MISSION STATEMENT

The Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF) was founded to assist bishops in the spiritual formation of diocesan seminarians and priests in the Roman Catholic Church. The Institute responds to the need to foster spiritual formation as the integrating and governing principle of all aspects of priestly formation. Inspired by the biblical-evangelical spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola, this spiritual formation has as its goal the cultivation of a deep interior communion with Christ; from such communion the priest shares in Christ’s own pastoral charity. In carrying out its mission, the Institute directly serves diocesan seminarians and priests, as well as those who are responsible for diocesan priestly formation.

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BECOMING SPIRITUAL FATHERS

A Public Association of the Faithful in the Archdiocese of Omaha

Preacher to the Papal Household, Rev. Romaniere Castelamarese, OFM Cap., delivers his keynote address to the many symposium attendees.

“Spiritual Fatherhood: Living Christ’s Own Revelation of the Father” was the focus of a symposium, part of the 150th anniversary celebrations of The Pontifical North American College (Rome), which was co-sponsored by the College and The Institute for Priestly Formation. This eighth annual symposium by IPF on the spirituality and identity of the diocesan priest offered the college a time to reflect on and pray about the spiritual fatherhood priests are called to share with Christ in His mission in the world.

Along with daily hours of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and times for prayer and conversation, the symposium included five main presentations. In the first, Deacon James Keating, IPF Director of Theological Formation, encouraged us to “protest the mystery” of God’s love, as St. Joseph did in relation to Mary and Jesus, as spiritual sponsor and father. Many men discern and neglect their role as father, relegating fatherhood to a secondary place of importance after success and achievement. Instead of following this misguided trend, priests must see true fatherhood as a tremendous gift and the core identity that must be cultivated.

In the keynote address, Father Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., Preacher to the Papal Household, reflected on spiritual fatherhood according to the model of St. Paul. Particularly in a Post-Christian world, priests need an unabashed focus on Christ Himself. Like St. Paul, the priest as father begets children in Christ, awakening in them faith through the preaching of Christ’s death and resurrection. The father must also “form Christ” in each believer through continued education throughout their lives, especially by helping them enter into the mystery of the Eucharist. Having offered themselves with Christ in the Eucharist, priests must reveal His sacrificial love through holiness of life and true care for His people, elements integral to the fruitfulness of our mission.

Delving into the Gospel of John, Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Estevez of the Archdiocese of Miami explained that Jesus’ model of spiritual fatherhood requires priests first to be trusting sons. As Jesus the Priest lived out of His identity as Son, priests also learn to be fathers in their relationship with the Father in whose image they are made. Being sent in His name, the priest limns his deepest identity in identifying true fatherhood in a world that continues to hunger for it so deeply.

Sister Sara Butler, MSST, of St. Joseph’s Seminary in New York, beckoned symposium attendees to “reveal the heart of God.” As Jesus reveals the Father’s love in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the priest is called to reveal the Father, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Since it is only when a person feels loved that he or she has the courage to confess personal sins, priests must reveal God’s merciful love in their own persons. As priests give the Father a face, a voice, and a heart with a humble yet masculine bearing, others may truly see God’s mercy, receive forgiveness and enter life with the Father.

Father Timothy Hepburn of the Archdiocese of Atlanta spoke on the mission of spiritual fathers to uncover, acknowledge and foster charisms - or spiritual gifts - of the lay faithful. Throughout the weekend, symposium participants also benefited from the opportunity to pray with Fr. Kevin Scallon, CM and Sr. Bringe McNamara, OSC, who offered to the community their own spiritual gifts of intercessory and healing prayer.

Members of the College’s own faculty also spoke of their own experience of spiritual fatherhood. Father Joseph Hanefeld, one of the College’s spiritual directors, and Monsignor Robert Gross, Vice-Rector for Seminary Life, both shared inspiring stories of their own fatherhood in pastoral ministry. Through the symposium, the College community was blessed to enter more deeply into the mystery of God’s Fatherhood and hear Christ’s priestly call more clearly: ‘As the Father has sent me, so have I sent you.’

By Daniel Weiske, Seminarist from the Diocese of Duluth
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The Pontifical North American College Magazine
From Our Executive Director ...  

Dear Friends,

On June 19th of this year, Pope Benedict XVI will open the “Year of the Priest.” This special time, coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the death of St. John Vianney, patron saint of diocesan priests, will offer the whole world a chance to pray for and to highlight the mission of priests everywhere. We look forward to sharing in this time of grace and to responding to the Holy Spirit’s inspirations as we continue to help bishops in the spiritual formation of diocesan priests.

As you will see in the following pages, the Holy Spirit’s inspirations have led us most recently to Rome, where we co-sponsored with the North American College a symposium on the priest as “spiritual father.” The Holy Spirit has also helped IPF Publications blossom with several new productions, including a groundbreaking book by Donal Keating on the vocation of the seminary theologian.

All inspirations need practical help if they are to come into existence. And so it is with deep gratitude that we want to honor and thank all the many individuals and groups who have continued to support so generously the mission of IPF. We are aware that the times in which we live have caused economic hardship across the globe. Nonetheless, our generous benefactors have allowed us to offer the important programs which continue to call diocesan seminarians and priests to greater holiness. We are deeply grateful to you all of you.

With patience and thanks to God, I am happy to report that this summer we are witnessing a record number of seminarians in attendance at the ten-week program—174 seminarians from 73 different dioceses! Many of these dioceses are new, and many “returning” dioceses are sending in higher numbers.

During this upcoming “Year of the Priest,” pray for priests and seminarians you know, as well as those whom you have not yet met! Pray also for the Institute for Priestly Formation, that we remain faithful to the mission which has been entrusted to us. What a wonderful gift it would be if we could claim some “future St. John Vianney” as an alumnus of IPF.

Gratefully in the Lord,

Richard J. Gubazda
Executive Director

The Institute for Priestly Formation
2008 Summary of Activities

Honor Others with Gifts to IPF

Ordinations to the priesthood, special anniversaries, births, graduations, retirements and birthdays are all occasions of celebration. Consider honoring a loved one celebrating a special occasion with a financial gift to IPF. Remembering a deceased member of your family or a treasured loved one with a memorial gift to IPF is a wonderful way to honor them. A letter of acknowledgement with the amount kept confidential will be sent to the honored person or their loved ones. Donations can be one time or recurring on a monthly or quarterly basis. You may also make donations at www.creighton.edu/ipf/donate.asp. Supporting IPF financially is a compassionate way to assist in the spiritual formation of diocesan priests and seminarians in the Roman Catholic Church. IPF is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization and all gifts are deductible to the extent of the law.
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Pictured above is the site for the Institute's new Center for Priestly Spirituality, located on Omaha's St. Cecilia's Cathedral campus. The former Dominican convent has been removed. Work continues on detailed design plans for the Center. If you are interested in a concrete statement describing the Center and the funding needs, please contact Tom Pogue at pogue@omaha.edu or 402-280-5238.

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CELEBRATION OF PRIESTHOOD BANQUET
Mr. Christopher West was the keynote speaker at IPP’s annual Celebration of Priesthood Banquet in April.
Archbishop Ethen Francis Curtiss, Omaha, received the Pope John Paul II Service Award for his many years of service as a priest. Both are pictured here with IPP’s Fr. John Horn, S.J., Kathy Komany, and Fr. Richard Gubatza.

For more information or to order: IPPPublications.com or 1-877-263-1263

IPF PUBLICATIONS

Reeling on the Heart of Christ
Deacon James Keating, Ph.D.
$19.95 (Paperback)
‘Deacon James Keating’s Resting on the Heart of Christ is a marvelous account of the theologian’s call to arouse faith and help pass on wisdom in the Catholic seminary.’
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A SECOND HONEYMOON
As a priest for 19 years, the Spiritual Exercises were like a second honeymoon for my priesthood. I came to Omaha in search of new inspiration for my vocation and ministry. God lovingly led me back to experience the enduring worth of my original conversion and inspiration in fellowship. There was much harvesting and ample ears as I discovered the Lord who gave his choice wine for when what we have is dried up.
Fr. Joseph Wares
Diocesan of St. Petersburg.