

PASTORES DABO VOBIS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC SEMINARIANS ASSOCIATION

JUL/AUG

2010

Vol. 1

No. 4

Securing a Catholic Future in the Black Community

A Message from the President

THE NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS (NBCC) exists to promote evangelization in the African American community, and so it is fitting that its board of trustees is comprised of organizational leaders representing a variety of Black Catholic apostolates. The **NBCC Board of Trustees**, chaired by Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ of Pensacola-Tallahassee, met on June 14, 2010 in St. Petersburg, Florida. As president of the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association (NBCSA), one of my responsibilities is to serve as a member of the NBCC Board of Trustees.

Two matters from the June meeting appear to be of particular significance to all who are interested in ministry in the Black Catholic community.

The first matter is the number of **Catholic school closings in historically Black communities**, a trend that can be found in various dioceses around the country. In response to this trend the NBCC has created the NBCC Catholic Education Foundation to provide financial assistance to ensure the preservation of Catholic schools and their longstanding contribution of quality education and evangelization in the Black community.

Additionally, an effort is underway to begin gathering data on the **perceived decline in the number of Catholics in the African American community**. The data will help inform the development of a pastoral plan in preparation for the eleventh National Black Catholic Congress gathering in 2012.

It is my hope and prayer that our unanimous decisions to institute the NBCC Catholic Education Foundation and to begin collecting data toward the development of a pastoral plan will not only advance the Church's evangelization mission in the Black community, but also help promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

If you are not already familiar with the National Black Catholic Congress, I encourage you to visit www.nbccongress.org to learn more about the work of this dynamic national apostolate. Ω

Christopher S. Rhodes

NBCSA President

“I will give you shepherds...”

Jeremiah 3:15

- A -

PASTORES DABO VOBIS

The Newsletter of the
National Black Catholic
Seminarians Association

PRESIDENT

Christopher S. Rhodes

VICE PRESIDENT

Peter Damian Harris, OP

SECRETARY

Anthony Anichukwu, SSJ

TREASURER

Kevin Bellot, CSsR

PASTORES DABO VOBIS is published
bimonthly and is available to subscribers,
free of charge, by electronic mail.

EDITOR

Desmond Drummer

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

Mailing Address

Christopher S. Rhodes
Theological College
401 Michigan Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20017

Email Address

nbcseminarians@gmail.com

- Ω -

NOTES:

THE OIL SPILL IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

Catholic leaders on both the local and national level are responding to the oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

In mid-June, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) announced that its Subcommittee for the **Catholic Campaign for Human Development** (CCHD) approved \$300,000 in grants for vulnerable communities in the Gulf Coast.

According to the USCCB, "the groups who receive the grants will use the funds to provide a voice for the fishermen and communities affected by the spill, coordinate with communities and emergency responders to document the damage, as well as insist on work to restore the damaged wetlands."

The USCCB also announced in mid-June that the **Apostleship of the Sea**, the Catholic Church's ministry in the maritime community, is developing a network of relief efforts among the dioceses on the Gulf Coast.

Visit the websites of the USCCB and the Apostleship of the Sea to learn more about how you can support these relief efforts. Ω



Catholic Campaign for Human Development

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

www.usccb.org



Apostleship of the Sea

www.aos-usa.org

HAS IT FALLEN ON DEAF EARS?

A Reflection on What We Have Seen and Heard

Christopher S. Rhodes | Archdiocese of Louisville

ON SEPTEMBER 9, 1984, THE FEAST OF SAINT PETER CLAVER, the ten Black bishops in the United States published *What We Have Seen and Heard*, a pastoral letter on evangelization in the Black Catholic community. I wish to reflect upon what the bishops wrote about vocations to priesthood and religious life, an important element in the pastoral letter—an element that I suspect may be too easily overlooked.

In the pastoral letter, the bishops stressed that young people would be more receptive to a call to service if they are first introduced to this notion in family life. The responsibility also falls upon those who minister to youth. Seminaries and houses of formation are also addressed in the pastoral letter. Citing the third edition of the Program of Priestly Formation, the bishops offered a reminder that formation should incorporate an understanding of the various cultures present in the Church in the United States.

The Family

It must be noted that even though some responsibility of promoting vocations in the Black community is given to the entire Catholic community, it is primarily given to parents. Parents, as the primary caregivers of children, must also be the primary educators of the Catholic faith. Parents should not be afraid to actively engage and form a partnership with youth ministers to ensure that the faith as taught at home is confirmed and reinforced at the parish.

I fear that many youth, especially young adults, contemplate a life of priesthood or religious life but become discouraged for reasons pertaining to financial security or familial sustainability. Whatever the

[Continued on next page](#)

SEMINARIAN PROFILE:

Michael Trail

Archdiocese of Chicago



Michael Trail is a third year college seminarian studying for the Archdiocese of Chicago at St. Joseph College Seminary, located at Loyola University Chicago. Michael was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. After graduating from a charter high school in 2007, Michael went to Loyola University Chicago for a year and a half before entering seminary studies. He hopes to graduate from Loyola University in 2012 with a BA in philosophy and then continue his formation at the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary, the major seminary of the Archdiocese of Chicago. He asks for your prayers as he continues on his journey towards priesthood. Ω



“...after my own heart.”

HAS IT FALLEN ON DEAF EARS? (CONTINUED)

situation may be, parents should support their children concerning when and how they choose to contribute positively to the Church and society.

Ministry with Youth and Young Adults

In cooperation with the Church's effort in evangelization, those who work with youth and young adults in the Black Catholic community must draw attention to those who have labored to advance the Catholic faith. We must remember those like Sister Thea Bowman, who strived to affirm and strengthen the identity of Black Catholics in the United States. We must remember Father Augustus Tolton, who “labored among us in times of contradiction [and] helped lay the foundation for a truly Catholic gathering in faith in our time” (Prayer for the Cause of Father Augustus Tolton, Bishop Joseph Perry, 2010).

We cannot forget to make efforts to continue to evangelize young adults, especially those on college campuses. Newman Centers will continue to play an increasingly important role in promoting church vocations among young people. I can personally give testament to the value of Catholic campus ministry, and I am not alone. There are many seminarians who have received the invitation to discern the priesthood through their involvement in a Catholic community during their years in college.

The Black Catholic Community

It must become a priority of the Black Catholic community to monitor the progress of all who are in formation for priesthood and religious life. Those who are the seminarians, novices, postulants, and junior religious today will become the ordained leaders and consecrated witnesses of the future. The Black Catholic community must continue to be proactive in finding new ways to collaborate with vocation directors, seminaries and houses of formation to find ways to teach and expose those in formation, regardless of race and culture, to the history, faith, hopes, and challenges of Black Catholics in the United States.

Seminaries and Houses of Formation

I must personally commend many of the seminaries and formation houses in the U.S. who make it a point to continue programs of formation that work to expose seminarians and religious to ministries within historically Black Catholic communities. Following upon these observations, I invite all those given the responsibility of formation to consider the Institute of Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana as an opportunity to expose those in formation to the presence of Black Catholics in the United States.

We cannot ignore the challenge placed before us concerning vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The task of promoting vocations among Black Catholics is the work of the entire Church. All of us have a role, especially families, those who work with youth and young adults, and leaders in the Black apostolate. **Ω**