

*From the Inside:
An Inside Look at Seminary Life*

Here at Saint Francis Seminary, the new year always starts in August—early in August for the new seminarians, and later in the month for us “old guys.” The new seminarians arrive for the Month Intensive, which is a four-week program that focuses in on various aspects of priestly life, from obedience and celibacy, to prayer and simple living. It also helps guys to get accustomed to the rhythm of seminary days. The beginning of August is always exciting. There always seems to be a renewal of energy that takes place in the building. The new guys coming in highlight an important part of seminary life and a particular strength of Saint Francis Seminary—our community.

Over the years that I have been in the Seminary, I have come to realize the importance of community and the joy of having a strong fraternal bond with the other seminarians. The bond that we seminarians form with one another helps us through difficulties and enhances the joy of the fun times. In some sense, the seminarians truly become your brothers—something which will pay off in the future when we are in the parishes. We have worked hard over this summer to try to continue to build those bonds between us. Some of us formed a Seminarian Hospitality and Activity Committee to work on building that sense of fun and fraternity. And it has borne fruit already.

On the first evening of the Month Intensive, we held the first annual Msgr. Joseph Rainer Night. Named in honor of a long-time rector here, it was a chance to welcome the new guys and allow us to get to know each other. It was a huge success. We held it outside behind Henni Hall, and we had about twenty men there all told. We cooked out, enjoyed the warm summer evening, and had the chance to just relax.

This sense of being bonded together continued a couple of weeks later when we went down to a seminarian’s house in Burlington for an evening beginning with Mass at his home parish, sitting around a bonfire, taking some target practice, and enjoying pizza. Later on that month, we had the opportunity to serve for the Archbishop at the Irish Fest Mass as one of our seminarians received candidacy prior to beginning his studies in Rome. The chance to feel the support of 10,000+ people was very encouraging. As we processed out, I heard people saying that they were proud of us and were happy to see us.

These were opportunities to be together, to celebrate things together, and to get to know each other on a deeper level. The community of seminarians here is strong. We had two seminarians from another seminary staying with us this summer as they did CPE (continuing pastoral education), and they both told us that they don’t have the same experience of community in their seminary as they felt in ours—that there was something special here. It is one of the blessings of being a seminarian here at Saint Francis Seminary.

Live Jesus!

Peter J. Berger
Seminarian