

VERBUM

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“A TREMENDOUS GIFT...”

The Society of St. Pius X's Superior General celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood on this June 29th. Several weeks previously, during his visit to the Seminary for Holy Week, the VERBUM seized the opportunity provided by his presence to congratulate him on his upcoming silver anniversary and to ask him a few questions about vocations and the priesthood. We hope that his comments, which follow, will reveal the significance of each priestly ordination.

VERBUM: Your Excellency, thank you for your time, granting us the chance to conduct this interview. We apologize for any inconvenience it might cause; obviously your schedule is...quite hectic.

Bishop Fellay: You're welcome. It's my pleasure.

VERBUM: First of all, do you ever grow weary of answering the same questions in the interviews that you give?

Bishop Fellay: No. (Laughs) And I may say that it is never the same questions. At least with the circumstances there is always something different and special.

VERBUM: The main topic which we wanted to discuss, since the text of this conversation will appear in our ordinations issue, is the priesthood. With twenty five years having passed since your ordination, surely you have had the opportunity to learn just what the priesthood means, as applied to your own life. In that time, what has changed in your understanding of what a priest is?

Bishop Fellay: Nothing.

VERBUM: That's good I suppose!?

Bishop Fellay: (Chuckles). I still have the same idea about the priesthood, and I may say that the only thing which has changed is that it has been corroborated by the facts, by the experience. What I got at the Seminary was clear enough, and true enough, that it has been absolutely maintained and sustained during all that time.

VERBUM: So it is just a question of taking what you learned at the Seminary and applying it?

Bishop Fellay: Yes.

VERBUM: Every year different men are

ordained and each one of them possesses a distinctive personality and individual talents. After ordination all share the sacramental character, but previously there was something else which they possessed in common, namely, the vocation itself. If you strip away the particular characteristics of each priest, what is there that remains at the heart of a vocation? What is its essence?

Bishop Fellay: There are two things in a vocation. The most important, which is not always clearly understood, is a call from the Church. It is not the candidate who says, *I want to become a priest.* It is the Church who says, *"I call you."* It's really, let us say, the representation of what Our Lord said, *"You have not chosen me: but I have chosen you."* {John 15:16} This is the essential part of the vocation.

It is something which is hardly understood, because of what we experience when we have the vocation. We feel a call inside, and so we really feel, *"I am called, and I answer that call."* And that is the second part of it, that there really is something which is inside which pushes the young boy to the priesthood. There is something inside, but the formal element is an exterior call from the Church. So you have these two elements, and I may say that a happy vocation will be the combination of both.

VERBUM: What is the obstacle today, which more than any other, keeps some of those who do have vocations from responding to Our Lord's call?

Bishop Fellay: (Sighs) There are many, many, many obstacles. I think that most probably the major problem today is an

over-consciousness from the young man that he will not make it, that he is not capable of making it. And in fact this is a temptation. It is looking too much upon himself and not remembering enough that there is a Good Lord, with His grace, and He is going to support that vocation. Many, facing human fragility and seeing all these requirements for the priesthood and the elevation of these requirements, have this awkward feeling of, *"I'm not going to make it."* I think that today, this is a major cause of not responding to the vocation.

Then you will have those who have been wounded more directly by the world, making mistakes in their past, in their youth, which are too big and can then leave wounds in the heart that can be...

VERBUM: ...debilitating?

Bishop Fellay: ...debilitating and a problem for the vocation.

VERBUM: The ordination to the priesthood is a magnificent event, even exteriorly, made so by the splendor of the Liturgy. What role does the Liturgy have in awakening vocations?

Bishop Fellay: It has a major role. To a very great extent, the life of the Church, the supernatural life, is communicated to souls in and through the Liturgy. If there is one place where the soul receives the nourishment for her life it is in the Liturgy, mainly in the daily or weekly Mass. It will depend on the correspondence of the soul to these graces, but there is no doubt that if the Church is obliging the Christian soul to go to Mass every Sunday, it has a reason. On the one hand, it has the reason of worshipping God, giving to God the duty of thanksgiving and serving Him, and at the

same time definitely it is the place where the soul receives the strength, the perseverance, and the grace to go on as a Christian. So the place of the Liturgy is enormous in general, and then, because of this, it will also have a decisive importance in awakening, fostering, and strengthening the vocation.

VERBUM: Parents and others often come away from Ordinations with zeal to promote vocations among their own children and loved ones. What are some of the practical positive actions which families can take to foster vocations? On the negative side, what should they avoid doing in order to attain the same end?

Bishop Fellay: It is very clear that the normal place for the birth of a vocation is the Christian family. This holy and sacred garden which is the Catholic family is a place— provided that it is lived correctly, let us say, according to the principles of the Church— where you will find the beginnings of vocations, maybe not expressly, but at least implicitly. Explicitly it will probably be in the contact with the Mass, but definitely it starts there, in the family. What should the family do for that? First, they should do their duty of state. Mom and Dad have to fulfill their duty of state.

VERBUM: Nothing spectacular?

Bishop Fellay: No. Nothing special, just carefully fulfilling their duty. I notice also that the prayer of the mother, asking the Good Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary for vocations in the family... is a powerful means. There is a famous story of a small village in Italy, where all the mothers gathered, I think daily, for a special prayer in the Church. They had a tremendous boom of vocations, something like six hundred vocations in a very small village. It is very, very famous.

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"There is nothing more beautiful than the priesthood...And it is for us a great, great honor, absolutely not merited..."

REV. FR. FRANK RICCOMINI

The Catholic priesthood is the most sublime gift which God may grant to a man. By it, a mere creature becomes conformed to Christ Himself, and through this likeness he acquires the power to preach, to bless, to sanctify, and to sacrifice a Divine Victim—powers which not even angels have received. Fr. Frank Riccomini received this gift on June 22, 2007 from the hands of His Excellency Bishop Bernard Tissier de Mallerais.

Fr. Riccomini, the third of fifteen children, grew up in St. Mary's, Kansas, with all the benefits of a Catholic family, community, and education. Father professes an overwhelming debt of gratitude to all those souls who gave him the tools, help, and encouragement which were essential on his journey towards the priesthood. This journey ultimately began when his family moved to St. Mary's in 1979. At that time, there were only fifty traditional Catholic families living there, but over the next few decades, the parish and the newly arrived family would grow together. Father recalls how his parents cultivated in their children a pious attitude towards the sacred calling of a priestly or religious vocation from an early age. His father set the example with his great respect and unshakable loyalty for all priests, but especially for those who provided his family with the sacraments.

Father perceived a desire to follow in the footsteps of these pastors soon after beginning his studies at St. Mary's College, and he remembers the gentleness and delicacy which these priests showed with regard to his calling. Fr. Ramón Anglés, especially, helped to ground and to nourish the seed of this vocation with his words and acts of kindness. From his example and that of others, Fr. Riccomini gained a deep esteem for the priestly life and an unshakable confidence in the guidance which God gives to souls through the counsels of His priests.

Nevertheless, when Father first entered the Seminary he admits that he was somewhat intimidated. He was worried since he did not know anyone and concerned that perhaps he would not fit in. But at once he found a happiness and a peace which arise from the Seminary's structured schedule and community life. Father gladly lent his talents wherever he was able, serving in the sacristy and barbershop throughout his years at the Seminary, before becoming head sacristan during his final years.

During the Ordination Banquet, Fr. Riccomini paid special tribute to his grandmother, Sr. Mary Marcel, an SSPX Oblate, who devoted most of her life to her family and then gave him an example to follow by consecrating herself to God.

“A Tremendous Gift...”

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

The name of the village is Lu. I may say, the motherly heart has something to do with the vocation. It is of course, not an absolute, but it is to be noted.

Then, of course, during the education the parents have to take care to give this Catholic education, and to prevent the kids from going down a wild path, which could be dangerous and hurtful. Now we are speaking of the dangers. Certainly the

contact with the modern world is dangerous, and when I say so, what do I mean...? How can the young come in contact with the world? First, friendship.

VERBUM: Which is something good in itself.

Bishop Fellay: Yes, but bad friends are no good. The danger is that you have to choose your friends. Young boys and girls do not choose; they take whatever comes. So that is the duty of the parents, to check and to be careful about what kind of friendships the children have.

Also, the arts, but especially the music, are a dramatic influence today. There too, the parents must exercise

a very tight control on what the children listen to or see. I may say, all the electronic media—computer, walkman, DVDs, games, whatever—they are a drastic potential danger. I do not say that they are directly such, in themselves, but they are close to it.

VERBUM: Is it that need in human nature for art, and also, on the social level, for friendship, which makes these influences so powerful?

Bishop Fellay: There is a need in children, and if they do not find it in the right place they will look elsewhere.

VERBUM: So by doing these things, in time at least, the universal need for priests may be alleviated. It seems that the need for priests in some respects and in specific locations must be especially keen, for one reason or another. Where are priests most needed today?

Bishop Fellay: Everywhere. (Laughs). Really everywhere. I wish that I would be able

to say something else. I do not think that there are many places in the Society where we can say, “Now the people have what they need.” The growth of the Society, either on the local level—say parish, school—or on the level of countries, new countries, new calls for people—it is everywhere. The growth is steady. It is not spectacular, but it is there, and the number of priests cannot cope with the need. So we are in dramatic need of new strength everywhere. I cannot say that there would be a place which would be better than another. Maybe the places which are growing more, like the missions, or the United States. But if I look at France, for example, I see the same needs.

VERBUM: It is easy for people to forget this, is it not? When priests are assigned to one place instead of another and they become frustrated because they do not have the priests that they need?

Bishop Fellay: It is always a difficult choice for the superior to choose one place and not





Having given her son to Our Lord, Mrs. Margie Riccomini appropriately was the first to receive Him from his hands.

For this seminarian, the whole fight for Tradition received its glorious and unshakable foundation from the *Acts of the Magisterium* classes taught by H.E. Bishop Williamson. Learning the teachings of the holy pontiffs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, marked the moment when Father ceased being merely a “cradle” traditional Catholic and was set squarely on his feet, with the tools to strengthen his conviction in the truth of the Faith. “Thanks to Bishop Williamson’s clear and penetrating logic, to his serious and engaging style, and, no doubt, to his unflinching resolve, the teaching of the Church became so real, so much a point of reference from which to view fundamental issues that I will certainly look back on this class years from now with no less gratitude and appreciation.”

Father is also grateful to his spiritual director, Fr. Iscara, who brought long experience, foresight and basic common sense to the young seminarian. “He could always be depended on to provide a solid and refreshing contact with reality.” Fr. Riccomini is likewise indebted to the guidance of Fr. le Roux, especially for the consideration and solicitude he has always shown for his seminarians. “So many hands have knocked on that door during the past four years that I am amazed that it is still standing. He made it simple to understand what it means to become a father.” These priests were the support and consolation of Fr. Riccomini when his own father, to whom he owed so much, was called to his reward one year ago.

As Father begins his apostolate, he begs for prayers, so that he will put to good use all the gifts and blessings that he has received. His desire now is “to get to work” and begin contributing to the restoration of Catholic life wherever his assignments take him. May this Alter Christus remain united to Our Lord throughout his priestly life and share His zeal for His Father’s work.



Fr. Arnaud Rostand, Canadian District Superior, led the Canadian contingent for this year’s Ordinations ceremony.



another. Someone will be deprived, and we are very conscious of that.

VERBUM: The Society’s seminaries provide for filling some of this lack, but a number of non-Society priests returning to Tradition also are helping, by learning to say the Traditional Mass and by studying the Church’s traditional theology in greater depth. As a final topic we wanted to ask some questions about this phenomenon. Is it limited to the United States, or is its character universal?

Bishop Fellay: It is universal, but it is more noticeable here. In numbers, the country where we have more priests who can get close to us is definitely the United States. We have contacts, we have priests who join us, a little bit everywhere—from France, Germany, Argentina—but definitely the United States is one step ahead. We think that this phenomenon will happen also in other countries, but...

VERBUM: It’s just a matter of time?

Bishop Fellay: It is a matter of time. Yes.

VERBUM: Are the interested priests younger, or is there any specific thing which is common to them?

Bishop Fellay: There is nothing much to say. The majority are younger priests, yes, with about ten years of priesthood.

VERBUM: So they have had some time to live in the Novus Ordo?

Bishop Fellay: They have had time to estimate the fruit they have gotten.

VERBUM: And they see that it is bitter?

Bishop Fellay: It is bitter.

VERBUM: Finally, can you tell us why this trend is evidencing itself now? What are its causes?

Bishop Fellay: It is because the crisis in the Church is extending and is coming to the last conclusions. So the unease and the emptiness are more and more visible. This makes greater numbers of priests react in front of this emptiness and want something more.

VERBUM: It has been a privilege to explore these matters with you, Your Excellency. As Superior General you can see things in a light which few others could. Do you have any final remarks on this theme, or is there anything else you would like to tell our readers?

Bishop Fellay: Oh definitely. There is nothing more beautiful than the priesthood. It is a tremendous gift from God to the Church and to souls. And it is for us a great, great honor, absolutely not merited, to be able to live and toil for such an institution, continuing the work begun by Archbishop Lefebvre. We are very proud of the Society, and I think we

are right to be so.

VERBUM: Thank you for your gracious cooperation, we assure you of our continued prayers, especially during this year of your silver anniversary. Thank you for coming to sojourn with us for a brief time. We hope you have gotten some rest!

Bishop Fellay: (Laughs). I have tried. You are most welcome.

Due to space constraints, much of the content of the full interview had to be omitted. If readers are interested in hearing the conversation in its entirety, it can be found on the Seminary’s website: www.stas.org. We ask our readers to pray always for His Excellency, but especially now, during this exceptional period of his priestly life. We thank him for the permission to print his remarks and eagerly anticipate his next visit to the Seminary.

St. Thomas Aquinas Visits St. Dominic

Good Catholic parents always strive to rear their children as good Christians and to guide them as they discern the vocations which God has chosen for them. Most of the struggle typically comes during the beginning stages, while in the later years, the parents can more fully enjoy the fruits of the labors which God has asked of them. In March of this year, God was particularly generous to the parents of one seminarian. Within the space of a week, three of the six children in the Boyle family took steps in the religious life—two in the order of St. Dominic and one in the Society of St. Pius X.

The logistical considerations involved in traveling to all these ceremonies were significant. Attending the first two events on the agenda required traveling across the Atlantic to the shores of the “Eldest Daughter of the Church,” France. Thankfully, Providence, which had seen fit to arrange such an extraordinary week, also smoothed

out the travel arrangements. Nearly all of the Boyle family and even a few friends were able to make the trip from New Jersey to the Dominican monastery at Avrille, near Angers, France. There, on the feast of St. Patrick, Sean Boyle, the youngest member of this family of Irish descent, received the habit from his superior, Fr. Innocent-Marie, taking the religious name of Br. Terence, O.P. He was one of five men, all of different nationalities, who took their habits that day. The joy of having such a number, at one time, give their lives to God was evident in the faces of the older members of the monastery. Three of these new Dominicans, including Br. Terence, enter the novitiate as scholastics so as to prepare for the sublime grace of the priesthood.

Just two days later and less than two miles away, on the Feast of St. Joseph, the second of the anticipated ceremonies took place when Kelly Boyle, now Sr. Mary Trinity, took her first temporary vows in the

contemplative Dominican Order. She was the only candidate to take this step on that day, the patronal feast of the convent. The concurrence of these two ceremonies was not by chance, as the monks had been kind enough to schedule the reception of the habit around the vows of Sr. Mary Trinity, so that her family would not be burdened with two trips. Brother Terence even was allowed the honor of serving the ceremony of profession.

However, the celebration following this event could not last long, since fourth-year seminarian Richard Boyle, had an appointment in Winona set for the next day. He was expected for the retreat that would precede his reception of the last two minor orders. On Saturday March 24, the last of the trio received the orders of Exorcist and Acolyte, together with the ten other seminarians in his class. These ordinations concluded a week of grace and joy, which no one involved would have envisioned during the ‘beginning stages’. Thanking God



Mr. Richard Boyle and Br. Terence, O.P. smile for the camera while Sr. Mary Trinity, O.P. stands on the other side of the grille.

for the blessing of three vocations, the Boyle family can only pray that He will be equally generous to other families, letting them too experience the rewards of their initial efforts rearing citizens for the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Ignatian Exercises Give Spirituality Year a Strong Finish

Monday, May 7, marked the beginning of a ten-day Ignatian retreat for those seminarians in the year of Spirituality and those brothers concluding their year of novitiate. Fr.



Jacques Emily, prior of St. Aloysius Gonzaga Retreat House in Los Gatos, California, came to Winona to preach the conferences with the assistance of Seminary professor Fr. Patrick Abbet. Although these seminarians and brothers had already undergone a five-day Ignatian retreat to start their academic year, its purpose was to create a horror of sin and a desire for perfection. The focus of this concluding retreat, rather, was to attain a greater knowledge of and love for Our Lord and to ignite the desire to imitate Him in a higher degree.

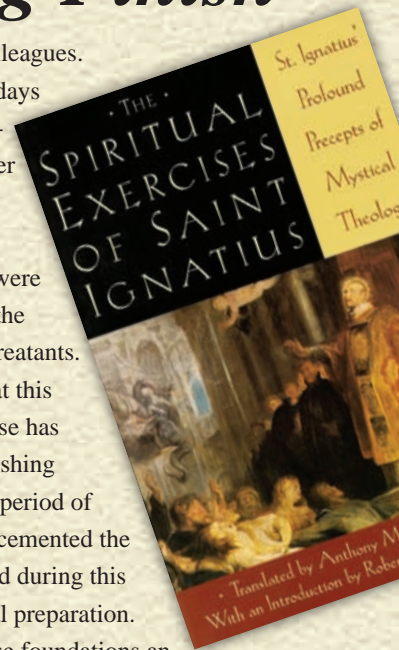
In the words of Archbishop Lefebvre, the year of Spirituality should be “...a year of spiritual enlightenment, working within them (the seminarians) a profound conversion and turning towards God.” (Seminary Rule, Chapter 2, §A) Just as an aspirant to the religious life has at least one year of novitiate before taking his first vows, so the seminarian follows this year of Spirituality

to strengthen his interior life in preparation for entering the Society during the following year. In the mind of the Archbishop, this ten day retreat would be a powerful instrument by which those about to enter the clerical or religious life would “strive to restore to Our Lord the place that belongs to Him, in their soul and in their whole person.”

The retreatants followed a distinct schedule, attending four conferences each day and hearing Mass in Our Lady’s chapel on the Seminary’s second floor. St. Athanasius, the new basement classroom, was pressed into service in yet another way by doubling as the retreat refectory. This allowed the retreatants to remain completely segregated from the rest of the community even at meals and thereby avoid possible occasions of distraction. With one-third of the community temporarily “out of service,” the remaining seminarians all pitched in to fill the gap in manpower left behind by their

twenty-five colleagues.

The ten days passed smoothly, and whatever sacrifices and extra work had been required were offered up for the good of the retreatants. The hope is that this spiritual exercise has applied the finishing touches to this period of formation and cemented the foundations laid during this year of spiritual preparation. Then upon these foundations an imposing edifice of doctrine and piety may rise up during the following five years of philosophical and theological study.



Future Shepherds Flock to the Twin Cities

I am the Good Shepherd. I know Mine and Mine know Me...” It is the custom of Society seminarians in Europe to attend Mass as a community at a nearby parish on Good Shepherd Sunday, a day which the Church devotes to the cultivation and support of vocations. On this feast She encourages the faithful to remember in a special way those who are preparing to help Our Lord tend His flock. This year, the Seminary in Winona decided to adopt this practice as well, spending Good Shepherd Sunday with the parishioners of Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM), the Society’s chapel in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Immediately after the Easter break some sixty seminarians and brothers traveled to the “Twin Cities” for this occasion. Those who had traveled directly to the Seminary from their vacations rose early on Sunday morning for the two-hour drive north.



Others, who were returning to Winona via St. Paul, had chosen to stop off there the previous evening and were graciously welcomed into the homes of six families from the parish.

The remainder of the seminarians and brothers arrived shortly after the early Mass. During the time which intervened before the second one, they gave some of the faithful a much deserved break, by teaching catechism classes and by leading the parish rosary. Then at 10:00 a.m. Seminary Rector Fr. Yves le Roux celebrated the Solemn High

Mass. Although the Solemn Mass is the Church’s “ordinary” form of worship, circumstances today are such that many parishes seldom witness the Holy Sacrifice celebrated in this manner. But with the Seminary providing the sacred ministers, altar servers, and

schola, the faithful of Immaculate Heart of Mary were treated to the sacred liturgy in the fullness of its symbolism and splendor.

Afterwards, the seminarians and brothers had the opportunity to speak briefly with members of the congregation in the church’s undercroft before departing for a luncheon organized and prepared by their generous hosts. This event presented a much-appreciated opportunity to make the acquaintance of many parishioners who regularly make sacrifices for the benefit of the Seminary. Near the end of the banquet some (more or less) musically-inclined seminarians provided post-lunch entertainment in the form of sacred and secular melodies. But by the time the festivities had finished, the waning afternoon required a concerted clean-up effort by all present in order to arrive back at the church in time for Solemn Vespers. When this concluded, the invitees bade hasty farewells to the laity and packed up for the return drive to Winona.

With appreciation for their warm hospitality, the Seminary thanks Rev. Fr. Beck and his parishioners at IHM, requesting at the same time their continued prayerful support—an indispensable aid in the fostering



and perseverance of vocations. The seminarians also hope that this glimpse at the fruits which such prayers have already produced will be a source of hope and encouragement for the faithful. May the Good Shepherd continue to raise up new vocations in all of the Society’s chapels for the care of the souls He draws unto Himself “...My sheep hear My voice: and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give them life everlasting” {John 10: 14, 27-28}