Mount Angel Seminary celebrates 125 years as a SCHOOL OF THE LORD’S SERVICE
Dear Friends

As I begin this letter I feel a touch of nostalgia, having just journeyed down "memory lane" in the pages of the 1964 booklet that was published for the 75th anniversary of Mount Angel Seminary. Most of the personalities whose pictures fill the pages of that booklet are now long gone to their reward, but they are the ones whom generations of priests have remembered as their teachers, their personal mentors, their spiritual guides and their inspiration as they made their journey to priesthood at Mount Angel Seminary.

The ordination class of that jubilee year of 1964 is also shown in the booklet, and in the photograph of that year’s eleven ordinands I happily find myself included! Yes, that was 50 years ago, and as Fr. Paschal and I made plans for the celebration of our golden jubilee of ordination in May, Mount Angel Seminary was celebrating its jubilee too – now for its 125 years as a school of the Lord’s service!

These 125 years reach back to April 4 of 1889 when William H. Gross, the Archbishop of Oregon City, made a memorable announcement:

With a heart filled with gratitude, we announce the establishment of an institution for the severe training requisite for the priesthood. With deepest respect we most cordially invite their Lordships, the Bishops of the Pacific slopes, also to send to Mt. Angel Seminary young aspirants to the honors of the altar…. Let us all pray that Mt. Angel may indeed be worthy of its name, and from its beautiful summit send forth angels in flesh and blood to promote, as not even angels in heaven can do, glory of God on earth. May that sacred Mother, who merited to give to the world Him in whom all the glory, strength and grace of the priesthood have their source, earnestly bless and pray for Mt. Angel Seminary.

And so it has been for 125 years! In this century and a quarter, hundreds of men have spent time in the pastoral ministry on the plain. Fired with zeal to be channels of God’s abundant mercy and to proclaim his saving Gospel, they have walked among God’s people in the Name and in the Spirit of Jesus the priestly ministry on the plain. Fired with zeal to be channels of God’s abundant mercy and to proclaim his saving Gospel, they have walked among God’s people in the Name and in the Spirit of Jesus the

In this issue: Our Lady of the Angels elects new prior; Mount Angel Seminary celebrates 125 years; Pastoral formation begins on the Hilltop, ends in the community; The hope of the harvest is in the seed; Scholarship fund inspired by heroic Hungarian priest; Pope Francis appoints Mount Angel alumnus, teacher, as Auxiliary Bishop.
Our Lady of the Angels elects new prior

In April, the Abbey’s mission in Cuernavaca, Mexico, elected one of its own Mexican monks as prior, Fr. Evagrio Póntico López Álvarez, OSB. The subprior, Br. Hildebrando Castro, OSB, will assist Fr. Evagrio in leading Our Lady of the Angels through a three-year transition toward independence. Fr. Konrad Schaefer, OSB, who has served as prior for 20 years, will remain in Mexico and continue to serve as a link between Mount Angel and the priory.

“Twenty years ago, in his characteristic spirit of obedience and generosity, Fr. Konrad Schaefer, OSB, agreed to interrupt his experience at Mount Angel Abbey in order to serve the Cuernavaca community with his many talents,” said Abbot Gregory Duerr, OSB. “His wise leadership as prior has brought the community to the present significant point in its history. Now, I believe the community will continue to thrive under the pastoral leadership of Prior Evagrio and Subprior Hildebrando.”

The primary work at Cuernavaca is Benedictine hospitality. The monks provide rest and retreats to missionary groups who work with the poorest of the poor, to diocesan and religious priests, to nuns and religious, and to lay persons who are seeking God. They welcome and offer food and clothing to the needy people who continually come to their door; many locals have been touched by the cartel violence that plagues the area, and there is a continual need for listening, consoling, blessings and prayer. The monks also grow and produce coffee, as well as citrus fruits and avocados, and their homemade granola, yogurt, honey and candles draw visitors. Our Lady of the Angels was founded as a daughter community of Mount Angel in 1966.

March 19 is the traditional time when the swallows are supposed to return to Capistrano, and March 20 is the time when postulants come to Mount Angel Abbey. This year we welcomed three new candidates. The first is Br. Joseph Klange. Joseph is 35 years old; he came to us from Florida, where he managed operations at a video production company. Br. Marvin Ramos, 48, is from Manila, Philippines. He has a background in directing human resources. I always think that anyone in that field should get a fistful of purple hearts before he even starts. Br. Stephen Cox, who just turned 23 a day or so after he arrived, is from Concord, Calif. He has considered a religious vocation since his early youth.

The old bells – the four that we used before the bell tower was built – are gone. We donated them to Saint Edward’s in Keizer, and on April 9 they were hauled away. I’m glad Saint Edward Parish is getting them, but their removal pulls at the heartstrings a little. I can remember how, as a child, we would come up on Sundays to visit Fr. Luke and Br. Ben, and before going home we would swing around and watch the fraters ring the bells. Later I became one of the bell ringers, and inevitably there were spectators watching me. Sigh. … Pray for us as we do for you.

Mount Angel Seminary named Rev. Paschal Cheline, OSB, the recipient of its highest honor, the Lumen Gentium award. Fr. Paschal is a much-loved monk who came to the Abbey at age 14, studied at the seminary, and became a priest and professor of art history, literature and liturgy. He has served in numerous positions, including dean of formation, vice-rector of the Seminary College, spiritual director and executive director of the Abbey Bach Festival, and has also offered retreats. The award recognizes Fr. Paschal’s 50 years of devoted service, his desire for God and his love of learning.
The SS Columbia was headed north from San Francisco, carrying a small band of monks and nuns in search of a new home. One of its passengers, Fr. Adelhelm Odermatt, OSB, had recently written a nostalgic letter to his abbot at Engelberg Abbey in the mountains of Switzerland, saying, “I hunger and thirst for mountains, for during seven years in America I have not yet seen a decent hill.” But Oregon, he wrote, “is said to be a kind of Paradise, if one can speak of such a thing on this earth.”

The morning after their arrival, Fr. Adelhelm’s sermon created almost as much of a sensation as his black beard. The long-bearded monks were given a blessing by Archbishop Francis Blanchet, who had established the Church in Oregon, and they soon found their new home – at the foot of a fir-clad mountain, a place where Native Americans had worshipped their own Great Spirit. The locals warned that the incessant winter rains turned the valley into a “frog pond,” but Fr. Adelhelm countered, “That does not permit a missionary zealous for souls to be discouraged.”

German Catholics in the nearby town of Fillmore – soon to be renamed Mt. Angel – were so eager to have the monks as neighbors they pledged a cow and $1,200 toward a monastery within the space of two days. More cows were to follow.

In 1882, Mount Angel Priory was founded. A mere five years later, the pioneer monks opened Mount Angel College, and in 1889, Archbishop William Gross, CSsR, of the Diocese of Oregon City – later renamed the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon – asked the monks to establish a seminary. Breaking with academic tradition, the Benedictine monks chose to honor their namesake and opened their doors, not in the autumn, but on March 21, the Feast of St. Benedict.

And then a story began to unfold on this holy Hilltop. It would be told in many chapters. Between 1887 and 1979, the monks would open a preparatory high school, a seminary high school, a seminary college and a school of theology. As the Church’s needs changed, so did the educational programs at Mount Angel. The school would go through different metamorphoses, faces and buildings would come and go, and the monks would face hardship and setbacks. And yet they would show remarkable resilience.

Through two devastating fires, two world wars, depressions and recessions, Vatican II, the gradual secularization of society, and the challenges and blessings of a 21st-century, globally connected, highly diverse Church, monks and rectors and teachers and students have kept the faith. In a region known for its lack of religious affiliation, they pursued a love of learning animated by the search for God and enriched by the Benedictine charism.

Mount Angel Seminary – now the oldest and largest seminary in the West – has been in existence since 1889 and has played an integral role in the development of Catholicism in the Pacific Northwest and beyond. The school has never wavered in its central mission, the education and formation of men for the priesthood.

Mount Angel Seminary celebrates 125 years as a SCHOOL OF THE LORD’S SERVICE 1889–2014

An hour before midnight on a rainy October night, four Portland priests stood on a wharf peering out into the dark, waiting to welcome the first Benedictines to the West Coast of America.
1882
Benedictine monks from Engelberg Abbey in Switzerland, led by Fr. Adelhelm Odermatt, OSB, established a monastery at the foot of the Hilltop, naming it “Mount Angel” after their monastery in Switzerland. Within 45 days of their arrival, they began to chant the Divine Office, which has been offered in an unbroken succession for 132 years.

1887
The monks opened Mount Angel College and a preparatory high school.

1889
Archbishop William Gross, CSsR, of Oregon City asked the monks to establish a seminary to train “aspirants to the honors of the altar.” The financial outlay was enormous and the school too new and untried to attract wealthy donors, so the monks built Mount Angel Seminary and untried to attract wealthy donors. In 1889, the first three bachelor’s degrees were awarded.

1893
The community began plans for a new monastery building on the top of the hill. As the building took shape over the next five years, it became the daily habit of students and faculty to walk up and inspect progress.

1898
The seminary enrolled a record 36 seminarians. The enrollment lists began to feature the names of future leaders in the Pacific Northwest. The first bachelor’s degrees were awarded. Students, “from the biggest to the smallest,” helped the monks as they desperately tried to save books and furniture, but much was lost.

1901
On Christmas Eve, the entire community took possession of the new monastery, college and seminary. Constructed of basalt stone quarried on-site, the new building was five stories high, and from its windows one could see a green-mosaic panorama stretching out in every direction.

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1915
A “fine boulevard for the automobiles to spin over” was being constructed from Mount Angel Depot to the base of the Abbey hill, and in 1917, the first automobiles chugged up the new cement road to the monastery. The road would bring new students, along with “graduates who are now clergymen laboring in the vineyard of the Lord.”

1925
Mount Angel Seminary became the first independent college to be accredited by the Northwest Association of Colleges and Universities.

1926
In September, a second fire destroyed the monastery, seminary, church, college, gymnasium and sisters’ home. The wind whipped the flames until the Abbey became a giant inferno, visible for miles.

1929
Student writers for The Pacific Star expressed gratitude to “Brother Benedict,” who installed the first radio on the Hilltop, allowing them to hear sports and musical concerts.

1933
The school gained four-year accreditation from the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools.

1929–2014
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“Mr. Angel was about six years old and I was just turned fifteen when first we made each other’s acquaintance in September, 1890. … After forty years my memory of it is still fresh and vivid, still dear and delightful.

“It was on a clear, calm starry evening that I came to know Mt. Angel. … In those days, a wagon transported the students, old and new, from the depot to the school. I was one of three lonely Souls that arrived by the little train … I took passage in the wagon and trundled noisily and none too comfortably over the planked highway that connected the college with the town. … I vowed by the stars that I would study mightily …

“Dispersed through the land are many former ‘boys’ of Mt. Angel now – like me – gone gray, and far away in years and miles from that scene of their joys and adventures.”

— Alphonse G. Keenan, Director of the Apostolic Bureau of the National Council of Catholic Men, The Pacific Star, 1929

Concrete was poured for the new monastery, which would house seminarians as well as monks. College classes were reopened within a year.

1929
Aerial view of the Hilltop during construction of the current monastery, 1927

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1945  
The Abbey bells rang in celebration of victory in Europe, and the monks and seminarians gathered for thanks and praise.

1947  
Burdened with growing costs and complexity, the monks made the painful decisions to close the lay college and focus on the seminary, which began a period of steady growth.

1951  
Abbot Gregory Duene, OSB, entered Mount Angel as a 14-year-old boy. Fr. Paschal came a year later, “which means we’ve been good friends for many years,” Abbot Gregory says. They played muddy ball games on the mall, which was then a boulder-strewn field, and Fr. Augustine DeNoble, OSB, who entered the school in 1949, remembers hiking down through the countryside to the Abiqua River on weekends.

1957  
A handful of Chinese and Vietnamese seminarians found their way from “the Orient” to Mount Angel, heralding the beginning of what would eventually become an international student body.

All three monks recount some of the happiest days of their lives.

“My intellect came alive here,” remembers Fr. Paschal. “My teachers inspired me to write well and speak well.” His lifelong love of art history, which he later taught at Mount Angel, grew from a teacher’s assignment. “Most importantly,” Abbot Gregory says, “the Hilltop became a place of encounters with God.”

1960  
On Vocations: What Does Life in a Seminary Mean?

“In the seminary everyone plays [sports]... Like anywhere else, there are some in the seminary who are good, and then there are others who can’t catch anything but a cold...”

“It is very strange sometimes to hear what made different men come to the seminary. Some fellows wanted to be priests ever since they can remember; others came to the seminary on a whim... Some of those who came without thinking stayed to think harder... The only way to know if God is calling is to answer, and see.”

“The priesthood isn’t like medicine or accounting or electrical engineering, where you know exactly what your job will be like. The difference is that the seminarians is not studying to learn a new skill – he is learning to be a new person. All the time in the seminary your ideas are shifting and deepening and clearing up and broadening.”

Early 1960s

Faculty monks were now being trained at prestigious universities in the U.S. and Europe, and academic departments became specialized. The first lay people were hired at the seminary, beginning with Anna Marie Till, whom Fr. Paschal remembers as a “little bit of a mother, but mostly Fr. Bernard’s secretary.” The Benedictine sisters would staff the Abbey and seminary kitchen until the early 2000s.

1962–65

The Second Vatican Council issued its Decree on Priestly Training, leading to new guidelines for the holistic formation of priests, focusing on spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral dimensions. These four “pillars” became the core of the curriculum at Mount Angel.

Published by students in The Angelus

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1964
Against a backdrop of social turmoil, landmark civil rights legislation, and Beatlemania, Mount Angel Seminary celebrated its 75th anniversary. Five thousand students had passed through its halls, and 45 priests, abbots and monsignors had been formed, along with one bishop. Mount Angel had also educated doctors, lawyers, engineers and “workers of the soil and of machinery.” At a celebration Mass, Msgr. John Tracy Ellis quoted orator Daniel Webster, saying, “It is, Sir, as I have said, a small college. And yet there are those who love it.”

“...the oldest continuous seminary in the western United States...”

I started my career with twelve fellows in the Grand Seminary and five in the Petit Seminaire... But you know what I’m proud of? It’s my boys. So far, over 1800 seminarians are now diocesan as well. 96 percent of the seminarians are international; 30 lay, religious and other students are currently studying on the Hilltop. Beginning in the fall of 2014, a new Master of Arts in Philosophy program will augment the school’s offerings for pre-theology studies. This “school of the Lord’s service” is now the oldest and largest seminary in the Western United States. During the past 125 years, the school has sent thousands of priests to serve the people of God in nearly 500 dioceses and religious communities throughout the U.S. and around the world. “Millions of lives have been touched by what happens on this Hilltop,” says Abbot Gregory. The seminary is still the primary mission of the monks at Mount Angel.

1965
“We eat all our meals in a big dining room... We all take turns being waiters at the meals. Most of us are lucky enough to sleep in dormitories with bunk beds, but the college men have to live in rooms. Occasionally a few pillows find their way into orbit, but normally we just sleep there.”

The Angelus

1969
Mount Angel Seminary, the School of Liberal Arts and the School of Theology were combined, and headed by the first president-rector, 34-year-old Fr. Boniface Lautz, OSB. Since 1972, beginning with the Most Rev. Ealdon Curtis, all president-rectors have been diocesan priests, and 80 percent of the seminarians are now diocesan as well.

1970
Mount Angel Abbey Library, a sleek, modernist-style building designed by internationally renowned Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, was dedicated. It now houses one of the most significant theological collections in the Pacific Northwest, with holdings that span 1499 A.D. to the age of the Internet.

I nterior, Mount Angel Abbey Library

1971
Women religious were admitted to the theology graduate school.

1978
The monks made the difficult decision to close the seminary high school, enabling them to focus more resources on priestly formation. Fr. Vincent Trujillo, OSB, is still nostalgic about the high school youth, who brought their own brand of vitality and liveliness to the Hilltop. He taught calligraphy and art for 35 years, and played classical music each morning to wake the students. Many, he said, still keep in touch.

1995
The seminary began developing a unique curriculum based on Communion Ecclesiology, the Vatican II teaching that identifies the celebration of the Eucharist as the source and the summit of the Church’s life. The Eucharist makes the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist.

1998
State guests attended the seminary’s 125th anniversary celebration, which included Vespers and dinner. From left to right: Rev. Msgr. Joseph Batschat, Most Rev. Liam Curry, Most Rev. Alexander Sample, Rt. Rev. Gregory Dunn, OSB, Most Rev. John Vlazny, Most Rev. Ealdon Curtis, Most Rev. Peter Smith. Francis Cardinal George was to be the honored guest and speaker; we were sorry he was unable to join us.

2014
This year, Mount Angel is home to 134 seminarians. The youngest is 18 and the oldest is 57. “I see in our seminarians more quiet self assurance and maturity than in previous generations,” says Fr. Vincent. The increasingly diverse student body echoes that of the larger Church; one fifth of the seminarians are international students. The school also supports non-seminarians who are preparing for some aspect of ministry; 35 lay, religious and other students are currently studying on the Hilltop. This year, Mount Angel is home to 154 seminarians. The youngest is 18 and the oldest is 57. “I see in our seminarians more quiet self assurance and maturity than in previous generations,” says Fr. Vincent. The increasingly diverse student body echoes that of the larger Church; one fifth of the seminarians are international students. The school also supports non-seminarians who are preparing for some aspect of ministry; 35 lay, religious and other students are currently studying on the Hilltop.

Aerial view of the Hilltop taken in 2007

~ Ad a nnuati on Hall, which houses most seminary classrooms, was dedicated. The building was designed with arches, a central skylight and natural light throughout. It has been featured in magazines and newspapers as a model of sustainability, and received the Northwest Construction “Best of 2006” Sustainable Award and Grand Award.

~ The Angelus

Fr. Vincent Trujillo, OSB, assigns a student with calligraphic design and layout. He taught art and calligraphy classes in the old Fort on the Hilltop. Photo circa 1967

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Alfred Heibel was born in 1897 in the attic of a crowded Minnesota farmhouse, the twelfth child of an impoverished German-immigrant family. By age 10, he was carrying his share, selling religious pamphlets door-to-door, helping promote Catholic missions.

Praying alone in the woods, Alfred promised God he was carrying his share, selling religious pamphlets door-to-door, helping promote Catholic missions. He would try to become a priest, but his schooling was often interrupted by farm work, and after he began studies at a Wisconsin seminary, he was asked to leave. His eyesight had begun to fail, and a doctor had written the rector, warning, “This boy, Alfred Heibel, cannot possibly go on for the Priesthood. His eyes are absolutely too weak.”

The need for priests was severe, and at age 23, after only three years of theology, Fr. Alcuin was given a special dispensation from Rome, and ordained. On his birthday, Abbot Bernard Murphy, OSB, said, “I have a birthday present for you. You are now pastor of the Milk Ranch, Crooked Finger and all the territory up to the Cascade Mountains.” Fr. Alcuin visited the parish by horseback on the weekends, and taught in the college during the week.

No sooner had he dedicated his first parish church, he was called, at age 25, to be rector of Mount Angel College. In a pattern that would repeat itself throughout his life, he threw himself into the challenge with idealism and pragmatism. Fr. Alcuin set about revising the curriculum and laid plans for the systematic training of faculty. “As I think back, I often marvel at the humility of the older men [the monks], because I had been the youngest on the faculty and yet they gave me such cooperation,” he wrote.

Enthusiasm ran especially high on registration day in September 1926. The college had just achieved its first accreditation, new courses had been added, and enrollment had reached a new high. But the monks and new students—who had not even unpacked—would lose their home by morning. A Model T Ford parked in a garage caught fire and the flames spread, until a giant inferno began to consume the monastery and school, leaving the Abbey in smoldering ruins.

Before the embers even cooled, the monks were engaged in somber discussion about the future of Mount Angel. Fr. Alcuin was determined to rebuild the school and the primary task of fundraising fell to him. “The begging was hard at least for a man as proud as Father Alcuin, but eventually he got used to it,” he wrote. His door-to-door penny sales as a child had prepared him well, and for the next five years, Fr. Alcuin traveled the country in search of funds to rebuild the monastery and school. While fundraising in New York City, despite constant headaches from poor eyesight, he earned a Master of Arts in history from Columbia University.

In 1933, after five years on the road, Fr. Alcuin returned to Mount Angel College, to again serve as rector. “My ambition was that [Mount Angel] should be a Bachelor of Arts College,” he wrote. He succeeded that same year, with the college receiving full accreditation.

The following year Fr. Alcuin was named pastor of St. Mary’s Parish in Mount Angel, and he began his ministry to families who had been devastated by the Great Depression. “These were hard times,” he said.

“The Sunday collections were mostly nickels and dimes or quarters.” He must have remembered his own early poverty. In spite of a full load—he was still teaching history at the college—he responded by establishing farm co-operatives. They became so successful that it wasn’t long before Catholic families began arriving from the Midwest, pulling up in front of the parish house, trailers loaded with belongings.
One of Mount Angel’s most legendary leaders found his vocation under humble circumstances — in a farm field. “My vocation started when I was in Tillamook living on a dairy farm,” remembered Fr. Bernard Sander, OSB. “I had a lot of time to think when I was working in the fields with a team of horses.”

Fr. Bernard, who passed away in 2008, served as a rector at Mount Angel Seminary longer than any other leader (1952–70). His seven decades on the Hilltop leave a legacy of spirit, social relevance, and much of that growth was the product of his remarkable vision.

George Raymond Sander, as he was baptized, was born in 1918. His parents, of German-Swiss ancestry, had moved to a Tillamook farm from Southern Oregon in order to live near a parochial school. Surrounded by a large Catholic family, George was impressed by the piety of his grandmother, his parents and his priest uncle. His own call to the priesthood came early. “The idea of giving my life to God was uppermost in my mind since I was about 15,” he recounted.

In his fourth year of high school he entered Mount Angel Seminary, and was clothed as a novice in the monastery at age 20. In 1944, after three years of study, he was ordained a priest. While making up the fourth year of study, he was appointed vice-rector of the seminary. When asked, many decades later, if it wasn’t unusual to be given that position only a year after ordination, Fr. Bernard answered simply, “They were just in need of help.”

It was a critical time for the seminary. World War II had just ended, and Mount Angel only had 46 students in the seminary. When asked, many decades later, if it wasn’t unusual to be given that position only a year after ordination, Fr. Bernard answered simply, “They were just in need of help.”

In 1947, the seminary was reorganized, and Fr. Bernard, who taught American history, sociology and journalism, led the sports program, and instituted the first student newspaper, The Angelus.

“In 1967, the seminary was reorganized, and Fr. Bernard, who taught American history, sociology and journalism, led the sports program, and instituted the first student newspaper, The Angelus,” said Fr. Augustine DeNoble, OSB. “A lot of people heard of him and made their way to the Hilltop,” said Fr. Augustine DeNoble, OSB. “Fr. Bernard was very calm and peaceful. He loved people, and he was open to everyone.” Students, visitors and staff credited him with transforming their lives or lifting them up when they fell. One woman wrote: “I might have despairsed had it not been for you. You cared; you were never too busy: you were a listener, a counselor.”

On the 50th anniversary of his ordination, Fr. Bernard issued a special invitation, “For any young man who feels called to share in the kind of ministry that I have been privileged to have, my word to him is: By the grace of God, go for it.”

For several summers, the young man from a coastal farm was sent to the University of Notre Dame, where he was introduced to Catholic Action and the Catholic Family Movement. “This opened up my vision,” he later recalled. “I saw the role of the laity for the first time in my life. I began to see that here is where the strength of the Church is. The job of the priest is to inspire the laity to be fully involved.”

“Mount Angel Seminary High School changed dramatically under Fr. Bernard,” said Fr. Paushal Cheline, OSB. “He had a willingness to change and to experiment, and most of what we are today is due to him. The social relevancy, the spirit, these have come to us as a heritage from Fr. Bernard.”

In 1970, Fr. Bernard was named guest master of the Abbey Guest House, and would greatly expand its reach. “It’s impossible to estimate the number of visitors to the Hilltop who received his gracious welcome and loving counsel,” said Fr. Paul. “The Guest House served as a place of refuge, solace and peace for those caught up in the hectic pace and turmoil of daily life.”

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— Jim Thompson

Fr. Bernard shared his enthusiasm for lay work with his seminarians, bringing numerous lay organizations to the Hilltop. His vision was to bring back to the seminary the techniques he learned at Notre Dame, convening small study groups of seminarians. “Often, there was so much pressure in the marketplace that people didn’t have time for their religion. Our work was to make it possible, if we could – to give people techniques by which they could bring the Gospel into their lives as they worked,” he said.

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The mystery of God brings us to gather. We are drawn to something greater, more ancient, more lasting than any of the careers or aspirations we might otherwise know. We share a journey in our diversity, a purpose in our presence. The seminary experience is one of intellectual exploration, cultivation of virtue, commitment to prayer and divine relationship, and formation of our temperament, character and skills. We foretaste the fullness of the eternal, immense, diverse Church, and we are invited to explore as far as we are able. I thank God for the opportunity.

– Seminarian Daniel Miller, from the Diocese of Boise in Idaho

Many college students spend Friday nights unwinding, but not Jesús Sanchez. The third-year collegian from the Diocese of Tucson spends Friday evenings at St. André Bessette Church in downtown Portland, where he ministers to some of the city’s poorest residents, including the homeless. Sanchez assists with prayers and greets parishioners, and he’s learning that it’s sometimes the little things that make up ministry.

One evening Sanchez was serving carrot cake to Stephen, a middle-aged man in a baseball cap, who told him, “It’s my birthday today, and I was going to be alone, but here I am eating with others.” Sanchez said, “We are all doing little things, not realizing that we are doing so much.”

“Spiritual reflection is part of the process, and Piper recalled an incident in his classroom that awakened him to the importance of ministry. The children were rambunctious and seemed uninterested, he says, and when they were asked to share a prayer request, most of the answers were jokes. Then one young girl opened her heart, and said, “There has been a lot of death in my family.” When asked, “Who died?” she replied, “My two sisters died, and my whole family is sad.”

“Despite all appearances, there is always a deep hunger for God, waiting to be nourished,” said Piper, who believes the gap between graduate level theology and second-grade catechism is not as wide as you might think. “We are talking about the same God, and Jesus tells us that unless we receive the kingdom like little children, we will never enter.”

Seminarians at Mount Angel are learning to minister to everyone – including the homeless, the poor, the old and the young – with an open spirit. “The heart of diocesan priesthood is radical availability to God and his people,” says Msgr. Joseph Berschart, the seminary’s president-rector. Sanchez puts it simply, “It’s not about you. It’s about the other person.”

– Jim Thompson

Since 2011, Mount Angel’s Pastoral Formation program has been supported with generous grants from the Maybelle Clark Macdonald Fund.
The seminary traces its heritage to those first monks who came to Mount Angel and, following the example of their Swiss motherhouse whose school was founded in the 12th century, established Mount Angel College. Two years later, in 1889, the pioneer monks founded Mount Angel Seminary, and began what has since been their primary apostolate: educating and forming priests with the mind and heart of Jesus Christ for service to his people. This “school of the Lord’s service” that came from these humble beginnings is now the oldest and largest seminary in the Western United States, and the only seminary in the West that offers theology programs. Since our founding, Mount Angel Seminary has prepared thousands of priests – and many religious and lay men and women, too – to serve the people of God in nearly 100 dioceses and religious communities throughout the United States and around the world.

This year we are blessed to have 154 seminarians from 27 dioceses and six religious communities enrolled in our programs of priestly formation. Our graduating class consists of 13 Bachelor of Arts candidates, 16 Master of Divinity candidates, eight Master of Arts candidates, and three Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology candidates. Mount Angel’s undergraduate program, offering a major in philosophy and possible double majors in literature or religious studies, helps our students understand the human person, the world in which we live, and the God who holds us all together in himself. The pre-theology program prepares those who have already graduated from college for future theological studies. Our graduate program of theological studies is centered on the Eucharist as the “source and summit” of our faith and life, giving our courses and our entire program unity and cohesiveness. And our English Communication Department helps our international students, undergraduate and graduate alike, adjust to the demands of English in their studies, while also preparing them to proclaim the Gospel effectively in their future parish ministry.

The seminary’s pastoral formation, the end to which all our efforts are ultimately directed, gives students the experience and preparation they need to be effective in their future ministry. Our human formation seeks to develop the image and likeness of Jesus Christ in our men, so they can personify his love and bring that love to his people in their words and their actions. And our spiritual formation and the faith life of this community, led and stabilized by the monks of the Abbey, open us to the grace of God, which unites us together in Christ and makes all our work possible. But as good as our formation program is, we are always working to improve it – to form priests who can even more effectively preach, teach, shepherd and sanctify in the name and in the person of Jesus Christ. To that end, we are seeking to enhance our program.

• Next year we will begin offering a fully accredited Master of Arts in Philosophy to our pre-theology students, making us one of only a handful of seminaries in the country to offer a master’s degree at the pre-theology level.
• We are updating our classroom technology to give our students and teachers the best 21st century has to offer. We are also updating the behind-the-scenes infrastructure to create a stronger administrative network.
• In support of our international students and their future ministry, we are seeking ways to further integrate English language training across the curriculum.
• We are looking for ways to further enhance the Eucharistic focus of our theology studies and integrate it even more fully into our classes and into our lives.
• We are increasing our pastoral placement opportunities and seeking to integrate them more fully into the curriculum, so that practical learning goes hand in hand with academic learning.

And the list goes on. But all of these accomplishments and goals are only possible because of God’s grace and the prayers and support provided by so many. We cannot do it alone. It is a work that we can only do when we are all united together in Jesus Christ. First and foremost, then, we offer our praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God, for calling us to share in this sacred mission of his Son and sustaining us with his grace. We express profound gratitude for the sacrifices, dedication, prayer and work of the abbots and monks of Mount Angel Abbey; past and present, including our current chancellor, Abbot Gregory Duerr, OSB.

We want to acknowledge the many faculty and staff members throughout our history whose dedication and learning still animate the seminary. We are grateful for the many generous board members, volunteers, benefactors and friends who sustain us in our common mission. We are mindful of our co-workers on the Hilltop whose service and support keep us going. We thank the many bishops, religious superiors and vocation directors who have entrusted their seminarians to us for formation. We honor the parents and families of our seminarians, and most especially, we honor our seminarians, students and alumni, for their labors in the Lord’s vineyard, and the countless people to whom they have transmitted the lifegiving Word and saving mysteries of God.

Almost 20 years ago, I was blessed to be a seminarian at Mount Angel, and I am even more blessed to be back here now. I am constantly awed and inspired by our seminarians, students and alumni, for their labors in the Lord’s vineyard, and the countless people to whom they have transmitted the lifegiving Word and saving mysteries of God.

As we celebrate the past and look to the future, may the Lord continue to bless us with his grace, unite us in his love and bring to fulfillment the good work he has begun in all of us, as together we move forward in his service. For as our motto reminds us, “The hope of the harvest is in the seed.”

– Msgr. Joseph Beachart, President-Rector, Mount Angel Seminary
Scholarship fund inspired by heroic Hungarian priest

Janko was greatly influenced by the dynamic priest. In 1956, Janko’s own resistance to the Communist yoke forced him to flee his homeland for the United States. He landed in Monterey, Calif., where he met his wife, Abigail, then a student of international studies. He established an obstetrics clinic, which is now in its 45th year. Shortly before Fr. Havass’ death in 2001, Bela Janko visited his beloved teacher in Hungary. Fr. Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, recalls the scene: “I was struck by what I saw when the old priest recognized Bela. I saw immense love and tenderness in his eyes, and between the two of them, in a glance, the many years of suffering and courage were understood. Fr. Havass saw that one of his students had brought to beautiful fruition the faith he first had planted in him.”

Forty-two years of Communist dictatorship left Hungary with a dire shortage of priests, and restrictions placed upon the seminaries made it impossible to provide adequate pastoral studies. “This meant the Hungarian Church was unable to provide a bridge between what the preacher can teach and what the people are living,” Janko said. “A well-trained priest can show them what the Church should be, and can be.” Janko looked to the West, and Mount Angel, for answers. In 1992, he established the Reverend Geza Havass Endowed Scholarship Fund, which now totals $465,000, to help defray the cost of tuition, room and board, and travel for a Hungarian seminarian each year. Sadly, its annual proceeds (4–5 percent) can provide only half of the cost incurred. The monastery struggles to cover the rest. Previous scholarship recipients include the Rev. Ernő Bárányi Keckeméter, whose radio Mass has reached more than a million listeners in Hungary. Other graduates have demonstrated gifts in such areas as preaching, pastoral psychology, ecclesiastical Latin, youth ministry and charitable work.

“Mount Angel Seminary is perfect for this mission,” Janko said. “It is a unique place, free in spirit, understanding what the vocation of a priest is and how the priest can be open to change, leading society to what is productive. This is a solution for Hungary. Indeed, there is no chance for Central European countries to flourish without the influence of the Church.” The Reverend Geza Havass Endowed Scholarship Fund seeks additional contributions to support this mission, one rooted in persecution and love.

—Jim Thompson

Pope Francis appoints Mount Angel alumnus, teacher, as Auxiliary Bishop of Portland

Our prayers and warm wishes go to Bishop Peter Smith, who was ordained April 29 as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Portland. Bishop Smith graduated from Mount Angel in 2001 and now teaches the canon law class on marriage at the seminary.

“Bishop Smith is a man of deep faith, great intellect and practical wisdom,” said Portland Archbishop Alexander Sample.

Bishop Smith was born in 1958 in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, and ordained a priest in 2003. He holds a law degree from the University of Natal Law School, a master’s degree in theology from Mount Angel Seminary, a Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Athenaeum Sant’ Anselmo in Rome, and a licentiate in canon law from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He has served as pastor of St. Rose of Lima parish in Portland, archdiocesan delegate for the charismatic movement, adjunct judicial vicar, local superior of the Brotherhood of the People of Praise, and vice chair of the Presbyteral Council.

Mount Angel Alumni Homecoming

September 10–11, 2014

Gather on the Hilltop for reunion, renewal and reconnection with one another and seminary faculty and staff, as well as the monastic community. Attend special presentations by Fr. Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, Deacon Owen Cummings and Dr. Shawn Keough, and enjoy Mr. Angel’s Annual Oktoberfest! For information, contact Jeanne Hobson at alumni@mtangel.edu or 503-845-3057.

Greetings!

My name is Jeanne Hobson and I am the new Alumni Relations coordinator. We hope you’ll join us for our Alumni Homecoming celebration September 10–11. We invite you to send memories, stories and photos from your time on the Hilltop, which we’ll share at the reunion. Please plan to help us celebrate the seminary’s 125th anniversary!

Alumni Relations Coordinator Jeanne Hobson was formerly the program manager of the Executive Development Center in the Atkinson Graduate School of Management at Willamette University. She has served as religious education coordinator and business manager at Saint Edward Catholic Church in Keizer, Ore., and a Table of Plenty volunteer at Queen of Peace in Salem.

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EVENING AT MOUNT ANGEL

Slowly and quietly shades of the evening,
Steal across valley and fields below;
Softly the angelus tells its sweet story,
In music of bells, so softly and low.

The lights twinkle out from the town in the distance;
The wind murmurs low in the sweet balsam air;
The watchdog bays deep as the pale moon creeps upward,
Showering her glory on hillside and lee.

And God speaks again through his wonderful planets;
Of his love and His wisdom, in voice most sublime;
And bids the faint heart to rest in his keeping;
That He is the Father, the Keeper of time.

J.B., The Pacific Star student newspaper
Mount Angel College and Seminary, 1913