st. Thérèse of Lisieux said, “To put limits to our desires and our hopes means that we reject the infinite goodness of God.” I read this quote the first night of my eight-day silent retreat all IPF seminarians did the first week of June and, like I often do with quotes from saints, I read it and said, “O, that’s nice,” and moved on. However, the Lord was not ready for me to move on. Throughout my retreat, I kept coming back to this quote and the truth of the infinite goodness of God. As I prayed with it, the image of an ocean kept coming to me. I sensed the Lord continually inviting me to come deeper into the depths of his love and mercy for me. I began to realize once again, as I have several times throughout my life in my walk with Jesus, that the deeper I delve into the ocean of God’s love and mercy, the more and more I begin to realize just how deep the ocean really goes. I become conscious of the fact that there are only greater depths in this ocean of God’s love. There is no bottom, because if there was a bottom, then it wouldn’t be infinite, and if it’s not infinite, then it is not God’s love. Coming to a deeper understanding of this truth has brought me a deep sense of joy and hope, because I truly know that there is always more with God. I love Jesus Christ so much. He is my joy, my hope, my Savior, my King, my all and to know that as much as I love him now, there is still more. That realization brings me tremendous joy and hope. Coming to this understanding has been a great grace from this summer.

Anyone who knows me knows that I really want to be a priest. And now, after spending these weeks here in Omaha at IPF, I really, really, really want to be a priest. The Scripture verse that comes to mind to describe this feeling in me that I have experienced this summer is Luke 24:32, after the two disciples had encountered the Risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus, “Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” This summer, through classes, homilies, conferences, lectures and prayer times, the faculty here at IPF has done an outstanding job of opening up the truths of the priesthood for me, opening up the truths about the beauty of the celibate life. A few times, this burning in my heart even crossed over to a physical pain. I know this is a grace from the Lord. Throughout the summer, the Lord has increased in me this great desire to be not just a good priest, but a holy priest: A priest that is a true shepherd like Jesus, The Good Shepherd, a priest that is a humble spiritual father to his children and a priest whose heart is like that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that burns for souls. A wise priest once said, “If God is calling you to be a priest, you would be a fool to say no.” This quote has stayed with me this summer, and while I’m not a priest yet, my experience this summer has helped me realize in a deeper way just how true this quote is. I am so thankful the Lord has given me the grace to not be a fool and to say yes to this remarkable calling of the priesthood.

I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to all who work the support of this wonderful ministry. Because of the work of IPF, seminarians like me have the opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ on a deeper level and to be formed into the kind of priests who will continue to build up the Kingdom of God and set this world on fire for Jesus Christ.

More on the summer seminarian program on page 7.
Dear Friends,

As Pope Benedict opened the “Year for Priests” on June 19th, he offered a simple yet direct message that helped inaugurate this wonderful time of grace. In the midst of that homily, he spoke some words that resonated deeply with all of us at IPF:

Certainly, to be ministers at the service of the Gospel, study and careful, ongoing pastoral and theological formation are useful and necessary, but even more necessary is that “knowledge of love” which can only be learned in a “heart to heart” encounter with Christ.

Yes, priests need to be formed in so many ways, but the “heart to heart” encounter with Christ is “even more necessary.” The mission of IPF focuses on providing opportunities for seminarians, priests and seminarians to experience such encounters with Christ. In this light, I want to share with you some activities of the Institute that are helping to accomplish this mission.

Once again, our summer program for seminarians welcomed a record number: 174 seminarians filled Swanson Hall on Creighton’s campus for 10 grace-filled weeks. And, at the end of the summer, IPF played a prominent role in the Serra International Convention held here in Omaha. The convention allowed both local and international Serrans to hear about the mission of IPF.

It has been a busy and grace-filled fall for the IPF staff. Deacon Jim Keating hosted seminary faculty members for an academic seminar whose goal was to help faculty integrate prayer and the spiritual life with their teaching. Fr. John Horn, S. J., Kathy Kanavy and Deacon Jim Keating presented an all-day workshop at the beginning of the National Vocation Directors Convention held in Newark at the end of September. Also at the end of September, I offered a presentation on formation in chaste celibacy at a convocation which took place at St. John’s Seminary, Boston. Fr. George Aschenbrenner, S. J., has taken up residence at the Gonzaga High School Jesuit community in Washington, D. C.; he is looking forward to sabbatical time to work on some new writing projects.

Looking ahead: the 2010 Symposium will be held at St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, from March 11-14. Symposium talks will focus on the implications of the New Evangelization for priestly formation. Mr. Ralph Martin will be the keynote speaker.

As you read through this newsletter, we invite you to thank God for the graces we have received and we ask for your prayers for our future endeavors. At the same time we thank all of you for your continuing support of our mission. You are helping us to offer the “heart to heart” encounters with Christ that priests and future priests need if they are to help their parishioners encounter Him that way as well.

Sincerely in the Lord,

Rev. Richard J. Gabuzda, Executive Director
Seminarian Spiritual Directors Fund

Through the generosity of Tom and Jane Werner of Omaha, the Institute has created a new "Seminarian Spiritual Directors Fund." The photo shows the check being delivered to the Institute by Fr. Michael Gunogell, the pastor of the Werners' home parish, St. Cecilia's Cathedral in Omaha. The Werners had set aside money in the care of their parish to be used for seminarians. When the Werners learned about IPF's training of seminarians and the work of the Spiritual Directors, it was discerned that their donation would serve as seed money for the new fund.

Werner, an active member of his parish's Council of the Knights of Columbus, is hopeful other Knights from across the country as well as their Councils will gain knowledge of the Institute and the fund and prayerfully discern to support it financially. "The Knights have always been a strong defender of the priesthood and generous supporters of seminarians in formation. My hope and prayer is that other Knights will learn about the work of IPF and will want to support the spiritual training of seminarians as I do," Werner said.

As noted by IPF's Executive Director, Fr. Richard Gabuzda, the one-on-one spiritual advice from spiritual directors enables the seminarians to fully receive and pay attention to the presence of God in their hearts and lives. It is the "golden thread" that weaves throughout and binds together all aspects of the spiritual formation program.

"I was excited to hear of the plans for the building," Dan said. "For many years, the Institute has conducted Training Programs in Spiritual Direction in Austin, Texas, and presently at Mundelein Seminary near Chicago. Three one-week intensives are offered each year for three years. There are currently 73 priests in formation to become Spiritual Directors with others registered for the next three-year cycle which will begin in 2011. During the summer, the Institute also runs a course to refresh previously trained Spiritual Directors.

If you would like additional information about the fund or to make a donation, please contact Tom Pogge at 402-280-3528 or tpogge@creighton.edu.

Limited Window to Make IRA Distributions

IPF is grateful for the many generous donors who support the Institute through their financial gifts. The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 allows individuals age 70 ½ or older to transfer any amount up to $100,000 from a traditional or Roth IRA directly to IPF without claiming the transfer as income. The withdrawal must come from the IRA administrator. Gifts must be completed by December 31, 2009. For further information or to take advantage of this opportunity, please contact your financial planner or Tom Pogge, 402-280-3528 or tpogge@creighton.edu.

New from IPF Publications

We live in a culture of distraction, making it very difficult to hear God's voice and respond with courage. Fr. Michael Najim's book, Radical Surrender: Letters to Seminarians, will assist vocation directors and seminary formators in helping seminarians recognize the true voice of God and rightly discern their vocation. Seminary formation must be interiorly appropriated; in other words, formation will be fruitful only if the seminarian allows Christ to transform his heart. Radical Surrender: Letters to Seminarians is a unique resource for all interested in the spiritual and human formation of the next generation of priests. Each vocation director will want to give Radical Surrender to the men under his care and every seminarian will want to have a copy with him while praying in chapel or in the quiet of his room. Radical Surrender also will be of great assistance to the seminarians' experience of ongoing spiritual direction.

To order any item from IPF Publications, please call 877-263-1263 or order online at http://faithmarket.net/
A
t the 2009 annual Serra International convention held Aug. 27-30 in Omaha, IPF’s Fr. Richard Gabuzda, Fr. John Horn, S. J., and Kathy Kanavy participated in a panel presentation titled “Projecting the Priestly Identity in the 21st Century.” The convention also featured IPF’s Deacon James Keating, Director of Theological Formation, who spoke on the role of priests as parishioners’ spiritual fathers. The convention, drawing more than 500 attendees from across the U.S. and twelve foreign countries, provided an opportunity for Serrans around the world to learn about IPF’s work and celebrate their shared missions. Serra International “fosters and promotes vocations to the Catholic priesthood and religious life, and encourages its members to fulfill their own Christian vocations to service.” IPF’s work directly supports the priesthood.

The three Omaha-Council Bluffs Serra Clubs hosted the convention. His Excellency Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York, provided the keynote address and presided at the closing Mass. Archbishop Dolan encouraged Serrans to build strong families to ensure a strong priesthood.

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In the early fall of 2009, seven theologians from various seminaries around the U.S. (Kenrick-Glennon, St. Patrick’s, Mount St. Mary, Pontifical College Josephinum, and St. Charles) gathered at IPF on the Creighton campus to deepen and explore their vocation as seminary professors. Pope Benedict XVI caught the crux of the theme of this seminar when he taught that:

Theology must be joined with spirituality; indeed, only in this way can it be profound and effective. The demand for a scientific method is not sacrificed when theological research is carried on in a religious spirit of listening to the Word of God. Spirituality does not attenuate the work of scholarship, but rather supplies theological study with the correct method so that it can arrive at a coherent interpretation. Theology can develop only with prayer. This is a road that is worth traveling to the very end.

– (October 6, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI)

In this spirit, the seminar integrated both academic discussion with prayer and contemplation. The schedule of the seminar gave the participants time for silence and also time for contemplative reflection upon the research that each theologian shared. The contemplative schedule of the seminar was as important as the content of each theologian’s presentation. Theological ideas were shared that deepened the themes of a previously attended IPF retreat, while keeping the critical approach to theology well grounded in a contemplative reflection upon the Paschal Mystery. The fruit of this gathering will be a book of essays that invites other seminary theologians into the dialogue. Each essay will model a theology that is contemplative and carries practical application to seminary teaching. The book will contribute to IPF’s effort to concretize the Program of Priestly Formation, which envisions spirituality to be the heart of seminary formation around which all other facets must be integrated.

Couples Retreat Scheduled

Each year IPF offers an eight-day, silent, directed retreat as part of the ten-week summer program for seminarians. This retreat is often a transforming experience. In hopes of offering the laity a similar experience, an IPF-sponsored Couples Retreat, led by Msgr. Bill Whelan, has been scheduled for March 24-28, 2010 at the Benedictine Retreat Center in Schuyler, Nebraska. Retreatants will receive the tools needed to deepen their prayer life and establish habits of daily prayer through talks, personal spiritual direction, and silence. Daily Mass, time for silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, and daily conferences will be available to retreatants.

A second Couples Retreat, also led by Msgr. Whelan, is being planned for September 29-October 3, 2010, in Reading, Pennsylvania. Registration is open to couples interested in deepening their relationship with Christ. For more information on either retreat, contact the IPF offices at 402-546-6384.

Have you visited the IPF website lately?

www.creighton.edu/ipf/