

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Mount St. Mary's Seminary Opening Mass

Thursday, 19th Week in Ordinary Time

Feast of St. Stephen of Hungary

Mount St. Mary's Seminary Opening Mass, Emmitsburg

Aug. 16, 2018

A Word of Welcome

Those of you who are new to the seminary will quickly learn that daily Mass homilies here at the Immaculate Conception Chapel are to be short, crisp, and focused.

Those of you who have been around for a while already know that when the archbishop comes the homilies are, shall we say, a bit longer. As to their focus and their crispness, that's another matter for another day.

This evening, however, short, crisp, and focused are the order of the day, so let's get right to it!

First, as Archbishop of Baltimore and Chancellor of Mount St. Mary's Seminary, I want to welcome back all of you who are returning for another year of formation.

Second, I want to warmly welcome those of you who are beginning your seminary studies here at Mount St. Mary's.

Please count on my prayers for this entire community and for each of you as you begin a new year of formation.

I'm proud to say that I'm an alumnus of this seminary and I'm grateful that it is

under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is blessed with a wonderful rector, an excellent faculty and a dedicated staff.

We are also blessed by the support and leadership of President Trainor and his team.

It is a privilege to do anything I can to foster this great center of priestly formation, the second oldest seminary in the United States and, arguably, the second largest.

A Difficult Moment

There can be no doubt that you begin your seminary studies at a difficult moment in the life of the Church.

This summer the news has not been good and it will not be good for some time to come.

The Grand Jury Report in Pennsylvania and the situation of Archbishop McCarrick have plunged the Church in the United States into crisis, a crisis that has also erupted in Chile, Australia and elsewhere.

This is not a mere public relations crisis. It represents a tsunami of moral failures - grave acts of commission and omission - that have justifiably bewildered and angered God's people and undercut the Church's evangelizing mission.

You've no doubt heard this from your family and friends. You talk about it among yourselves. The social media and the blogosphere are filled with it. Suggestions for new policies and procedures abound. Everyone has an elixir that will cure the wound in whole or in part.

Keeping One's Focus

The crisp and focused point of my homily is this: Don't get swept up in it. Don't lose your focus. Concentrate on formation, on becoming in God's grace the best priests you can be. Continue developing your life of prayer. Stay close to Jesus in the Eucharist.

Like Ezekiel, take your baggage as if into exile, i.e., the Sacrament of Penance. Somewhere in the Gospel Jesus tells us we're better off without our baggage! Tend to your own evangelization so that one day you will evangelize others. Be first a disciple so that one day you will be a missionary.

Study hard, imbibe and ingest the truth, beauty and goodness of the Church's faith, learn to make it your own, form a coherent picture of the faith, a coherent picture that will continue to develop and grow throughout your life.

Relate your studies to your life of prayer and your moral life, practice what Father Hans Urs von Balthasar called, 'theology on one's knees.' Try to see the relationship of prayer and study to pastoral needs with which one day, God willing, you will grapple.

Let your friendship with the Lord - his love for you and your love for him - open your hearts to healthy relationships and life-long friendships, for nothing develops the personality quite like true friendship, especially a capacity to forgive and to be forgiven, as we saw in the Gospel.

Through friendship with the Lord and friendships in the seminary community your persona becomes not an obstacle but a bridge to Christ.

Let prayer, study, and human formation culminate in pastoral charity. One day last week I was in a room full of priests and one of them asked how to evangelize the millennials, as if there is a secret formula for reaching this elusive demographic.

But there is nothing magic. Evangelizing isn't a matter of technique. It's all about being the sort of priest who is deeply authentic, and who knows and loves his people, listens to them, cares about them, teaches them, ministers to them, and walks with them along the way of salvation.

Conclusion

Finally, turn every day to Mary.

I've seen it time and time again: Mary has a special love for this place and she has a special love for those who study here for the priesthood. Stay close to Mary, ask her to intercede for you and for your classmates and do count on my prayers even as I ask you to pray for me now and again.

God bless you and keep you in his love!