

Monsignor Champion honored as seminaries mark alumni day

More than 120 priests and lay alumni of St. Charles Seminary in Charlestown, St. Mary Seminary on Paca Street and St. Mary's Seminary and University in Roland Park gathered on the latter's campus Oct. 22 for the annual Alumni Day.

With alumni priests from as far back as the classes of 1946 and 1949, and special honors for the classes of 1954 and 1959 marking their 55th and 50th reunions, respectively, the ordained clergy present represented more than 3,000 combined years of service to the church, according to Sulpician Father Thomas Hurst, president-rector of St. Mary's Seminary and University, today's incarnation of the school to train priests for the Archdiocese of Baltimore and many of the nation's dioceses and archdioceses.

Reflecting on the theme of "one" from the readings of the Mass, Father Hurst in his homily talked about the significance of the number for the alumni and the seminarians at St. Mary's.

At a luncheon following the Mass, Monsignor Owen F. Champion, a 1966 alumnus of St. Mary Seminary and a priest of the Diocese of Nashville, Tenn., was honored with the seminary's Jean Jacques Olier Distinguished Alumnus medal. Shortly after his ordination, he began a career as a Catholic journalist, serving from 1971 to 1988 as editor of the Tennessee Register. Since 1988 he has been associate publisher of Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Inc. in Huntington, Ind. He has been extensively involved in Catholic publishing on the national and international level.

Father Hurst said, that in this Year for Priests, one particular aspect of Monsignor Champion's ministry for which he was honored was his work as editor of The Priest magazine, "a periodical which address important questions for the ministry and life of the priest today in an insightful, balanced and pastoral manner."

"In his apostolic exhortation 'Pastores Dabo Vobis,' the late Pope John Paul II drew particular attention to the necessity of ongoing formation and built his reflection in

this area on St. Paul's advice to Timothy, 'Rekindle the gift of God that is within you.' Monsignor Campion and The Priest magazine have worked hard to help each of us rekindle that gift in our lives," Father Hurst said in awarding the medal.

As he accepted the award, Monsignor Campion thanked Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien of Baltimore, who was the principal celebrant of the Mass and with whom he has been friends since he was an editor and the archbishop was a priest and communications director in the Archdiocese of New York. He also expressed gratitude to Bishop David Choby of Nashville, his own bishop, who concelebrated the Mass.

Monsignor Campion recalled the excitement of being at the seminary when the Second Vatican Council "was defining the notion of the church."

To the "young brother seminarians" present, Monsignor Campion said he envied them for what lay ahead of them. He encouraged them: "Be in and for the church and be personally with the Lord."