

Throughout the years of our seminary education, we are confronted with one major question: what are we doing here? Why do we subject ourselves to Friday night formation sessions, dish duties, and academic pursuits that don't appear to bear much fruit? And when we see John Carroll students coming to 11:00 AM class in pajamas, we ask, why have we been up since seven o'clock? And with even more serious issues, why do we suffer misunderstandings from our family and friends, and why do we enter into the work of the spiritual life? In short, why are we seminarians?

We have grown up in a world with values contrary to the Gospel. We are inundated, daily, with the message of individualism and consumerism. We are faced with the reality that in today's world it is fashionable to mock Catholicism, the Church and Her Teachings. The salvific act of Jesus Christ has sent the Devil into frenzy and, as a result, we experience the world as the battle ground that it is. These are not some medieval ideas, but the realities that we suffer through. And, I believe, that in a real way, these are the very reasons why we are here, right now, as seminarians. Somewhere along the short span of our lives we were knocked off of our horses – like St. Paul – by the Light of God. And when we looked around at the world with the new sight that He offered, we saw not only the horror of darkness, but saw how good the world is. We saw that the world needs holy men and holy priests, who can bring Christ's salvation to this sin torn world. By the grace of God we have been the lucky few open enough to hear the Shepherd's voice, to drop our nets, and enter the seminary.

More than a month ago we seminarians, we happy few, traveled back to our parishes to celebrate Holy Week and Easter. And at every church in the Diocese of Cleveland during the Easter Vigil, the flame and light of Christ roared to life and burst like hope into the dark night of

the world. If we were to suspend ourselves above the Diocese with a mystical eye, we would have seen countless numbers of faces lit up by votive candles processing behind the Easter Flame into their churches. That holy day answered the darkness of the world with the piercing reality of the Resurrection. And it is during those moments, when we are celebrating the great Mysteries of our faith with our fellow parishioners, that I believe we receive the answer for what we are doing here as seminarians for the Diocese.

When Thomas Merton walked into the church of the Gethsemane Monastery of Kentucky, he saw files of monks in their white habits, silently gathering to pray. In that moment Merton recalls in his autobiography *Seven Storey Mountain*, that he became aware of the fact that the sinful world was being held together by those few saintly religious. While the whole world seemed lost, those monks were living as seeds of sanctification for the universe. In the same way, every church in the Diocese of Cleveland exists as a light in the darkness, a seed of sanctification. Every church is thus the Mount where Christ gave his Beatitudes. Every church is Calvary where Christ died on the Cross and every one's an empty tomb out of which he rose. And who will be the christs who preach those Sermons on the Mount? Who will be the christs who die on the cross for their parishioners? And, who will be the christs offering the hope of the resurrection to the poor and suffering? We will be.

If we continue through formation and are then called to Holy Orders by the bishop – we will *literally* be transformed into Christ for the world; and called to shower the Mercy of God, given to us in the Eucharist, down into the deepest darkest recesses of the people of God. Now, that is a great reason for being a seminarian! That is a cause of rejoicing, and proudly telling the many people that we meet over the course of the summer that, “YES, I am a seminarian!” We are

called here to be formed into Christ for the people. The call to the priesthood is not only a supreme task, but a supreme gift, and one with ultimate consequences.

Being a seminarian is an awesome life. And praying and working with you brother seminarians for the past four years has been an inspiring and joy filled time. And I think I can speak on behalf of the class of 2010, when I say that we could not have done it without your support. The same goes for our family, friends and faculty members, too. This wonderful task of ours cannot be accomplished alone, and we thank God for having blessed us with those who have been by our side through it all.

God has granted us the greatest gift he could possibly give anyone: the chance to be in the person of Christ as priests, filling in the sufferings of Christ and moving the world towards salvation. By keeping these things in our hearts we can move forward together as one, through the sufferings and joys of seminary life. This is indeed an awesome and wonderful life; and has been the best four years of my young life; I am looking forward to spending so many more with you. So, as the prayer for ordination goes: "May God who has begun the good work in us, bring it to fulfillment."

Amen.