

Letters From A Seminarian

Edited by Joseph More

Dedicated

to the

Sacred Heart of Jesus

and the

Immaculate Heart of Mary

FOREWORD

It is hoped that these notes from a seminarian's journal will give prospective young men an idea of the life of a beginning seminarian. It is also to give an insight to how a young man found himself through the demanding and challenging life of the first steps on the road to the priesthood. It chronicles the year before he went in the seminary, and his first year and a half there.

There is a unique spiritual journey that we each take. Reading these thoughts may encourage and motivate others to keep a record of their own thoughts in the journey of discovering what God's Plan is for them.

This may be a starting point for some who are not even aware that they are already on that journey.

A CALLING

March 18

For the past year, I have had thoughts of becoming a priest. I finally told Father Sam, the Chaplain of the Catholic Student Center at the college I attend, and he suggested for me to keep a journal of some of these thoughts. I don't know if this is a "calling," but since this idea had persisted, it is necessary for me to at least consider this possibility.

If this is going to be a journal, it might as well start with some background. My past would certainly not be the usual kind that prepares one for the priesthood. While my childhood was normal for a boy growing up in a Catholic home, my teenage years were not. I started hanging around with what my parents called "the wrong kind of boys," and typically being influenced into following the crowd, I got into trouble. Most of it was not the public kind, like getting arrested, but I was guilty of smoking, drinking, some drug experimentation, and sexual activity. God and religion were put on the side, as they were ignored - if not made fun of - by my new friends. Like I said before, not the usual formation of a priest.

About the age of 20, things started changing. Maybe a little maturity started creeping in, because I started to see my friends and their lifestyle for what it was - Loserville. All of a sudden, the things that I thought were cool now seemed stupid. I regretted my actions and was sorry for them. Luckily I belonged to a Church that had the Sacrament of Reconciliation in it. Instead of simply being able to tell God I was sorry, I had to confess my sins to a priest. Maybe the small percentage of humility it took to do that gave me the grace to not only change my life, but to start it in the opposite direction.

I enrolled in college the next fall, and decided to become a teacher. Certainly one of the things I want to teach others is to not make the same stupid mistakes I did.

Since I have been doing more spiritual reading lately, I've decided to include in this journal some of the inspirational thoughts that I have been reading. Since St. Augustine turned his life completely around and I can empathize at least a little with him, I will start with him.

I confess that you have forgiven me all my sins, both those which I have done by my own choice, and those which, under your guidance, I have not committed.

St Augustine

April 3

It amazes me about the different ways in which God calls people to conversion. It can be directly, as it was with St. Paul, or it can be through simpler means - other people's good examples, teachers, spiritual books, inspirational movies, and of course, prayer.

All of these had an influence on me. My best examples were my parents and other relatives. Now I realize that part of their example, as well as love for me, was to criticize and condemn my life of sin. They didn't see any effect at the time, but evidently it paid off. Too many parents let their children do whatever they want, in order to avoid trouble or hassle. Luckily, my parents were more concerned about answering to God on Judgement Day than concerned about avoiding arguments with a bull-headed son.

I'm getting sleepy, so I'll continue this later. And I've decided to simply make copies of excerpts from the books I read and paste them in this journal. It would take too long to copy them by hand.

I resolved to make my confession to him. I confessed my sins in full. I received absolution. I did not feel love, only bitterness, shame, and sorrow. Then I looked for the first time at Divine Mercy; I made the acquaintance of that Mercy which had withdrawn me from hell, which gave me grace. An illumination made me see the measure

of my sins. Thereupon, I understood that in offending the Creator, I had offended all creatures. . . Through the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, I invoked the mercy of God, and on my knees, I begged for life. Suddenly, I believed that I felt a pity of all creatures and of all saints, And then I received a gift; a great fire of love and the power to pray as I had never prayed. . . God wrote the Pater Noster in my heart with such an accentuation of His Goodness and of my unworthiness that I lack words to speak of it.

Blessed Angela of Foligno

April 12

I like living here at the Catholic Student Center, since more and more of my free time is being spent in prayer and spiritual reading. It also makes it very convenient to make daily Mass.

I also have much more contact with Father Sam. We have been involved in some very good discussions on the priesthood, and spiritual life in general. He is encouraging me to enter a good seminary to find out whether the priesthood is my calling or not. I still like to hang out with my friends, but since they are the Catholics who spend time here, the conversation is on a much higher level than it is in the dorms.

True conversion has nothing to do with emotional "uplift" or with a moral veneer of social action; it is a hard game, an arduous battle, a travail of soul from which emerges a new dedication of self. The Christ mind must become the soul of our thinking, the Christ vision the eyes of our seeing, the Christ truth must be in our mouths for speaking, and the Christ love in our hearts for loving.

Bishop Fulton Sheen

May 2

As busy as I've been throughout this semester, I still find myself thinking about the priesthood. Maybe it's because I'm bored in most of my classes that seem to be just advanced high school. I already have proved the ability to study and memorize inconsequential facts, and pass tests on it.

I am now interested in truly higher learning - the kind where you really have to think. That's why I spend much of my free time reading spiritual classics, from St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas. I would rather have them lead me to more understanding and wisdom,

than my present teachers leading me to only facts and figures. The latter has its place, of course. It's just that they take up all the place here.

The soul is enclosed in the body, but it contains the body; Christians must remain in the world as in a prison but they contain the world. The immortal soul dwells in a mortal home; Christians are pilgrims in a corruptible world while they look forward to heavenly immortality. God has set them in the world as his sentinels, and they may not leave their posts.

St. Justin Martyr

May 20

I not only like to be inspired - I need to be inspired. In most of my classes, the teacher gives the impression of being there only to collect a paycheck. There's no enthusiasm for the subject or the teaching process. The students are bored because the teaching is boring.

I realize that this is a state college and the teachers are not as good as they probably would be at a private college, but if they aren't here to instill a desire for learning, and at least some satisfaction of that desire, then they should leave and do something else. It would be better to have no teacher in the classroom than a bad one.

My efforts, by themselves, are nothing, absolute nothing. "Without Me you can do nothing." They will only be useful, and blessed by God, if by means of a genuine interior life I unite them constantly to the lifegiving action of Jesus. But then they will become all-powerful; "I can do all things in Him who strengthened me." But should they spring from pride and self-satisfaction, bring confidence in my own talents, from the desire to shine, they will be rejected by God; for would it not be a sacrilegious madness for me to steal, from God, a little of His glory in order to decorate and beautify myself?

This conviction, far from robbing me of all initiative, will be my strength. And it will make me really feel the need to pray that I may obtain humility, which is such a treasure for my soul, since it is a guarantee of God's help and of success in my labors.

Dom Jean Baptist Chautard O.C.S.O.

May 25

Maybe the desire to be inspired is a step to the priesthood where hopefully I could inspire others to follow Christ. Every vocation in life - the single life, marriage, or the religious, needs good examples. That's why I like to read Lives of the Saints. There are inspiring Saints from all vocations, and they should be our heroes instead of the movie stars, professional athletes, and rock singers that the media holds up as "heroes."

August 10

This has been an unusual summer for me. Basically it is usually care-free, even if I work full-time. This summer was different because I saved more, considering the possibility of entering a seminary in the next year. I went to talk to my Bishop last week, and he said that the diocese would loan me the necessary money for the seminary, which costs more than the state college I'm now attending.

With that possibility in mind, I didn't "party" as much as usual this summer. I also was not interested in dating. Whether a lack of interest in dating led to more thoughts of the seminary, or vice-versa, it still ended up the same. I spent most of my free time with my family which is always nice.

September 25

Here I am back in college and I'm really not interested in my classes. I'm getting good enough grades, but there's no incentive to get better ones. My best friend told me that I am turning into somewhat of a loner, because of joining my friends in fewer activities. I seem to spend most of my time outside of class in my room. Last year, I was in there only to sleep.

A second perceptible result of conversion is a definite change on behavior and conduct of life. Not only does conversion change one's values, it also reverses the tendencies and energies of life, directing them to another end. If the convert before conversion was already leading a good moral life, there is now less emphasis in keeping a law and more emphasis on maintaining a relationship of love. If the convert has been a sinner, his spiritual life frees him from habits and excesses which before weighted down the soul. He no longer need resort to alcohol or sleeping tablets. He often finds that these practices were not so much appetites as attempts to flee responsibility or to ensure, by plunging into unconsciousness, that he could avoid the necessary choice. Before conversion, it was behavior which to a large extent determined belief; after conversion, it is belief which determines behavior. There is no longer a tendency to find scapegoats to blame for the faults of self, but rather a consciousness

that the reformation of the world must begin with the reformation of self.

Once the soul has turned to God, there is no longer a struggle to give up these habits; they are not so much defeated, as crowded out by new interests.

Bishop Fulton Sheen

October 15

I've been thinking a lot lately about my past sins and really regretting them. I told Father Sam about this, and he said that if I was sorry and confessed them, then I should bury the past and think only about the present and the future.

Sometimes even when we know God has forgiven us, it is difficult for us to forgive ourselves.

The mentality or spiritual state of the beginner may be best described in function of that which is primary in the order of goodness, namely his knowledge of God and of himself, and his love of God. Admittedly there are some beginners who are specially favored, like many great saints who have had greater grace in their early beginnings than many who are proficient; just as in the natural order there are infant prodigies. But after all, they are children, and it is possible to say in general in what the mentality of beginners consists. They begin to know themselves, to see their poverty and their neediness, and they have every day to examine their conscience to correct their faults. At the same time they begin to know God, in the mirror of the things of sense, in the things of nature or in the parables, for example, in those of the Prodigal son, the Lost Sheep or the Good Shepherd. There is a direct movement up to God, not unlike that of the swallow when it rises up to the heavens uttering a cry.

Rev. R. Garrigou Lagrange, O.P.

Character of habit is no excuse for immoral conduct. We can shape our own characters, and we can control the beginning of our habits. A man may be sick because of incontinence of life or disobedience of doctor's orders. But he had the option of leading a pure life and of following proper medical advice. As a result, he must be held responsible for the entailments of his disobedience and excesses. You may regret having thrown a stone the moment it has left your hand; but all the regrets in the world will not call it back. The point is, how we are not obliged to throw it in the first instance.

St. Thomas Aquinas

October 26

I called my bishop today, and told him that I would like to enter a seminary. He said that he would make the necessary arrangements and let me

know when and where.

November 5

Since I made the decision to enter a seminary, I've had a kind of calmness in my mind. It could be because of doing what God wants me to do, or simply because I finally made a decision. Either way, I like the results.

I also understood that God's love shows itself just as well in the simplest soul which puts up no resistance to His grace as it does in the loftiest soul. Indeed, as it is love's nature to humble itself, if all souls were like those of the holy doctors who have illumined the Church with the light of their doctrine, it seems that God would not have stooped low enough by entering their hearts. But God has created the baby who knows nothing and can utter only feeble cries. He has created the poor savage with no guide but natural law, and it is to their hearts that He deigns to stoop. They are His wild flowers whose homeliness delights Him. By stooping down to them, He manifests His infinite grandeur. The sun shines equally both on cedars and on every tiny flower. In just the same way God looks after every soul as if it had no equal. All is planned for the good of every soul, exactly as the seasons are so arranged that the humblest daisy blossoms at the appointed time.

St. Therese of Lisieux

November 20

My bishop wrote me and said that arrangements have been made for me to enter a minor seminary at the end of next January, when the new college semester starts. Now I am already having second thoughts, but Father Sam said that it is par for the course and not to worry about it.

December 2

I've been spending even more time alone lately. My best friend said it was too much. Tonight he and some other guys decided to go in the woods and cut down a Christmas tree. They invited me, but I told them that I didn't feel like going.

So they picked me up in my chair and carried me out to his car and put my in. I complained about being "kidnapped," but we ended up having a log of fun and laughs.

I do enjoy their company, and should spend a little more time with the group that hangs around here.

As prayer goes deeper, so does our need for silence and solitude. Not only do we discover that we need times of silence, times to be alone, but we also know we are more still inside, at all times; that there is a whole element of our

lives that is simply "there" in presence before the Father, without the support of felt bonds with other human persons. It is in this growing silence and greater aloneness that we find our deepest peace, our center.

Rev. Felix Donahue O.S.C.O.

December 5

I hope I don't make a mistake tonight. I told my best friend about my decision to spend more time with my friends, and he liked the idea. Then he suggested double-dating with him.

I don't know if I believe him, but he said that a girl who spends time around here (even though she isn't Catholic), wants to go out with me.

She's cute and seems nice, but since I'm going in the seminary in January, I'm not interested in dating. He said that one date wouldn't hurt anything, and that I would be giving her an example of what a date with a good, moral Catholic is like.

So I agreed to double with him to go bowling tomorrow night.

December 12

Oh, no! Just what I was afraid of happening - happened. That date, "the one that wouldn't hurt anything," turned out to be the best date I ever had.

I can't believe we hit it off so well, and I can't believe we're spent hours together every day since. I haven't thought about the seminary for more than one minute since we met. We have a lot of interests in common that I've never had with a girl before, and I really enjoy being with her. And she feels the same about me!

Never wish to be loved in a special way. Since love depends on the will and the will bends by its nature towards good, it follows that being loved and considered good are one and the same thing. The desire to be esteemed by a preferential love cannot be compatible with sincere humility. How much fruit would you get by endeavoring thus? Not longing any more for the love of creatures, your soul will take refuge in the sacred wounds of the Savior. In the adorable heart of Jesus it will experience untold divine sweetness. The renunciation of the love of creatures for the love of God will empower your soul to taste abundantly that honey of divine consolation which would have been denied had your soul been attracted by the false and alluring sweetness of earthly consolations. Divine consolations are so pure as not to bear being mixed with earthly affections. We are filled with the former to the extent that we are empty of the latter.

Pope Leo XIII

December 15

My mind is really messed up. Every time I start thinking about the

priesthood, my girlfriend comes to mind. And after thinking about her for awhile, I start wondering about my plans to go in to the seminary. Father Sam says God will lead me in the right direction, but I certainly do not know right now what it is.

December 20

I can't believe that I'm on my way to South Bend, Indiana. At noon, my best friend and I were having lunch prior to him leaving to drive to the University of Notre Dame for a visit. He was enrolled there last year, and then transferred to my state college because of his father's sickness and the resulting financial strain on the family.

He missed the atmosphere, the spirit, and the Lourdes Grotto so much, that he planned a visit during our Christmas holidays, even though none of his friends would be there.

He asked me if I wanted to join him, and I said that I'd really like to, but I had plans to work for the three weeks of vacation at a department store back home.

An hour later, we were on our way, after he had talked me into calling my parents and have them call the store and tell them I wouldn't be there the first week.

I seldom do spontaneous things, and here I am doing the biggest one of my life.

The predestination of the Blessed Virgin as mother of God was associated with the incarnation of the Divine Word: in the designs of Divine Providence she was the gracious mother of the Divine Redeemer here on earth, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ, she presented him to the Father in the temple, shared her son's sufferings as he died on the cross. Thus, in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace.

December 23

I wouldn't have believed this trip could be so great. It has been very relaxing for me, both physically and mentally. Evidently my best friend knew I needed this - and he was right.

As soon as we got here, we visited the Grotto, lit a candle, and made our intentions on the rock from Lourdes, France, where Our Lady appeared to St. Bernadette. Now I can understand why he went to the Grotto nightly when he was here to pray his rosary.

Then we went to his old dorm, and he talked the rector into letting us spend the night in his old room. As I had already found out, he can talk almost anyone into anything.

Every day unbelievers and unrepentant sinners cry: "Let us crown ourselves with roses." But our cry should be: "Let us crown ourselves with roses of the Most Holy Rosary."

How different are theirs from ours! Their roses are pleasures of the flesh, worldly honors and passing riches which wilt and decay in no time, but ours, which are the Our Father and Hail Mary which we have said devoutly over and over again and to which we have added good penitential acts, will never wilt or die and they will be just as exquisite thousands of years from now as they are today.

On the contrary, sinner's roses only look like roses, while in point of fact they are cruel thorns which prick them during life by giving them pangs of conscience, and their death they pierce them with bitter regret and, still worse, in eternity, they turn to burning shafts of anger and despair. But if our roses have thorns, they are the thorns of Jesus Christ, Who changes them into roses. If our roses prick us, it is only for a short time - and only in order to cure the illness of sin and to save our souls.

St. Louis De Montfort

December 26

It is so beautiful on the campus here. We've spent most of our time just walking around outside in the snow, looking at the architecture of the old buildings. Sometimes we talk, and sometimes we just walk in silence - each deep in our own thoughts. With almost no one else here, it is like being on our own retreat at the most impressive retreat facilities anywhere. I now understand why he would be interested in coming back without even getting a chance to see his friends.

Last night we went to Midnight Mass in Sacred Heart Cathedral here. It was my most memorable Christmas Mass ever. We were in the balcony, and it almost felt like we were close to Heaven. What peace!

Is this what a priest feels every time he offers Mass? I know priests have special graces from the sacrament of Holy Orders, and I wonder if this is one of the consolations that God gives them.

All I know is that this peace I feel is what I want more than anything else in the world. And if I can have that, then I think I can accept the crosses of the priesthood, as well as accept what other things must be given up for that vocation.

There are only three things which I will explain at some length and which are taken from our constitution itself. It is essential that we should understand how very important they are to us in helping us to preserve that peace, both inward and outward, which the Lord so earnestly recommended to us. One of these is love for each other; the second, detachment from all created things; the third, through humility, which although I put it last, is the most important of the three and embraces all the rest.

December 28

We left today for home, and part of me didn't want to leave. We are both short of money, though, and have it figured to the dollar on what it will cost to get home.

It is amazing how free the mind is when you physically spend time in a place outside of your usual haunts. For me, that would be college or at home. It really gave me a chance to get a few things clear in my own mind. I do want to go to the seminary, and look forward to moving my spiritual life to a higher level. I definitely want to be closer to God. My mind was filled with goals and plans in this area.

Once we left, however, my thoughts turned to my girlfriend, because we are going to stop and visit her on our way home.

Happy the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked, not walks in the way of sinners, nor sits in the company of the insolent, but delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on his law day and night.

Psalms 1

January 1

Well, here it is, the start of a new year, and one in which I must face some hard choices. I can't wait to be back at college in a few days to spend time with my girlfriend, and yet at the same time, look forward to entering the seminary at the end of the month.

It is said that "you can't have everything in this life," and now that has more meaning for me than ever before. Compared to my choice now, giving up my sinful life and bad friends several years ago was easy.

Modern anxiety is different from the anxiety of previous and more normal ages in two ways. In other days men were anxious about their souls, but modern anxiety is principally concerned with the body; the major worries of today are economic security, health, the complexion, wealth, social prestige, and sex. To read modern advertisements, one would think that the greatest calamity that could befall a human being would be to have dishpan hands.

The philosophy of anxiety looks to the fact that man is a fallen being composed of body and soul. Standing midway between the animal and the angels, living in a finite world and aspiring toward the infinite, moving in time

and seeking the eternal, he is pulled at one moment toward the pleasures of the body and at another moment to the joys of the spirit. He is in a constant state of suspension between matter and spirit and may be likened to a mountain climber who aspires to the great peak above and yet, looking back from his present position, fears falling to the abyss below.

Bishop Fulton Sheen

January 14

I've had a lot of temptations in my life, but my present one is really unique. I really don't want to go and leave my girlfriend, but I feel like I have to give the seminary a try. If I didn't go, and ended up marrying my girlfriend, I might always wonder if the priesthood was my true calling. I don't want to live the rest of my life with doubts, so I have to give the seminary a try now. Father Sam agrees with me on this.

Still, I've been with my girlfriend every day, and I know how much I'll miss her.

There is no place so holy or so remote where you will not meet with temptation, nor is there anyone completely free from it in this life; for in our body we bear the wounds of sin - the weakness of our human nature in which we were born.

As soon as one temptation or trial goes, another comes. We will always have something to suffer because we have lost our original state of happiness.

Many try to fly away from temptations only to fall more deeply into them; for you cannot win a battle by mere flight. It is only by patience and humility that you will be strengthened against the enemy.

Those who only shun them outwardly and do not pull them out by the roots will make no progress; for temptations will soon return to harass them and they will be in a worse state. It is only gradually - with patience and endurance and with God's grace - that you will overcome temptations sooner than by your own efforts and anxieties.

Thomas a Kempis

January 27

I arrived here at the seminary last night, and admit to being excited. My trip up here was tiring. On arriving, it was 5 degrees below zero, but it's warmed up today and the weather is nice now.

It was tough to say goodbye to my girlfriend and all my friends at the bus station when I left. I was surprised at how many came to see by off. My girlfriend told me that she understood why I had to come here, but I'm not sure she really does. I'm not sure I understand it completely myself. I just know I have to be here.

If we follow the light of Christ, and not the false lights of the world which at times burn brighter and feel closer, we are given the power to be made the sons of God. For this was the Word made flesh, that man might be born, not of nature or of man, but of God. This is love. This is the way and the truth and the life. This is the light of Christ. But it is a hidden light.

Always the search after charity, always the search after Christ. The soul never finding full satisfaction in love, never knowing whether Christ is found or not. Walking on the way, but not being sure about it; living for the truth but having to make acts of faith about it; sharing the life, but feeling dead. This is faith.

Dom Hubert Van Zeller, O.S.B.

February 17

Everything is going well up here. The academics are definitely tougher. I've had two research papers assigned so far and will get at least one more. Another assignment is to read about 20 books outside of class during this semester. Then there's the preparation of a one-hour seminar for a history course. Six or seven hours studying is my average for every day. This is good for me - it keeps me out of mischief.

Every Christian is therefore called to sanctity and union with Christ, by keeping the commandments of God. Some, however, with special vocations have contracted a more solemn obligation by religious vows, and have bound themselves to take the basic Christian vocation to holiness especially seriously. They have promised to make use of certain definite and more efficacious means to "be perfect" - the evangelical counsels. They obligate themselves to be poor, chaste, and obedient, thereby renouncing their own wills, denying themselves, and liberating themselves from mundane attachments in order to give themselves even more perfectly to Christ. For them, sanctity is not simply something that is sought as an ultimate end: sanctity is their "profession" - they have no other job in life than to be saints, and everything is subordinated to his end, which is primary and immediate for them.

Thomas Merton

February 25

Time is passing rather fast here. Our whole day from 5:30 in the morning until 10:30 at night is taken up with something which helps time to move at a rather rapid pace. What a schedule! A typical day would go like this. We rise

at 5:30 and have about 20 minutes in which to get ready. We then go to chapel for morning prayers, meditation, and Mass. Mass is over at about 7:10 and we then proceed to breakfast.

Morning classes run from 8 to 12, and each class is one hour long. You have to be in your room studying if you don't have class during one of the periods between 8 and 12. At 12, we have a private examination of conscience for 10 minutes and then have dinner.

Afternoon classes are from 1 to 4 o'clock. During this time we have to keep silent during class and study periods. From 4 to 5:30, we have recreation. We can play some sports, do voluntary work (or sometimes required work), or just go for a walk on the grounds. From 5:30 to 6, we pray the rosary and do private spiritual reading. Supper is at 6 o'clock and night prayers at 7. From 7:15 to 9, we have classes and study. A bell rings at 9:15, and we have to keep silent until after breakfast the next morning. From 9:15 until we go to bed at 10:30, we can do anything we want. I usually pray a rosary, do some reading in the Bible, or any other reading pertaining to the faith.

On Saturday, we have classes until noon. Saturday afternoon is free time from 1 to 5:30. During this time, I usually study, work on a term paper (four written so far), read, or play some sport. We can also watch television if we want to. Saturday night is free from 7:15 to 10. We have a movie every two weeks and the other week I usually read or get in some discussion.

We get up at 7:15 on Sunday mornings. We have morning prayers and meditation from 7:40 to 8. Breakfast is at 8 and we are free until Mass at 11. I usually study during this time. Dinner is at 12, and then we are free from 12:30 to 5:30. I usually study and get some exercise during this time. From 5:30 to 6, we have rosary and benediction, supper at 6, night prayers at 7, and study period from 7:15 to 9. Then on Monday, the routine then starts all over again.

Well, it's time to stop my writing now and prepare for bed. Getting up fairly early requires going to bed rather early. Not much night life for a seminarian.

March 4

The food is good here, and the teachers are nice and very intelligent. (Hmmm. Why did I write about the food first?) The students are just out of this world. They sure have gone out of their way to make friends with me and make me feel like one of them. They are just ordinary guys with all the likes and dislikes of most young men our age, except that they've dedicated their life to the highest goal attainable by man. I really feel humble being among them and being a part of them.

I wonder what is going on at my old college. I assume the Newman Club is still perking because of its leadership. I'm anxious to hear some news from my friends, but I know college students don't like to write much when they have to, much less when they don't. I sure miss our group and all the good times we had together. Everyone is in my thoughts and prayers every day, and I hope to see everybody before too long. I'll be home next summer and maybe, if God's willing, we'll get to see each other.

God never ceases coming to us; He never ceases acting in us at every moment of our lives, not only invisibly through His grace, but visibly through the action of creatures with which we come in contact and which come in contact with us. Furthermore, in all this coming into us and in all this operating in us, God has a purpose.

His purpose is that He may make us more like Him; that He may give us an opportunity to unite our will to His, thus emptying us of another grain of sand of self-will, and becoming more sanctified still. His purpose is that by our uniting our will to His we may thus glorify Him, and as a result of that, achieve a greater share of His happiness which He will for us for all eternity. That is God's general purpose and plan for us in all the events and circumstances of our life.

Philip E. Dion, C.M.

March 27

Time is certainly passing fast for me. It just doesn't seem as though two months has already passed. We're kept so busy here. That must be the reason for the quick passage of time. I just heard from my best friend at my old college, and was glad to hear that everything is going well for the Newman Club. His letter sure brought back old memories. I probably won't recognize the old place if I ever get back there.

He told me about some things that aren't working out for him, but I guess life is not meant to be easy for anyone. Only the ones who know heartache, disappointment, and setbacks can really appreciate life. These past two months have been very difficult in a way for me. I have had to completely readjust my thinking and feelings and am still far from adjusted. Some days I feel sadness to the very depths of my being. In these times, however, I feel very close to Christ. It is as though I'm sharing in his suffering, and then realize why I'm in a seminary.

It's amazing how much you find out about yourself when you take a deep look. Here at the seminary, we have plenty of time to do this. That is one of the hardest things about the seminary. You look at yourself and you study the ideal. When you compare the two, you realize how far you fall short. You must then set about the task of achieving the ideal. This is not done overnight - it takes a lifetime. You have to get rid of every bit of selfishness and, in a way, die completely. Your old self must be put to death in order that Christ can remake you in the way you should be. Of course, you fail miserably every day, but you must never give up. This constant effort is very trying.

A lot of people think that the minute a person enters a seminary, this person is made holy and takes on a holy character automatically. Far from true! A person still retains his identity, and all his faults and habits (good and bad) follow him right in. That's where the remaking comes in.

Also, some people think that people in the religious life feel joyous and happy all the time. Just the opposite. There's a lot of discouragement and sometimes utter distaste for the religious life. At times, I can't pray and nothing seems to work out. These are the crucial times in the religious life. To continue

to do your duty, even though distasteful, is most important. Then you are doing it for the love of God, purely and simply, and not for the consolations you receive. These are some of the things which make this life difficult but very rewarding.

Ambrose himself I believed to be a happy man, as the world judges such things, because so many powerful persons showed him honor. His celibacy alone appeared to me to be a hard thing. But what hopes he held, what struggles against temptations arising from his exalted station, what comforts amid adversities.

St. Augustine

April 17

I just finished writing my best friend and was glad to hear from him that things are working out now for him and his girlfriend. Patience is one of the most sublime of virtues and I think he's shown it to a good degree. It usually pays off in a good and wonderful way. God always answers our prayers in a way that will best benefit us. We have to avoid getting discouraged when things seem to be going wrong. That is the time when they are usually going most right.

It is strange what 2½ months in a seminary can do to you. These past months have really had a profound influence on me, and my life will never be the same, no matter what happens. It is really hard to explain.

You really see yourself as you really are, and you come to realize how utterly helpless a person is without God's help. You no longer look at God as someone who is far off, but as a personal friend who walks side by side with you every minute of the day. Some days, God seems far off and you feel all alone. Of course, you know with your intellect that He is close by, but you do not feel it. These are very trying times because there is no human person to turn to. Outside the seminary, you can turn to a close friend, your girlfriend, your wife, or some other person. Here, there is just you and God. He is only purifying you, making you act solely out of love for Him. In time, he returns and everything is all right again.

In prayer we express to God our feelings, our thoughts, our sentiments. We wish to love and to be loved, to be understood and to understand. Only God loves us perfectly, with an everlasting love. In prayer, we open our hearts and our minds to the God of love. And it is prayer that makes us one with the Lord. Through prayer we come to share more deeply in God's life and in his love.

August 10

Much has happened in my life since February. I survived four months at the seminary which is saying a lot. It must not be too bad, though, because I am anxious for school to start again next month. It'll be the minor seminary for one more year before entering the major seminary. My first three weeks of the

summer were spent in trying to teach fourth-grade students some religion. We had school for three hours every day and three hours spent in trying to teach nine-year-olds is equivalent to a full day's work. But it was a wonderful experience in which a lot was learned about the workings of a young child's mind. Also, it was the first time I have been called "Mister" which made me feel somewhat majestic, which is not good in a seminarian, but which I could not help.

Then it was construction work up until last Wednesday when our work ran out. I am currently helping to tear down an old building our church used as an auditorium. This is free labor since our parish is poor. It gives me a good feeling to be doing something worthwhile for no pay. We should finish Saturday. The last month of my vacation will probably be spent in reading, some studying, and some work around the house. My finances are limited which, in turn, limits my traveling ability, so I won't be visiting out-of-town friends before leaving for the seminary.\

And that is what meditation is all about. The whole point, then, is to listen, but to listen in a new and special way. It is to listen as if my whole life depends on it, and it does. It is to listen in trust, in openness, in surrender. It is to listen to God in utter simplicity without defending myself against Him in any way. To listen like that, I find I have to be more than silent. I have to wait until I become still, until I become totally quiet. That stillness, in faith, in hope, is the very stillness of God. That is what it means, I think, to put one's self in the presence of God. I am still. But it seems I do not create the stillness. I empty myself of noisy chatter; I lay down the preoccupations of the day, and the stillness comes upon me.

Father Thomas Kane

August 21

Today I was doing some reflecting on my summer. It was a very difficult one for me. I am still on shaky ground and will probably be for some time to come. A person does not forget all the good things of the past overnight. The religious life is a demanding one, more than I thought.

However, I am very anxious to return to the seminary. This will be my last year here and then it will be the major seminary next year. Seven long years left. Seems like a long time.

I wish I would have heard some news about the girlfriend I left behind last January. There's been no news about her since leaving college. I remembered her birthday, but did not send a card because of not knowing the situation there or where to send it. I still miss her a lot. That has been my heaviest cross so far. One thing about the religious life, you receive many wonderful graces, but you pay a tremendous price for everything you receive. It does make you feel closer to God, though.

But it is not easy to pray when the mind is troubled, when sorrows and trials assail it, when fatigue and worry take their toll, when the daily round of

duties and the pressures of time seem to overwhelm. A few minutes, even a few moments, of calm collected prayer is the ideal source of strength for these circumstances. But this kind of recollected meditative prayer frequently is not possible, and we need to have recourse to familiar prayers or devotions that we know by heart, and to which we naturally turn.

Bishop Robert F. Joyce

September 20

Well, I am back at the seminary - back with mixed emotions. I am glad to be back in a way, and yet in another way, not so glad. The first couple of years in a seminary are really rugged. But as time goes on, things get easier.

One of the most difficult things to live with in a seminary is the fact that you might have to leave at any time for any of numerous reasons. One day at a time. That is the old axiom around here.

I have 20 hours of class work a week this semester. Some of my classes are: Social Problems, Social Encyclicals, Scriptures, and Modern Philosophies of Education. Enough to keep me quite busy. These courses require so much outside reading.

Yesterday was my birthday. Time is really flying now.

October 5

Things have settled down here, and with the combination of classes, term papers, study, and spiritual exercises, I am kept quite busy. Of course, I would not be content if not busy.

I did write a letter to my best friend and asked him to do me a special favor. There's been no word from my former girlfriend since leaving last January. This was an understanding. However, as the months have passed by and Christ has become more and more a part of my life, I have begun to see things, or at least try to see them, as He sees them. Old friendships and people, in general, were dear to Christ, and so they are with me. I asked him to tell her about me wanting to correspond with her. She could either write to me and send her address or just send her address and I would write first.

If she would rather not correspond, though, I would understand perfectly, and she will still remain in my prayers. But it is very important for me. It is difficult to explain. I have found something very wonderful here, and I want to share it with others, especially those who are near and dear to me. I asked him to tell Father Sam to please remember me in his prayers, especially asking God to give me the grace to persevere and to attain the deep holiness of life which is so necessary for me to carry on His work.

Along came one of my former pupils, a pretty Bengali girl from a good family. Her name was Shubashini. "I want to become one of your Sisters," she said.

"You are going to have to renounce everything, even yourself," I told her.

"Your life will have to be one long self-denial. Think it over!" I looked at her carefully. The qualities I was looking for in my future missionaries were in the first place health of mind and body, the ability to learn, common sense, and above all, and natural gaiety and unfailing good humor. Shubashini had all of these.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

October 22

When my studies seem especially hard, and the priesthood seems a very long way off, I remember something Father Sam told me.

When he was in the same situation in the seminary, he would tell himself, "I was called to the priesthood - not the seminary." He understood, however, the necessary of the seminary for his preparation for the priesthood.

It's the same for an athlete. They get into a sport for the competition, but the training is a necessary step in preparing them for that competition. And the training is usually harder than the competition itself. I know the priesthood is not an easy life, but at least priests have the sacramental grace of Holy Orders which seminarians do not.

Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there are who enter that way. How narrow the gate and close the way that leads to life? And few there are who find it.

Matthew 7: 13-14

November 3

Here it is the beginning of November, and we're already making plans for the Christmas holidays. My plans are to work at a department store for the two weeks, but as of now it is not definite.

Today is my old roommate's birthday, and I sent him a card. It went to his home town, but I presume his parents will forward it to him. Remembering the party we gave him last year and thinking of all the people who were there, I feel very lonely and empty. I really do miss the old group. I especially miss the late-night card games, and watching old B-movies and making funny comments and wisecracks during them.

Time is passing so fast here at the seminary. The main reason for that is that they keep us so busy. From the time we get up until the time we retire at night we are active, either in studies or spiritual exercises. We do get some time for thought and reflection. Last week we had a four-day retreat. Nothing but silence and reflection. These are times of tremendous grace.

Another way in which growth in prayer brings us to more self-awareness is an increased sensitivity to the action of God in our lives. As we relate more personally to God, we know more clearly how He relates to us, and so find ourselves better able to discern what will strengthen or weaken this relationship. Gradually, as we come into still greater union, this discernment sharpens and focuses.

Sister Marie Beha, O.S.C.

November 12

I am still happy here. It is a different kind of happiness from any I have ever experienced, though. It might be called it a happiness derived from suffering. This is not physical pain but mental pain, that interior desolation that seeps down into the very depths of your soul. The spiritual life is not a life of high emotion or high sentimentality. It is a life of cold deliberate will. No matter how you feel, you must always will to love God. This life is a constant series of pains which cleanse the soul of all its inordinate affections and make it more acceptable to God. As you go along you realize that you can do nothing without Him Who gives life, and that true success lies not so much in results but in purity of intention. A small hidden act done out of pure love for God has infinitely more value than a seemingly great act done for purely human reasons or motives.

This is the very meaning of the spiritual life. All things done solely out of love for God. When you have reached this point, then your love for God will overflow and will be manifested in love for other people. Of course, this love for God is not so easy to

obtain. It is a lifetime's work, and even then, the surface is barely scratched. But the knowledge of this reality, this potential - what you really are - is sometimes cause for moods of deep depression. You feel that you are just not living up to what you are capable of and in truth, what you are called to live up to.

But then, this is just another way or opportunity, if I may use that word, in which God shows his tremendous love and mercy. You try to live up to your potentiality and you fail. You realize your helplessness and you lift up your heart to God. And He then so tenderly and mercifully lifts you up out of these depths of despair, shares with you his Divine life (for this is what sanctifying grace is), and bestows abundant blessings on you. Thus our failures and discouragements are turned to true triumph.

When I stop and think about it, Christ's life on earth could be considered a "failure." He was accepted by very few. He wanted to give His love to mankind, but a handful accepted it. Then we have all the tremendous events of the Passion which were one failure after another. While he was on earth He did not see the fruits of His labors. Yet by doing all things out of pure love, His was the greatest triumph. Are not we all called to be other Christs?

Everyone knows that many people live a life wholly contrary to the laws of God and man, and still enjoy unusually good earthly benefits. It simply is not true that an evil life reaps its own evil reward on earth. Likewise, many unusually good people, trying to serve both God and their neighbor, suffer sorely during their pilgrimage in this world, and meet many apparently undeserved sorrows and trials. Only in the kingdom of eternity are final judgements of God made, and only there can full judgment and equity prevail. It is not necessary, and seems not to be God's plan, that good must be rewarded at once in this life, and evil immediately punished.

Bishop Robert F. Joyce

November 20

My last entry turned out to be a the lengthy dissertation on the spiritual life. But what I wrote applies not only to the spiritual life, but to life in general. This is true reality - the true meaning of life and of man.

Life means suffering, a share in the cross of Christ. Failure, discouragements, and disappointments are necessary and even to be desired. They have a way of purifying, of bringing out all the hidden forces of love and self-sacrifice. When we learn to accept these trials and sufferings and offer them to God, then we shall obtain true happiness and this happiness and love shall touch and affect all who come into contact with us, especially our loved ones.

As for myself, I have died a thousand deaths since leaving college. God wants to possess my whole mind, heart, and will. He is slowly putting my old self to death by means of these trials, failure, and disappointments. He is bringing down my pride and ego and will not be satisfied until they are completely dead and only then will He come to me and possess my soul completely. Only then will I be filled with the love of God which will overflow into love for other people. This is my calling as of now, to bring the love of God into the hearts of others.

The sad part is being so far from this potentiality. I fail so many times. Indeed, several times I almost quit the seminary out of despair and discouragement. Yet, God has always given me the grace to hang on. I pray that I may persevere at least until being sure that this life is definitely not for me. As of now, I feel that it is and am going to continue as long as I have the feeling of doing the will of God.

Peace of soul cannot come from himself, and more that than he can lift himself by his own ears. Help must come from without; and it must be not merely human help, but Divine. Nothing short of a Divine invasion which restores man to ethical reality can make man happy when he is alone and in the dark.

Bishop Fulton Sheen

November 28

Everything is running smoothly; time is passing by so terribly fast. I passed all my quarter exams and am still plugging away at the books. I haven't heard any word from my old girlfriend, so I guess she doesn't want us to write to each other.

It is a curious and tortuous contradiction to be totally guilty for your being, which you did not "do," and which cannot be forgiven for "being" as it is. One feels like a shell, empty, nothing. One is disappointed. One's spirit is raw. One's sense of presence has failed. There is an unlimited emptiness.
Father Kevin F. O'Shea, C.S.S.R.

December 4

I received a letter from my best friend today, and it brightened my day which had been rather melancholy. He says I am a source of inspiration to him. He should be more selective.

December 8

I was just thinking the other day how our lives can change so much in one year. Reflecting back on last year at this time when living at the Catholic Student Center, things were so different. I realize that time is so very important. Each moment means so very much because it is unique and once gone, will never be again. Moments pass by and words which should have been said to someone dear remains in the heart, never becoming the words which are necessary. Or some slight act or gesture of kindness, mercy, charity, etc. slips by never to be done, at least not at the moment which has just passed by, never to be realized again.

We seem to live out lives in some sort of coma, completely unaware of other people. We tend to look at people as objects (the man who brings the mail, or the man who fixes this or that), never quite penetrating this barrier to see in this person a unique individual, someone who never was before or will never be again, a being who is in reality another Christ.

Oh heck, here I go off on another tangent. I seem to have a knack for going off on some unrelated subject. Back to what I was talking about - time. It's hard to really comprehend all that has happened in the past year. For one thing, the year has passed so fast that it seems like yesterday when I was saying goodbye to everyone at the bus station. I have been a seminarian for almost one year, and to tell the truth, cannot really pass any judgement on that year. I feel that I have come to a much greater understanding of life, of myself, and of other people.

I think about last fall semester at college and all the wonderful moments

we had as a group. I also think of all the moments which slipped by, moments which should have been spent in acts of kindness and moments in which I should have given more of myself to others.

I never realized my selfishness before. I think of all the things that should have been said or left unsaid, things which would have brought happiness to others and made me more of a human person. But these moments have passed. They were unique; they came but once. It is rather sad in a way. I want to say to these moments, "Come back, give me another chance. I will really live you to the fullest if you give me another chance." But the moment says, "Too bad, you had your chance. I was unique, and you passed me by. You and your selfish ways, you both passed me by."

If I only knew what I know now. That seems to be the general case, does it not? We never seem to know the right thing at the right moment. Maybe it is because we are unaware of the moment because we are so intent on looking at ourselves.

Whatever it is, life is a series of moments, moments which are to be seized and to be squeezed until there is nothing left. While we are squeezing, we should be adding at the same time. Give and take? This seems to be the way of life. What an opportunity we have in this world.

Don't you see how in ordinary life even the most considerate children play with everything around them, and often pay no attention to what their father says? This does not imply a lack of love, or respect; it's the weakness and littleness proper to a child.

Look then: you are a child before God.

St. Josemaria Escriva

January 19

Christmas vacation was really nice, but I am glad to return to the seminary for a number of reasons. My life runs a lot more smoothly when I am here (especially in regards to my spiritual life). Also I am rather anxious to finish this year to be closer to home next year. And as each day passes, my goal is that much closer. So, I am glad to get back.

I visited my best friend during the Christmas holidays, and he finally told me some news about my old girlfriend. She got married on the rebound, only three months after my leaving for the seminary. He didn't want to tell me about it before, because of how he thought it might affect me in the early stages of my seminary life. I think he was right.

He told me that he tried to talk her out of it, or at least waiting a year to be sure of what she was doing, but temporary emotion ruled. I asked him if she was happy, and he said he didn't know. I think he does, but I didn't push the issue.

He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to God, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of this world, how he may please his wife.

St. Augustine

February 26

It's hard to believe that we have been back from Christmas for almost two months. A lot has happened during these two months. When we first came back, it was settling down to some hard, serious studying for final exams. Exams were difficult this year but I passed everything with fairly good marks. We started the second semester (we had one day off) with a bang. One course was added because of wanting to take a course under a particular priest who teaches it.

The archbishop from my best friend's diocese came here last Monday to recruit vocations for his diocese. Some of the students here are not attached to a diocese. He gave a talk Monday night and made a big impression on some of the students. My two closest friends here were accepted by him. If anyone deserves the priesthood, it is these two.

March 14

I wrote a letter to my parents, and asked them to please pray for me in regards to a special crises which I am now undergoing and which will affect my entire future as a seminarian, and in the long run as a priest. I will not go into it here.

By the confidence which I have in the Lord that He will help me to say something to relieve the great necessity which is experienced by many souls, who when they set out upon the road of virtue, and Our Lord desires to bring them into this dark night that they may pass through it to Divine union make no progress.

At times this is because they have no desire to enter it or to allow themselves to be led into it; at other times, because they understand not themselves and lack competent and alert directors who will guide them to the summit.

St. John of the Cross

March 19

Whenever I have doubts about my "worthiness" to become a priest, I

remember a story Father Sam told me about himself.

All through his seminary days, he had a deathly fear of hearing confessions. Just thinking about it, he would sometimes even make him sick to his stomach. He figured that the closer he came to taking his vows, the better he would feel about it.

It never happened. The night before he was to be ordained, he told his Spiritual Advisor that he couldn't go through with it. That day, his dread of hearing confessions upset him so much that he had thrown up twice. He figured that he wasn't meant to be a priest. His Spiritual Advisor told him to have faith and trust in God, be ordained, and God would take care of it.

He took that advice and was ordained the next day. He was then assigned as an Assistant Pastor to a country parish where he was relieved to have only a small congregation. Three days after he arrived, it was Saturday - and time for confession. He was sick to his stomach again that day, but surmised that at least there would probably be only a few people there, and he could get through it.

When he walked in the church, he was shocked to find what must have been half the congregation waiting for him. Unbeknownst to him, at the last Sunday's Mass the Pastor had told his congregation about him coming. He had suggested that they make him feel welcome and show their confidence in him by showing up for confession the next Saturday. Evidently, they were a very charitable parish, because half of them had showed up.

Father Sam said he almost fainted. He had to hear their confessions, though, and very reluctantly entered the box. He was in there for over two and a half hours, and when he came out, God had granted him a small miracle.

He went to the front of the church and knelt down in front of the altar. Even though there were still other people there saying their penance, he said out loud, "Thank you, Lord, for allowing me to hear and forget these people's sins."

As soon as he had left the confessional, he had completely forgotten every sin that had been confessed to him.

Never again was there the slightest trepidation about hearing confessions. In fact, he told me that when he visited the grotto at Lourdes, France, he would hear confessions for as long as eight hours straight, and then would feel completely refreshed on leaving the confessional.

Wow! What grace from having faith and trust in God!

Religious, therefore, should be humbly submissive to their superiors, in a spirit of faith and of love for God's will, and in accordance with their rules and constitutions. They should bring their powers of intellect and will and their gifts of nature and grace to bear on the execution of commands and on the fulfillment of the tasks laid upon them, realizing that they are contributing towards the building up of the Body of Christ, according to God's plan. In that way, far from lowering the dignity of the human person, religious obedience leads it to maturity by extending the freedom of the sons of God.

April 2

Where is the time going? It has been three months since Christmas time and we have only two months before we leave to go home for the summer. We

do get a week's vacation the week after Easter. I'm going to spend it at a Trappist Monastery in this state with a few of my fellow impoverished seminarians. Otherwise, it would be nice to go home. Oh well, just a few more weeks and I will be leaving here for good - with mixed feelings however. I will hate to leave all the close friends made, but will be glad to get back closer to home.

I have really been feeling good lately, getting plenty of exercise and eating well. That translates to about 15 pounds heavier than at Christmas - or was at least half of that gained during the holidays? I have got to continue in good health to be able to do the my work this summer.

My best friend wrote me about a small business venture he started, but it's slow going. The important thing is perseverance. Whatever we want to do in life, we have to work unceasingly towards it, and accept the failures in stride. Success usually comes with a heavy price.

April 6

Things (the crisis I mentioned earlier) are working out better for me. It is not totally solved, but I have found out a long time ago that God works slowly. He works through your human nature which can be perfected only through a slow, evolving process. The hardest thing in life, (or at least one of the hardest), is to learn to like ourselves. This means to look at ourselves, see out limitations and faults, and accept ourselves as we are, not trying to be something we are not. God has a wonderful plan for each of us and the more we conform to this plan, the more we become ourselves. And the more we become ourselves, the more human we become. Christ was the perfect human being, not just because He was God, but because he fit perfectly into the idea God the Father had of Him.

So the more of learning what God's concept of me is, what He wants from me as a unique individual, and the more conforming to this concept, this plan, then I am being more and more myself; more the person God wants for eternity.

When trying to be something else, then He really does not know me. What a terrible thought. That also applies to our material body. God wills that we should look as we do, that we should have all the unique attributes which differentiates us externally. So we should learn to love ourselves in our entirety. We are body and soul, and both are good in the sight of God. The body is the good and faithful servant to the intellect and will, and should therefore be accorded its true identity.

This is really something wonderful when you think about it. Each person unique, possessing some quality of God no one else has. Simply beyond human comprehension, but a truly beautiful thing though.

Well, I know myself better now and know what to expect more, so I do not go anymore into the deep moods of depression. More and more, I am learning how to accept failure. I am learning to laugh at myself more and more and reach out to others more. This is the way to happiness. NO other way. Painful, yes. Rewarding, yes, Accomplished quickly, NO. So, chin up; smile; thank God. Fill your heart with love, excluding no one; and let us follow that straight and narrow road to happiness.

Prayerful people are real people - down-to-earth and truly involved and very human. They pay a price, not in order to be divorced from reality but in order to live life fully.

Thomas H. Green, S.J.

May 18

We finished classes Monday and start final exams Friday. My whole grade in each course depends on the final since there's been no other tests this semester. That makes it hard in a way, because there is so much material to cover.

Frankly, there's a little worry about a couple of my courses and I am having the hardest time studying now. The strain of the past year is beginning to show. It is hard to believe that the year is over already. There's been so little accomplishment this year, it is rather discouraging. I am not looking forward to the summer that much, but need to get away from the books. The summertime is very trying, though, on someone who has not been in the seminary very long. This was learned from experience last summer. I am anxious to see my family and friends, as it has been almost six months.

My health is very good now. Around Eastertime, I was very sick with the flu and stayed weak for a long time, but my strength is back now. We have a new cafeteria here at the seminary and I have really been gaining weight - about twenty pounds since Christmas. In fact, it is going to be necessary for me to cut down on my food because of getting a "pot" belly. I really felt better when thinner.

We come now, to something that is much more difficult to talk about; it is also much rarer. To gather together the pieces we have already examined let us imagine a man who has lived through all that we have spoken of before, and who, in God's wisdom, is being led into this decisive battle. What would he look like as he stood upon the brink? He would be a man who had fought many long and often seemingly useless battles against his instinctive movement towards gratification. But, of course, they were terribly useful.

Further, things that he had become attached to had been taken away from him and he had struggled to see that as a gift from God's provident love. For example, let us imagine he had a gift for friendship, and then the commitments that ruled his life and the lives of his friends made them live physically separated. To be a friend in such a situation will cost something. A purgation is taking place.

There was that frightening time when he could no longer meditate and he just sat there waiting, not really understanding what was happening. But gradually that too became clearer. In the silence there was something deeper happening and he was content to wait and trust in the Father of Jesus.

Father Thomas Kane

July 14

This has been an unusual summer so far. I've been working to pay off my loan from the diocese, but still would not have the money to enter the major seminary next year without another loan. I now have my Bachelor's Degree and may look for a teaching job this fall in order to get ahead financially.

I do realize, however, that whatever I decide, I'm still in one of the first stages of really finding myself, of finding out not only what I want to do in life, but rather what God wants me to do and to be. At some time in the future, I will be out of the beginning stages of this development, but will always be in another stage of it for the rest of my life.

It is life on earth's major paradox, that we can never fully be what we should be, and never totally find what we are looking for.

So, in one aspect, our life becomes one long discouraging search - which can only end when we find God in Heaven.

My Lord God. I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Not do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Thomas Merton

EDITOR'S NOTE

This story is not over. It will only end when he is sure of being in the vocation which fulfills God's Plan for him - whether it be the priesthood, marriage, or the single life.