars, including Cardinal Avery Dulles, Fr. Matthew Lamb, Fr. Richard John Neuhaus (from *First Things*), Fr. Romanus Cessario, OP (from *Magnificat*), Cardinal Francis George, and Brotherhood member Fr. Robert Oliver, BH. We're honored that our confrere wrote one of the chapters, and we're amazed that the book's foreword is written by another scholar: none other than Pope Benedict XVI!

CAPTAIN CALLS CATHOLIC MEN TO BIBLE STUDY

Joey Vitale (right), team captain for the Huskies, the Northeastern men's hockey team, has another passion besides checking opponents and racking up goals. Joey loves being Catholic and learning about the Bible. With an assist from Br. Joe Donovan, Joey leads a men's group at the Catholic Center at NU. The men meet weekly to discuss their faith and read scripture.



FOUR CAMPUSES, ONE CAUSE

January 22nd 2008 marked the 35th anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling

that legalized abortion on demand in the United States. For over twelve years, the Brotherhood of Hope has been mobilizing college students to participate in the annual March for Life that celebrates the gift of life and protests against the destructive legacy of the Roe vs. Wade decision. With four campuses now marching under the Brotherhood banner, that makes for a lot of students! This year we decided to join forces. Despite the press of thousands of demonstrators, we managed to gather at the Supreme Court and pray together for the end of legal abortion in our nation. The students

were delighted to make friends with participants from other Brotherhood campus ministries. Brita Ulrich, a junior at Northeastern University commented, "this feels like a big family reunion!"



DROP SINS HERE

We make it our priority in campus evangelization to help students reconnect with the sacramental life of the Church. Often this begins with reconciliation. If the annual Advent penance service at Boston University is any indication, it's working! With five priests hearing confession for almost four hours, over 200 students received the grace of forgiveness. Despite the fact that most waited for over two hours on the week before finals, no one complained and there was a tangible spirit of joy in

Marsh Chapel in the heart of BU's campus. The guest priests were amazed at the turnout and commented on the spiritual maturity of the students. As he left, one visiting priest exclaimed: "Wow, that gave me hope!"

10 YEARS OF FOCUS

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the impressive outreach called FOCUS that evangelizes on 33 campuses across the U.S. Founder Curtis Martin tells us that the Brotherhood's mission at FSU was one of the inspirations behind his decision to launch FOCUS. We are pleased to share the work of evangelizing college students with such a dynamic and fast-growing organization as FOCUS. Also, we're grateful for the times we've been privileged to collaborate over the years. Happy anniversary, FOCUS!



Over 100 students and alumni from our four campuses gathered at the Supreme Court during the March.

MARATHON MEN

College Men Go the Distance, Grow in Character and Brotherhood

BY BR. ADAM NERI, BH

Run so as to win." Saint Paul used the analogy of running a race to encourage the early Christians to persevere in the life of holiness (1 Cor. 9: 24-27). Undergraduate men from our campus ministries at Rutgers and Florida State have taken this word to heart in a very literal way.

The lives of university students are ever-changing. As campus evangelizers, we try to find creative ways to meet them where they're at and draw them higher. Last year I was looking for a way to challenge some young men to do something greater with their lives. I also wanted them as a group to experience a sense of brotherhood because I believe these are two of the most pressing needs for today's young men. Taking my cue from Br. Jason Zink, who ran the Boston Marathon in 2006, I put forward the challenge to my Rutgers

men's group to train for and complete a full marathon: all twenty-six point two miles of it.

Training began early January with cold winds whipping off the Raritan River and roads covered with snow. Over the months of spring semester I ran with five men from the Catholic Student Association through everything Mother Nature could throw at us: ice, sleet, piercing winds, and as the months grew warmer, rain and burning sun. As we ran we called out to each other: "Why do we run?" "So as to win!" Together we pushed ourselves to go beyond our perceived limitations.

Completing the first ten mile training run was a big confidence booster. "I never thought I could do ten, but I did it. I believe I can do this thing," said Andrew Rodriguez. Another runner, Andy Sojourner, observed: "The training helped me to learn about my

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RUNNING TO WIN. Brs. Adam Neri (left) and Jason Zink (right) have organized marathon runs with their men's groups at RU and FSU.

The Pope on Hope

BY BR. RAHL BUNSA, BH

Recently I was asked to give a presentation at M.I.T. about Pope Benedict's latest encyclical on the topic of hope, *Spe Salvi*. Whether or not the students were inspired that night, I definitely was! I'd like to share with you three reasons I find this encyclical so inspirational.

THE POPE'S RELEVANCE

Like a good evangelist, the pope connects effectively with his widespread audience. His topics are on-target addressing political realism, technological progress (along with its false hopes), suffering, justice, the afterlife, and even astrology. His references are diverse, citing protestants and poets, scientists and sociologists, artists and atheists. His examples are inspiring: a Sudanese girl - once an abused slave - who is now a canonized Saint, ... or a Vietnamese Cardinal - once a prisoner in solitary confinement - now a hero with international acclaim. All of these topics, references and examples aim to explain and foster one relevant reality: biblical hope.

A BELOVED'S DEATH

Perhaps you've faced the death of a close relative or friend in recent years. For myself, I experienced the sudden loss of my dear mother who died of a brain aneurysm in August. Her life, faith, cancer-battle and miracle story (which can be heard online at www.dan-calamai.com>Nama) strongly influenced my own life and spiritual conversion. Reflecting on her death and the subsequent grief, I was deeply moved by the pope's affirmation that "love can reach into the afterlife, that reciprocal giving and receiving is possible, in which our affection for one another continues beyond the limits of death." He continues with a question for all of us: "Who would not feel the need to convey to their departed loved ones a sign of kindness, a gesture of gratitude or even a request for pardon?" How profound. How consoling.

OUR COMMUNITY'S MISSION

People often say they appreciate our name, the Brotherhood of Hope, because the world desperately needs hope. We couldn't agree more. On a daily basis we brothers encounter college students who are lonely, depressed, addicted, hurt, angry, confused, and fearful. These students clearly need Christ and the anchor of hope he gives! Pope Benedict states with conviction that the gospel is "not only 'informative' but 'performative' ... it makes things happen and is life-changing. The dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open." Although campus evangelization is hard work, we "ministers of hope" thank God for the tremendous privilege of being instruments of this "life-changing power" of Christ for young people. We also thank you for your vital assistance of prayer and support for our work. †