



Adsum

Adsum is published by the seminarians of **Mater Dei Seminary** for the enjoyment of our families, friends, and benefactors.

LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

“Of all the divine things, the most divine is to cooperate with God in the salvation of souls,” says St. Denis the Areopagite. For this reason, Our Divine Lord came down from heaven, “for us men and for our salvation,” and for this reason He shed His Precious Blood on the Cross. It was also for this reason that He instituted the holy priesthood to continue His work of the salvation of souls and to make men fishers of men.

The vocation to the priesthood is an awesome calling with the most serious responsibilities. The priest is an “alter Christus.” He acts in the Person of Christ and it is for this reason that when the priest pronounces the words of consecration over the bread and wine he says “Hoc est enim Corpus meum” and “Hic est enim Calix Sanguinis mei,” etc. “This is *my* Body” and “This is *my* Blood...” He also imparts absolution from sins by the form, “Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis,” etc. “*I* absolve you from your sins...”

Such a vocation needs a time of preparation. Before the time of St. Augustine, young men were trained by their parish priests and then presented to the bishop for ordination. But from St. Augustine’s time, cathedral schools were organized to focus on the training of priests. At the Council of Trent, seminaries

for students to the priesthood were established.

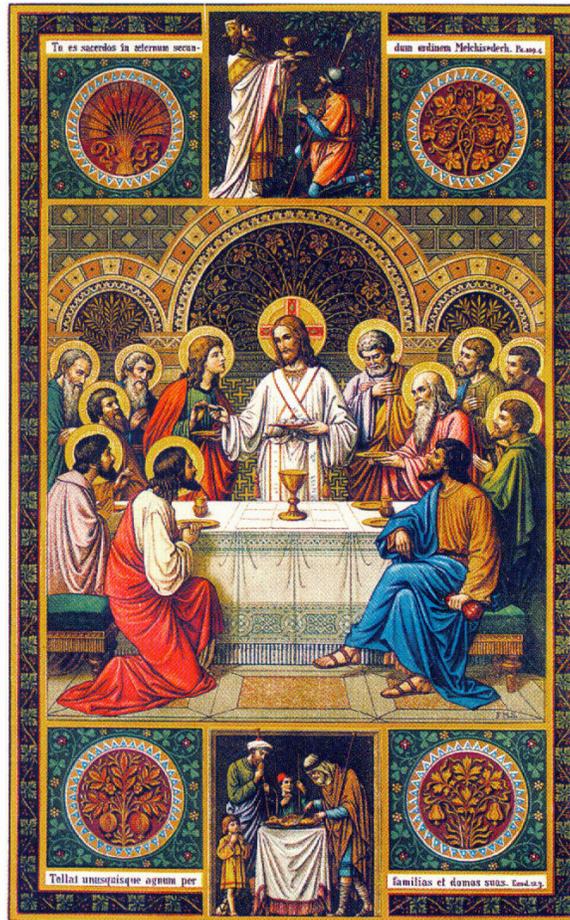
The word *seminary* comes from the Latin word for *seed*, and the word originally dates back to the ancient Roman times when seeds were planted in nurseries to grow plants and trees. How appropriate this word was chosen for the house of spiritual formation of priests—where the seed of their vocation can grow and wax strong as the seminarians make each successive step toward the priesthood.

As another scholastic year has begun here at the seminary, the seminarians are divided into three levels. The first level is the philosophate which is comprised of our first year students. They will study during the next two years the various branches of philosophy: Logic, Criteriology, Cosmology, Theodicy, Ontology, Ethics, Psychology, and Sociology.

Fortunately, we have been able to acquire from book stores around the country all the standard seminary text books necessary for all the seminarians’ classes. And for those books that are no longer available or in print, we have scanned them on the computer and reprinted them.

These first level seminarians also study Dogmatic Theology, Latin, Sacred Scripture, Liturgy, and Ecclesiastical Chant.

The second level are those seminarians who have completed their 2 years of philosophy and have now begun the study of Moral Theology and Canon Law in



addition to Dogmatic Theology, Patrology, Latin, and Ecclesiastical Chant.

Our third level of seminarians are completing their studies in Moral Theology and Canon Law and in addition continue in Dogmatic Theology, Latin, Liturgy, and Ecclesiastical Chant.

As important as their academic studies are, the most important part of the seminary is the spiritual formation. This primarily consists in a well-regulated schedule with daily Mass and Holy Communion, meditation, spiritual reading, recitation of the Rosary, and recitation of the Divine Office. The reason for this is quite simple. The deciding factor of the success of a priest is the grace of God. The priest is the mere instrument of God, and as a holy priest once made the analogy: the clergy are the arteries in the Mystical Body of Christ; if the arteries are healthy and clear, the graces of God will flow freely and abundantly

throughout the rest of the Members of the Mystical Body.

We commend the success of the seminary and the spiritual formation of our seminarians to Mary, the Mother of God, our patroness; most of her life was spent in union with her Divine Son, the Eternal High Priest.

Please pray for the success of the seminary year—we have six new seminarians who have begun their studies. At the end of September, Rev. Mr. Tim Geckle will be ordained deacon on the feast of the North American martyrs, September 26th.

As always, thank you for your support. May God reward you for your prayers and assistance in the important work of the salvation of souls.

With my prayers and blessing,

Most. Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI

The Life of St. Gabriel, Passionist

When we consider the lives of the saints, we may fall into the mistake of thinking that the saints were born saints. However, this is not the case for some of them, and in particular, St. Gabriel the Passionist. His friends called him “the dude” because of his immaculate grooming. They also nicknamed him “the dancer” because at parties he didn’t hesitate to dance with as many girls as were available. He was popular with his companions because he was witty and could readily make them laugh. With his vivacious nature, he fitted right in with the “Lords of Spoleto,” a gang of classmates whose idea of fun was marching through the streets laughing, joking and instigating boisterous stunts, often while enjoying a smoke on the side to prove their maturity.

Does this sound like one of those students who is more of a “party-goer” than a scholar, more of a potential candidate for juvenile hall than for a diploma? Well, oddly enough, the student described was at the time in the process of becoming a candidate for sainthood. Yes, seventeen-year-old Francis Possenti, the son of a well-to-do civil official in Spoleto, Italy, found his enjoyment in many of the pleasures and frivolities of youth. But the fun-loving side of his character was offset by his integrity, piety, and natural talents. He was an able scholar with a quick mind and tenacious memory, enabling him to earn the most envied prizes the school had to offer, the gold medals of philosophy and honor. The religious principles that had been instilled into him, both in his home and Catholic schooling, exerted an influence



on him, such that he did not neglect his religious duties of prayers, attendance at Mass and frequent confession and Communion. Furthermore, he fostered a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Doubtless, these Catholic practices preserved in him a high moral standard. He remained pure in mind, heart and speech, and his chastity of soul and body was reflected in his facial appearance.

While the world was trying to entice Francis into its service, God was beckoning to him in the opposite direction, that of His service. The instrument God used to make this call heard was the reality of death—the experience of his own narrow escape from death, not once, but twice. Twice on the threshold of death from illness he promised God that he would leave the world and consecrate his life in a religious order as a priest. Twice the world seduced him and he broke his promise. A third call reached him during a procession in which a famous icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary was being carried through the streets of Spoleto. As the sacred picture passed the spot where he was kneeling, his eyes met those of the image. As he gazed spellbound, in the depth of his soul he heard a voice say, “Francis, why do you remain in the world? It is not for you. Follow your vocation!”

That brief moment changed the course of his life. All procrastination ended and he answered the call without delay. In September 1856 he entered the Passionist Order. One year later he made his religious profession, taking the name Gabriel, vowing to live according to Our Lord’s evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. He then proceeded to take up clerical studies in preparation for the priesthood. He distinguished himself by the practice of heroic virtue, not manifested by doing extraordinary feats of heroism, nor by working astounding miracles, but by constant virtuous fidelity to the ordinary obligations and duties expected of any religious and cleric, fulfilled with extraordinary faith, diligence and purity of intention. By the power of God’s grace he gradually died to self-love to live for love of God alone.

His constant progress in virtue in a short time can be attributed to the firm resolutions he made, inspired largely by his fervent devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to His Passion, and to the Sorrows of Mary, whereby he received abundant graces to remain faithful to those resolutions. After six years in the religious life, at the age of 24, after suffering greatly with patient resignation, he died peacefully of consumption on February 27, 1862.

On May 13, 1920, Pope Benedict XV officially proclaimed him a canonized saint, citing Gabriel Francis Posenti as “the new patron of youth for the Universal Church in this 20th century,” stressing that what he achieved is “a lesson and inspiration to us all.” What specifically is that lesson? I think it is well summarized by Cardinal William Connell: “To live an ordinary life dedicated to God’s glory, that is the lesson we need most in these days of spectacular posing and movie heroes. And that an ordinary life, lived only for God, quite simply, quite undramatically, but very seriously, each little task done with a happy supernaturalism—that such a life means sainthood.”

But the life of St. Gabriel has an added lesson for those young men who are also being called by God to follow in the footsteps of his vocation, and who, perhaps, like him are attracted by the seductions of the world. To such, the example of young Gabriel can serve as a magnet to draw them away from the world’s allurements and inspire them with courage and resoluteness in responding to God’s invitation: “Young men... love not the world... because all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life... And the world with its lust is passing away, but HE WHO DOES THE WILL OF GOD LIVES FOREVER.” (I John 2: 14-17)



Students and Faculty of Mater Dei Academy for the 2014-2015 scholastic year

Father Connell Answers Moral Questions

by Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

Honesty in Sports

Question: Could not something be done by Catholics to promote a spirit of honesty in competitive sport, which seems to be on the decline in schools and colleges? It would seem that the idea that the game is to be won by any and every means is being encouraged even by athletic coaches. For example, a basketball player will deliberately foul an opponent when he is about to score a basket (by pulling the latter's jersey) in the hope that he will not be seen by the referee and penalized. Sometimes there is even a planned attempt to inflict physical injury on the players of the opposing team, especially in football. I hope that this spirit is not prevalent to any great degree in Catholic schools and colleges; yet I fear that sufficient instruction on this matter and admonition against dishonesty in sports are not provided in Catholic institutions.

Answer: With the questioner I wholeheartedly hold that all forms of dishonesty in sports should be denounced and that adequate instruction on this matter should be a part of the course in religion or ethics given in Catholic schools and colleges. Our young folks should be taught that the moral law regulates competitive athletics, as it does every phase of human activity. However, the chief difficulty in giving definite instruction on the subject is this: What exactly constitutes dishonesty in sports? What norm should be followed in determining what is unfair as distinct from lawful strategy? This is a question which has not been discussed to any great extent by Catholic moralists, and I would hesitate to give any more than general norms.

In the first place, I believe that certain practices in sport are recognized as lawful, even though they involve some deception, and hence may be used without any violation of honesty. Thus, it is a common trick in baseball for the baseman to conceal the fact that he holds the ball in his glove, in order to trap the runner to step off the base; and I do not believe that even the most conscientious player would regard this as dishonest. And certainly, in football the attempt to deceive the opposing side as to the contemplated play by clever passing is a recognized feature of the game.

On the other hand, any practices intended directly to inflict injury on an opponent should be regarded as forbidden. Under this would come the "spiking" of a player in baseball, the tripping of an opponent in hockey, and especially tackling in football in a manner expressly designed to injure an adversary and force him to retire from the game. I believe that the practice of some baseball pitchers of delivering a "bean ball" is also to be condemned. In Catholic schools and colleges such tactics should be vehemently condemned, and coaches and athletic directors denounced, not only as exhibitions of poor sportsmanship but also as transgressions of the moral law.

There are some tricks, too, which are clearly violations of honesty, even though they cause no physical injury to the opponents. Evidently the golfer who kicks his ball out of an unfavorable spot when the others are not looking is guilty of such a violation. But undoubtedly there are many practices in the field of sports, the morality of which might be controverted. Especially there are some, the prohibition of which might be regarded as a merely penal law. That is, they may be such that there is no moral wrong in attempting them, as long as one is willing to stand the penalty if he is detected by the referee or umpire. Perhaps in this category could be included the practice mentioned by the questioner—pulling an opponent's jersey in basketball, to prevent him from making a basket. If a player uses this type of strategy, is he guilty of an act of dishonesty, or can he argue that it is the function of the referee to detect and to penalize such tactics, so that it is a lawful feature of the game to block an opponent in this manner, running the risk of incurring a penalty? I would not venture to answer this and similar problems that might arise in the different forms of sport, since a reasonable judgment on this matter could be passed only by one who is fully familiar with the game toward tricks of this nature. I think it would be advisable for players, referees, coaches and athletic directors to give us their views on the honesty or dishonesty of various practices in sports.

At any rate, all who possess any influence or authority over school and colleges athletes should try to impress them with the need of honesty and fair play in games, not only as something which is decent and upright, but also as an obligation of justice and Christian charity. Even from my limited knowledge of recent sport activities, I am inclined to suspect that the principle that "the end justifies the means" has made considerable inroads on our American tradition of fairness in athletic contests. Catholic boys and girls particularly should be made aware of their duty to be outstanding exemplars of clean and honest sportsmanship.

Adsum, a publication by the seminarians of **MATER DEI SEMINARY** for the reading enjoyment of friends and benefactors, is sent free of charge to all who request it. If you are interested, please provide your name and mailing address to:

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