

PASTORES DABO VOBIS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC SEMINARIANS ASSOCIATION

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A Renewal of Vision and Purpose after 40 Years

A Message from the President



IT IS BOTH AN HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE to accept the opportunity to serve the Catholic Church in the United States as the President of the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association. In a particular way, I look forward to cooperating with a variety of Church leaders to promote and support priestly vocations in the Black Catholic community.

My term as President will be dedicated to garnering the spiritual, ecclesiastical, and financial support that will enable the NBCSA to effectively pursue its mission in the life of the Church. As stated in its mission, the NBCSA is to contribute concretely to the present and future wellbeing of candidates preparing for priesthood

and religious life. Additionally, the NBCSA takes an interest in priestly formation, in general, in the United States and its territories.

This newsletter is among the first steps toward renewing the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association. The newsletter's name, **PASTORES DABO VOBIS**, recalls the 1992 apostolic exhortation of Venerable John Paul II on the formation of priests in the present age. Naming the newsletter in this manner serves as a constant reminder of our collective, prayerful hope in the Lord's promise: "*I will give you shepherds after my own heart*" (Jeremiah 3:15).

In this and successive issues, my intent is to state clearly and emphatically the mission, purpose, and vision of the NBCSA and how these fit within the broader mission of the Catholic Church in the United States.

Appropriately, I begin with a brief commentary and reflection on the apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. I invite you to consider with me the continuing import of this document and its particular relevance for the Black Catholic community.

I truly look forward to the opportunities ahead and ask, most of all, for your prayerful support. **Ω**

Christopher S. Rhodes

NBCSA President

“I will give you shepherds...”

Jeremiah 3:15

PASTORES DABO VOBIS

The Newsletter of the
National Black Catholic
Seminarians Association

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To receive a subscription or to offer
comments and story ideas, send an
email to the National Black Catholic
Seminarians Association.

NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC SEMINARIANS ASSOCIATION

*The NBCSA is an affiliate of the
National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus.*

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NOTES:

INTRODUCING THE NBCSA NEWSLETTER

The publication of **the first issue of PASTORES DABO VOBIS** marks an exciting step forward for the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association. Our audience is anyone who is interested in promoting and supporting priestly vocations, particularly in the Black Catholic community in the United States. The newsletter will be published bimonthly (6 times each year) and will offer matter for discussion and prayer for families and parishes. Subscriptions are free of charge. To subscribe, please send an email to: nbcseminarians@gmail.com. Ω

U.S. CATHOLICS AND RELIEF FOR HAITI

In response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops called for a nation-wide special collection to obtain much needed **funds for relief efforts**. The collection took place in parishes across the United States on the weekend of January 16-17. If you have not already done so, please prayerfully consider offering financial support to the U.S. Catholic response to the disaster in Haiti. For more information, visit the website of Catholic Relief Services: www.crs.org. Ω

PRAYERS FOR BISHOP RICARD

The National Black Catholic Seminarians Association encourages you to continue praying for the complete recovery of Pensacola-Tallahassee **Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ**, who suffered a stroke on December 22, 2009. As of this printing, he continues to progress in his rehabilitation. For updates, visit the website of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee: www.ptdiocese.org. Ω

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Desmond Drummer, a seminarian of the Archdiocese of Atlanta, will serve the NBCSA as the editor of the **PASTORES DABO VOBIS** newsletter. A graduate of Morehouse College, Desmond is in his second year of pre-theology (philosophy) studies at Mundelein Seminary near Chicago. You are encouraged to submit your feedback and suggestions for the newsletter via email to: nbcseminarians@gmail.com. Ω

I WILL GIVE YOU SHEPHERDS

Commentary and Reflection on *Pastores Dabo Vobis*

Christopher S. Rhodes | Archdiocese of Louisville

VENERABLE POPE JOHN PAUL II released a post-synodal apostolic exhortation in 1992 on the formation of priests entitled *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (*I Will Give You Shepherds*). The document served as the capstone to the eighth general assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which had as its theme, “The Formation of Priests in Circumstances of the Present Day.” Trusting in the Holy Spirit, the bishops sought to discern the signs of the times, reflect on the identity of the priest, and reaffirm everyone’s unique role in nurturing priestly vocations.

The Holy Father makes it clear that the ultimate responsibility of promoting and sustaining vocations toward the priesthood falls upon the bishop and clergy but in a particular way this task also falls on the lay faithful.

In this document the Holy Father reminds us that we all are responsible for fostering vocations, especially within the Christian family. Pope John Paul II mentions that the Christian family is the domestic Church. The Christian family should continue to take responsibility in conforming the hearts and minds of the youth to that of Christ. If there is a shortage of men to proclaim, “Behold the Lamb of God,” it is only because the Christian family has not sown the vocational seed of “Here, I am.” In the Church we continue to pray for priestly vocations, but for the most part we look to the sons of other families rather than our own. In other words, the Christian family must allow themselves to become handmaids of the Lord, imitating the womb of Mary, to bear Christ to the world.

Apart from the duty of the lay faithful and the bishops to foster vocations, much trust is given to seminaries in preparing men for the sacrament of Holy Orders. As you may know, considerable attention is given to *Pastores Dabo Vobis* in developing programs for priestly formation and evaluating seminarians as they progress toward ordination.

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SEMINARIAN PROFILE:

Christopher S. Rhodes

President, National Black Catholic Seminarians Association

Christopher S. Rhodes is a seminarian studying for the Archdiocese of Louisville as a Military Chaplain Candidate. Prior to entering seminary, he served as a Commissioned Officer for the U.S. Army specializing in Infantry, Military Intelligence, Operations and Training, Logistics, Personnel Management and Company Command. He holds a BA in Economics from Morehouse College, an MA in Catholic Philosophical Studies from Saint Meinrad School of Theology and is currently working to earn an MDiv from The Catholic University of America (Theological College) in Washington D.C. On 18 January 2010 he assumed the position of President of the NBCSA. As a result of much continued prayer and support Chris has the goal of being found worthy for ordination, God willing, in the year 2012. Ω



“...after my own heart.”

I WILL GIVE YOU SHEPHERDS *(Continued from page 3)*

Pastores Dabo Vobis articulates the four areas of priestly formation (chapter 5). The four areas are:

Human Formation is considered the basis of all priestly formation. This area of formation ensures that the one seeking to be *in persona Christi* is “a bridge not an obstacle” for others and is “educated to love the truth, to be loyal, to respect every person, to have a sense of justice.”

Spiritual Formation allows the seminarian to develop a deep intimate relationship with God, to live in communion with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit expressed and rooted in Catholic Tradition and Scripture. As a consequence, the seminarian is able to communicate the message and mystery of Christ to all and to seek Christ in all.

Intellectual Formation trains young men to be good evangelizers who are able to effectively teach the truths found in scripture, and answer questions of Faith.

Pastoral Formation aids the seminarian to develop a character of charity in communion with Christ to better be able to take care of the people of God.

Aware of these four areas of formation, the NBCSA desires to assist bishops, laity, and seminaries in ensuring that all young men in formation are “bridges” for Christ, and not obstacles, by suggesting ways by which seminarians can learn more in the areas of spirituality, preaching, evangelizing, and pastoral care. In cooperation with competent individuals and Church institutions, the NBCSA intends to develop formative opportunities that will educate future priests about life and ministry in the Black Catholic community.

In conclusion, the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association’s mission is to make a concrete contribution to the present and future wellbeing of candidates preparing for the priesthood and religious life. The NBCSA intends to be poised to offer support to the Church in the U.S. in the area of priestly formation. **Ω**

THE YEAR FOR PRIESTS

June 19, 2009 - June 19, 2010

Observing the **Year for Priests**, called for by Pope Benedict XVI, the first volume of **PASTORES DABO VOBIS** is dedicated to the Black American priests and bishops who serve the Church in various ways, most of all through the sacraments. We are also very grateful for all priests who have served the Black Catholic community.

May all priests grow closer to the **Sacred Heart of Jesus**.

PRAY FOR PRIESTS