



July 16, 2020
Solemnity of Our Lady of Einsiedeln

Office of the President-Rector

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings from Saint Meinrad. During these difficult days, the prayers of the whole Church are undoubtedly rising on behalf of our poor world, so overcome with illness, fear, and doubt. I hope that all of you know of my prayers for each of you, your communities, families, and friends. It is a dark time. Here at Saint Meinrad we are doing well. There is little illness in our immediate area and while several members of our extended Saint Meinrad family have dealt with the effects of the virus, for the most part we are remaining safe and healthy. We have also been hard at work.

Enclosed you will find a copy of our protocols for the beginning of the seminary formation term this fall. These protocols have been the subject of a great deal of internal debate and have undergone many revisions. In the protocols, you will see that we are planning for a fairly contained environment, at least for the start of the term. I believe that these practices and ideals, while undoubtedly subject to discussion, will be for the benefit of all. As I have said many times, there are two factors that we must take into consideration in dealing with the present crisis. The first is the facts. What is the situation of the presence of the virus in the community around Saint Meinrad? What is the situation in our client dioceses? All these facts are easily obtained. They tell us one story or another about what is happening. However, charts and graphs can only take us so far.

The second component of dealing with the virus is feelings. How do people feel about what is happening? Feelings also give us information. Our task as formators is to help our seminarians, faculty and staff and all who are connected to Saint Meinrad *feel* safe, as much as that is possible. We also have the responsibility to protect those who have been entrusted to us in our mission of forming priests, deacons, and other ministers for the life of the Church. Likewise, the seminary has a responsibility to act in such a way that vulnerable members of the monastic community are also protected. Father Abbot Kurt and I have worked closely together through this process to make sure we are enacting policies for the good of all. It has been a tough project, but it has also been a rewarding one in that we are able to keep our mission, and the mission of the Gospel before our eyes at all times. It has been a spiritual journey as well as an administrative one.

While our task has kept us occupied for the summer, the plans we are putting in place are also temporary. Overall, they do not represent in any way the long-term situation of our formation programs at Saint Meinrad. Will we learn some lessons along the way because of the fall scenario? Undoubtedly, we will. That is an essential element of a community. The situation of

the virus gives us some breathing room for planning in other areas. For example, we will use the fall semester as an opportunity to completely revisit and overhaul our pastoral formation program. We will be examining our liturgical life as well, reworking not only the liturgy itself, but our way of involving seminarians in the planning and execution of the liturgy. We are initiating two new ceremonies, one for the presentation of gifts to new seminarians and another to name houses for the same group. In keeping with the practices of other seminaries we are moving the celebration of candidacy to First Year theology. The ceremony will take place in the first week of November. We will also have major seminarians wear clerical clothing as daily and formal wear after candidacy. Black clerical shirts, trousers and shoes are the norm. We are also revamping aspects of our retreat program, building on good foundations, but searching for new retreat experiences that will assist our seminarians in gaining greater insight into their spiritual formation.

Our other programs are also busy at these two levels. In our permanent deacon program, our graduate degree program, the Institute for Priest and Presbyterates, our youth leadership programs and our continuing education program we continue to move forward always looking for new opportunities. Recently we have established two planning committees, one dealing with a meaningful expansion of our youth ministry and evangelization programs and the other looking at opportunities to promote Benedictine arts. Both of these planning processes are a part of our long-term strategic planning in past years.

All of the work of Saint Meinrad continues to move forward. I am so grateful to our faculty and staff for their hard work this summer, a time usually spent in getting a bit of rest. I am grateful to our students who have remained in contact as we have been moving forward. I am also very thankful for our Church leaders, bishops, priests, deacons and lay leaders who have been working around the clock to hammer out solutions to unimaginable problems. The life of the Gospel moves forward because of the dedication of so many. Please, know of my continuing prayers for all of you.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. Denis Robinson" followed by a small flourish.

Very Reverend Denis Robinson
President-Rector

Enclosure

Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology

Plan for the Fall Semester 2020

Introduction

By Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB

We are living in troubled times. There can be little doubt in the mind of almost any person on the earth that these past few months have been a time of challenge and a time of a growing sense of dread, danger, anger, and sadness. Many have been affected by the ongoing questions of COVID-19. And yet, the work of the Church must move forward.

Our tasks of living the life of the Gospel, forming new ministers for the Church, and being signs of the presence of Christ for many communities, many places throughout this country and, indeed, throughout the world, move decidedly forward. This is especially essential in these troubled times.

When there is danger and trouble in our world, the Church is called upon in a necessary way, I would say a heroic way, to focus people's attention of the one True Reality that we all must rely upon: the love and care of God. Here at Saint Meinrad, we are agents of that message, especially in the formation of ministers called to a very specific task in these days.

There is an aspect of priesthood that is so important for us to incorporate in our lives. It is an element of our priestly life that can also be difficult. It is selflessness. Every day, as priests, we are called to something. We are called to respond to crises. We are called to visit the sick. We are called to celebrate the sacraments. We are called to serve little ones in the school. We are called to tasks that are exalted and to tasks that are very mundane. I would say mostly to tasks that are very mundane.

In all these things we are called, in a very focused way, to help our brothers and sisters through their fears, their sickness, their private demons. As we move into this temporary normal, I am asking you to consider this element of service and selflessness. We are going to be called to sacrifice a great deal, not only our freedoms and our usual activities, but also our attitudes. Some of us will find these measures too strenuous. Some will find them too lax. I wager that all will struggle to deal with them on a day-to-day basis. I also believe that we can do it. I know we can.

Here at Saint Meinrad, we are dealing with many factors, perhaps not so different to what many have been dealing with in parishes and other Church institutions this summer. We are dealing with vulnerable populations. Here, for example, we need to always consider the monks, whose presence here is the life force of Saint Meinrad. Our care for them extends to our taking precautions in the current climate.

We are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of masks and social distancing. This will be our trope for the upcoming formation term. We will be wearing masks. We will be social distancing, always. It will be inconvenient. It will be tiring. It is also for the good of all. All seminarians will need to bring with them a supply of masks when they return to Saint Meinrad this fall. The use of masks is outlined in the directives below.

Our formation term will begin in the usual way, but we will complete on-campus classes and formation on November 24, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. There will be no formal on-campus activities after this date, although we realize that some seminarians may need to remain with us for a longer period.

In reading these guidelines, there may be many questions. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time in the coming weeks for as much clarity as can be provided. Finally, I want each of you to know that all of these guidelines come from a place of love and concern, not only for you personally, but for our Church and for all of its members struggling through the world with this great unknown. Peace to all.

The Situation of Contagion in Our Area and in Client Dioceses

By Fr. Christian Raab, OSB

Indiana's first case of COVID-19 was recorded on March 6, 2020. Like most states, Indiana executed a stay-at-home order this spring followed by a phased reopening. Indiana's number of new cases continued to increase until May 8, when they peaked at 688 reported new cases. Indiana's number of new cases then went into decline until June 23, after which there has been a gradual uptick. As of July 7, 2020, Indiana has had 49,859 cases in a population of 6,730,000. Thus, approximately .75% of the population is known to have been infected.

Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology is located at 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, which is in the northeast corner of Spencer County, Indiana. As of July 7, 2020, Spencer County had 44 reported cases of COVID-19. This is about .2% of the population, or 1 of every 461 persons. The northeast corner of Spencer County borders Dubois and Perry counties. On July 7, 2020, Dubois County had 283 cases of COVID-19 in a population of 42,736 (.7%). Perry County had 146 cases in a population of 19,338 (.75%).

The New York Times data tracking color codes areas according to infection rates. White indicates "few or no new cases in the last two weeks." Blue indicates a falling rate. Yellow indicates a static rate. Orange indicates a rising rate. Red indicates a "hot spot," with a dramatic rise in cases. Since data tracking began in March 2020, Spencer County has always been coded white and has remained in the bottom 20 of Indiana's 92 counties in terms of both infection rate and total number of infections.

As of July 7, 2020, Perry County is coded blue, indicating a downward trend, averaging 1.8 new cases per day compared to 2.6 new cases two weeks ago. Dubois County is light orange,

indicating an upward trend, averaging 2.1 new cases per day compared to 1.7 new cases two weeks ago.

The closest “hot spot” to Saint Meinrad Seminary is in Warrick County, IN, which is situated about 40 miles west of Saint Meinrad. Warrick County has had 220 cases in a population of 62,998 (.3%). Currently, Warrick County averages 3.4 new cases per day compared to .9 new cases per day two weeks ago. The numbers change daily and updated statistics should be sought at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/indiana-coronavirus-cases.html>.

In the 2020-21 school year, Saint Meinrad seminarians will be coming from about 20 domestic dioceses, six international dioceses, and eight religious communities. Looking at the domestic dioceses, the situation varies greatly among them. For example, the dioceses of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Salina, Cheyenne, Amarillo, Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville and Mobile are in states that have recently seen large spikes in the number of coronavirus cases.

Dioceses of Louisville, Lexington, Owensboro and Tulsa are in states that have seen smaller but not insignificant elevations. The dioceses of Burlington, Indianapolis, Evansville and Springfield, IL, are in states that have seen recent rises after months of decline. Other dioceses, such as Little Rock and Crookston, are in states where the number of cases is remaining level. The Diocese of Manchester is in a state where the number of new cases is decreasing.

While on the national and global levels, the coronavirus is a significant danger to people’s health and well-being, it is somewhat encouraging that our immediate local area has had a relatively low level of cases and a slow rate of infection. Some of our students, however, will be coming from areas with higher rates. Thus, it will be crucial for us to be attentive to the guidelines established by the Seminary and School of Theology.

Cessation of Spring Semester and the Summer Experience at Saint Meinrad

By Fr. Tobias Colgan, OSB

On March 17, in response to the developing COVID-19 pandemic, Fr. Denis announced the suspension of on-campus courses, effective that day. At the same time, he announced the following:

- That the seminarians who planned to leave campus to return to their homes or dioceses were to leave by the evening of March 20.
- That any seminarian who needed to stay or preferred to stay (or whose diocese preferred that they stay) would be free to do so.
- That remaining seminarians and resident staff would enter into quarantined living as of the morning of March 21.
- That online classes would be up and running by March 30, giving faculty members time to prepare for online delivery and the seminarians time to settle into their new spaces and routines before classes would resume.

With the dawn of March 21, the quarantine area was established for the 56 residents who remained – 46 seminarians and 10 formation staff priests. As the spring turned to summer, one by one, the majority of the 46 seminarians returned to their home dioceses. As of July 12, there were nine international seminarians who remained with the 10 staff priests, and all will remain here for the duration.

Among the provisions for the quarantine experience were the following:

- Sections of the seminary buildings were cordoned off with signage. No one other than seminarians or resident staff were permitted in these areas.
- The community continues to celebrate Mass together, have regular times for Eucharistic Adoration, and take our meals together. One of the highlights of this experience was the opportunity to celebrate the Sacred Triduum together.
- The seminarians themselves established times of “House Quiet” during the remaining weeks of the semester to foster an atmosphere conducive to reading, study and paper writing.
- Faculty members did a great job in making a quick adjustment to the demands of distance learning.
- In the earliest days of the quarantine, no one could leave the campus. We depended on ordering needed items online or occasionally placing a pick-up order from Walmart, thanks to the generosity of a lay co-worker who delivered several orders for us.

At the time of this writing, we are in Week 17 of this experience. God has blessed us with good health throughout this time, and the morale of our much smaller community has remained high.

Based on this recent experience of living safely in the context of the pandemic, we are hopeful and quite confident that the plans we are putting in place for the fall semester will allow us to carry on the work of formation safely and effectively. May God grant that it be so!

Procedure for Returning to Saint Meinrad

By Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, and Ann Phillips, Director of Health Services

Those traveling to Saint Meinrad by car

Those traveling to Saint Meinrad by car are required to have a nasal swab test for the presence of COVID-19 before returning. After having the test, the seminarian should plan to quarantine for four days and then return to Saint Meinrad directly. During his trip to Saint Meinrad, he should take every precaution in remaining safe.

Those traveling with others by car

If you are traveling with another seminarian by car, the same precautions apply. If you are traveling with a non-seminarian by car (for example, a parent or sibling), it is recommended that

the other party, parent or sibling, should travel in a separate car. If they cannot, then the preparation procedure for seminarians applies to the other passenger as well.

Those traveling to Saint Meinrad by air

If you are traveling by air, you should arrange to arrive at Saint Meinrad 10 days in advance of your first day (orientation staff, orientation, or returning seminarian). You will be required to take both a nasal swab test and a blood antibody test. There is a required 10-day quarantine period after the testing, which will be accommodated on the second floor of St. Anselm Hall. Meals and Holy Communion will be provided daily for the period of the quarantine. Testing is repeated on Day 8 of the quarantine.

Participation of Monks and Glenmary Seminarians

By Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, and Fr. Aaron Wessman, GHM

Saint Meinrad monks will participate in formation activities in the following ways: They will take classes in the seminary program. Because the monastery is observing a similar protocol as the seminary, the monks will come to class, masked, and return to the monastery directly after classes each day. They also will participate in school-wide programs such as the opening Evening Prayer and Candidacy. The requirements will be monitored by the prior as usual.

Glenmary seminarians will live in the Glenmary House in the town of St. Meinrad with their Glenmary superior. They will come to campus for classes and school-wide events only. They will take all of their meals and liturgies in the Glenmary House.

Liturgy and Prayer

By Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB

The liturgical and prayer life of the Seminary and School of Theology is essential not only to the goals of the formation programs that it undertakes, but also as a sign of the Benedictine charism that it envisions.

During this time of response to the COVID-19 outbreak, there will be two iterations of liturgy in the seminary community. The first is school-wide celebrations of Mass or Evening Prayer. This will take place approximately three times during the semester in St. Bede Theater (for example, opening liturgies, candidacy). The theater seats 400 people so spacing is possible.

All other liturgies will be divided between two chapels, St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel and a temporary chapel established in the Gallery. Having two spaces allows for appropriate spacing.

Masks will be worn by all congregants during the liturgies.

Those using St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel will take meals in Newman Dining Room. Those using the Gallery chapel will take meals in Anselm Dining Room.

The seminary community will be divided alphabetically so that a variety among classes and houses can be represented in each chapel. Groups will attend all liturgies in their assigned chapels, and there will be a change mid-semester so that each group will have the opportunity to participate in both chapels. The Blessed Sacrament will be reserved in both chapels.

Simple Adoration will take place in the St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 4:00 in the afternoon.

Adoration with celebrations of Evening Prayer will take place on Tuesday and Thursday with Benediction in both chapels. Adoration with Compline will take place every Sunday in both chapels.

Presiding priests and concelebrants will likewise move from chapel to chapel. The rector and vice rector will always be in separate chapels for the proclamation of the Gospel in the absence of a deacon.

Spanish-language celebrations of the Eucharist will be held on alternate days in the two chapels.

Ministries will be the same in both chapels (except for thurifer). Musicians may have to move between chapels.

Deacons will be preaching more often and, likewise, may have to move between chapels. It is important for deacons' preaching to be heard in variety and in both parts of the community.

The Sign of Peace is suspended during this period.

Communion will continue to be distributed under one species only and receiving in the hand will be the norm.

Holy water will not be used, except in sprinkling rites. Holy water will be made available for individual use in rooms.

The Liturgy of the Hours will continue to be prayed in the usual way.

Graduate weekend students will utilize Bede Hall chapel.

Highlights

- Two chapels will be established with a change in venue around mid-semester.
- Larger liturgies will be accommodated in St. Bede Theater.
- Those using St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel will take meals in Newman Dining Room.
- Those using the Gallery chapel will take meals in Anselm Dining Room.
- Concelebrants and presiders will move between chapels.
- Deacons will preach more frequently and move between chapels.
- Masks will be worn by all congregants during the liturgies.
- Adoration will take place in both chapels.

Supervised Ministry

By Sr. Rachel Geracitano, OSB, and Fr. Thomas Gricoski, OSB

Even before the school closed its formation year and sent students home last spring, pastoral formation was affected by the pandemic. In an ordinary year, each Wednesday the Pastoral Formation Office sends over 100 seminarians to dozens of local ministry sites. Seminarians spend several hours at ministry sites, teaching in classrooms; interacting with young and old, families and groups; attending liturgies and sharing meals.

Already by March 11, a handful of ministry sites had closed their doors to all volunteers. On March 12, the seminary canceled all supervised ministry for the remainder of the semester. Since student travel is restricted as we reopen, all off-campus ministry is suspended for the fall semester.

The suspension of in-person ministry comes as a difficult sacrifice, both for our seminarians and our local ministry sites. Pastoral formation is essential to formation for priesthood, and so it must continue in the fall under a modified format. After careful consideration, and consultation with equivalent programs in other seminaries, we have devised a plan to provide excellent pastoral formation for each seminarian this year.

Pastoral formation at Saint Meinrad has three components: supervised ministry, formation conferences and theological reflection. All off-campus supervised ministry is replaced this semester with on-campus tele-ministry and group supervision. Formation conferences and theological reflection opportunities are expanded and deepened this semester.

Tele-Ministry: Each seminarian (except I Philosophy, see below) will spend two to three hours per week on tele-ministry, scheduled so that it does not conflict with any other formational or educational activity. The Office of Pastoral Formation will assign each seminarian to contact a local ministry placement supervisor. If a seminarian's assigned site has no tele-ministry opportunities, then he will contact his vocation director (or religious superior) to inquire about tele-ministry opportunities in his local diocese (or religious community).

Each tele-ministry placement should focus, as much as possible, on the theme of the seminarian's formation year (social ministry, clinical ministry, catechetical ministry). If the seminarian cannot find a tele-ministry opportunity, the Office of Pastoral Formation will work with the seminarian to find a suitable ministry for the semester. Each tele-ministry should be interactive, with two-way communication between the seminarian and individuals or groups.

The ministry supervisor will act as a mentor to the seminarian. The responsibilities of the supervisor include assigning the appropriate ministry tasks, giving adequate instruction on how to complete the task, and following up with the seminarian to reflect on how the ministry is progressing each week.

Group Supervision: Each class will meet on Wednesday afternoons for group supervision, formation conferences or theological reflection. The pastoral formation staff will visit each class on a regular basis to check on how their ministry is progressing and to offer guidance on how to

grow appropriate skills and attitudes. The men of IV Theology will assist in supervising and coaching the other seminarians.

Formation Conferences: The usual formation conferences (Workers into the Harvest, or WITH) will be delivered online by off-campus ministers. Additional formation conferences will be given in-person by on-campus formators and faculty. The topics of these conferences focus on the theme of pastoral formation suitable to each formation year.

Theological Reflection: As usual, the men of IV Theology will lead small theological reflection groups (TRG). At these meetings, seminarians will present a recent ministry experience to their peer group, which will help him to reflect on the theological, spiritual, cultural, and pastoral layers of meaning in the event.

Instead of two TRG meetings, each group will meet four times in the semester. Weekly ministry journals aid the seminarian in practicing his skills for theological reflection and will continue to be due each week. This year the office will provide additional and varied prompts for the seminarians to aid them in reflecting on their ministry experiences.

I Philosophy: As new seminarians, the men of I Philosophy will make virtual visits to a variety of ministry sites, including large and small parishes, and diocesan offices, to become more acquainted with the types of ministry in the local Church.

Highlights

- Tele-ministry will replace off-campus supervised ministry.
- Seminarians will work in tele-ministry for two to three hours each of the 10 ministry weeks.
- Seminarians are responsible for contacting their assigned ministry sites to inquire about tele-ministry opportunities.
- If no tele-ministry is available at their local site, seminarians will contact their vocation director (or religious superior) to find a suitable parish for tele-ministry in their home diocese or community.
- Each class will meet on Wednesday afternoons for a pastoral formation conference, reflection group, or group supervision (a schedule will be provided for each class).
- Ministry journals will be due weekly and will include further prompts to aid the seminarian in his theological and pastoral reflections.
- The men of IV Theology will assist in pastoral formation for the rest of the seminary by leading theological reflection groups, giving supplemental supervision, and coaching on pastoral skills.

Student Life

By Fr. Tobias Colgan, OSB

As part of our preparations for the fall semester, we are exploring creative ways to foster student life while also ensuring the health and safety of the seminary community. Because we will be following CDC guidelines for masks and social distancing, and basically will be quarantined on campus, student life will necessarily include some different ways of interacting.

The five formation houses will continue to meet as usual, under the leadership of the formation deans and deacon prefects. The houses will be tasked with developing safe ways to foster fraternity within the house, including on-campus activities and meals together. The same will be true for the academic classes, under the leadership of the class representatives.

Recognizing the need for recreational opportunities and leisure-time activities to assist with the good mental health of the seminarians, the Seminary Pastoral Council (comprised of the deacon prefects, class representatives and international seminarian representative) will be asked to come up with creative ways to build fraternity within the limits of the guidelines. They will be assisted in this task by the teams of seminarians appointed to organize house challenges, athletics and social events.

Because we have ample space on the campus grounds, it will be important to encourage the men to get outside for recreation on a regular basis – whether for tennis, disc golf, soccer, fishing, etc. We also will explore possible full-school outings, such as a “field day” at the Monte Cassino Shrine or the nearby Lincoln State Park.

Additionally, the Wellness Center will be available to the seminarians every afternoon and evening. Likewise, the gym adjacent to the UnStable will be reserved for the exclusive use of the seminarians, where games of basketball, volleyball, indoor soccer and badminton regularly take place.

Seminarians who have work-study jobs should basically be unaffected. Their work-study jobs will, of course, need to be carried out within the limitations of the guidelines for masks and social distancing.

Recreation areas within the seminary will need to be used in different ways. For example, the student kitchens may be used for cooking but, because the adjacent dining space does not allow a lot of room for distancing, the food may need to be taken to a larger space to be shared. Likewise, the use of the main recreation room may allow for ping pong and pool, but not for gathering in a large group to watch TV. This will be a learning curve for all of us.

We anticipate that the two on-campus gathering places – Jack’s Coffee Shop and the UnStable – will be open in a limited way and reserved for the residential community only.

Highlights

- Masks are to be worn in all indoor group settings, and social distancing (six feet) is to be practiced.

- Hand sanitizing stations will be located around the most frequently used common spaces.
- Signs will be posted to indicate the areas of the buildings that are reserved for the resident community.
- Visiting each other's rooms will be possible only if there is room for proper social distancing.
- Off-campus trips will be permitted for essential needs, such as doctor visits or needed shopping. Masks must be worn at all times when in the presence of others off-campus.
- Permission will need to be sought for any extraordinary off-campus trips, especially if an overnight stay is included.
- If one has been away for an overnight trip – especially for several days – it will be necessary to be tested and then quarantine oneself until results are back.

Classroom Procedures

By Dr. Robert Alvis

As Saint Meinrad prepares to welcome seminarians back to campus for the fall semester, it is putting in place a variety of measures to ensure the safety of our students and faculty alike.

In late March 2020, as the dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic grew ever more apparent, Saint Meinrad made the decision to shift all classes online. Seminarians had a choice of completing the semester at home or within the regulated confines of a seminary “cloister.”

All things considered, that solution worked remarkably well, thanks to a lot of effort and goodwill by faculty, co-workers and seminarians alike. Yet it also just the first phase of a longer, more complicated challenge. The start of a new academic year would begin in several months, and it was becoming increasingly clear that, by fall, the dangers associated with the pandemic would remain stubbornly in place. Saint Meinrad determined that it would use this time to develop a model of education and formation that could safeguard the health of the entire seminary community.

As online instruction was likely to factor into this new model, the entire faculty was given the opportunity to take a summer course devoted to the topic. The faculty-led Committee on Virtual Instruction Design was established, tasked with studying the current challenge, considering possible models, and drafting guidelines for how the fall semester could be conducted. As the committee completed its work, the faculty continued to meet regularly via videoconference to keep everyone apprised of the school's efforts and to listen to recommendations and concerns. Steps also were taken to procure the additional classroom technology needed in the fall.

By early July, most of the elements of Saint Meinrad's approach to a safe fall semester were essentially in place. The approach is designed to accommodate the varied teaching styles and specific demands of particular courses.

The school has determined that, under certain conditions, in-person instruction can take place safely. Courses of this type will be held in large spaces that allow for adequate social distancing. It is recommended that seminarians maintain adequate distance from one another in the classroom, and that professors remain at least 10 feet apart from the seminarians while teaching.

In all courses, seminarians and professors alike will be required to wear face masks at all times in the classroom. Professors also will be expected to provide ways for absent seminarians to learn the material taught in the classroom and to complete course assessments.

While many on the faculty are still finalizing their plans for the fall, early indications suggest that around 40 percent plan to teach in person. Another 40 percent plan to take a hybrid approach, combining in-person teaching with online elements, such as recorded lectures posted to our learning management system. The remaining 20 percent of the faculty plan to teach fully online.

Other measures will be taken to ensure safety. Seminarians and faculty alike will be instructed not to attend class if they are feeling under the weather. In their interactions outside the classroom (during office hours, for example), non-cloistered faculty and seminarians will be expected to wear masks if they come within six feet of each other.

Highlights

The following measures are being enacted to ensure the safety of the seminary community as we approach the start of the fall semester:

- The faculty has been given the opportunity to teach their courses in online or hybrid formats.
- All on-campus classes will take place in large rooms that allow for social distancing.
- We are recommending that seminarians maintain adequate distance from one another, and that professors maintain at least ten feet of distance from students while teaching.
- In on-campus classes, seminarians and faculty will always be required to wear masks in the classroom.
- In their interactions outside the classroom, faculty and seminarians will be expected to wear masks if they come within six feet of each other.
- Seminarians and faculty alike will be instructed not to attend class if they are feeling under the weather.
- In anticipation of a higher rate of absenteeism, or the possibility that some seminarians may need to enter quarantine, the faculty will be required to provide ways for absent seminarians to learn the material and complete course assessments.

Spiritual Direction

By Fr. Bede Cisco, OSB, Fr. Jonathan Fassero, OSB, and Fr. Jim Schimelpfenig, SM

The primary concern of this section is to describe how we will provide spiritual and pastoral care to seminarians as penitents and spiritual directees in a manner that respects the safety of each person.

Spiritual Formation

The unusual external circumstances of the pandemic suggest four issues for special attention in spiritual formation and spiritual direction during the 2020 fall semester. Accompanying seminarians in meeting these challenges will advance their spiritual formation. Engaging these issues also will help prepare seminarians to be attentive to their parishioners, as the experiences of the pandemic will be felt and reflected on for years to come.

- **Physical Separation** – The practice of social distancing does not come easy for men who want to be engaged with others and bring Christ's presence to them. Maintaining social distance from one another will be a challenge. Not having an external ministry among God's people will be a hardship for men who want to serve. Physical distance is a reality in diocesan ministry and living alone in a rectory.
- **Solidarity** – The pandemic is a worldwide reality that unites everyone, even deniers, in a negative way. The spiritual challenge is to recognize our common humanity, the pain of those suffering from the illness, the harmful economic impact on many, and the dedicated service of medical professionals. We need to take a positive approach and unite ourselves with everyone, praying for them and offering support as we can, seeking a deeper unity in God's love and mercy.
- **Solitude** – Being alone can be a challenge for men who want to serve others. Seminarians learn gradually how to convert time alone into a spiritually rich experience of solitude. The social distancing we will be practicing gives more space for solitude and encountering spiritual benefits flowing from being at ease with one's self and with God.
- **Silence** – Social distancing will bring some reduction in social interaction. Allowing this quiet time to become the silence that complements solitude can promote growth in prayer and relationship with God.

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual directors living with the seminarians after on-campus classes ended in the spring continued to meet regularly with their directees. Some seminarians whose directors were not available met with these directors. Several seminarians who left campus in March continued to meet with their directors through technology (WebEx, Skype, FaceTime, telephone), and some who have left since the end of the semester continue to meet with their directors through technology. The technologically facilitated meetings have been a satisfactory substitute for in-person sessions, especially when there is a video component.

Fall Frequency – Our norm has been meeting with seminarians every three weeks with an hour allotted for the appointment. Directors may choose to continue that practice. Others may choose to respond to the shorter semester by scheduling more frequent meetings (every other week) for a shorter time. Directors also may want to leave time between appointments, rather than schedule them consecutively (for attention to air circulation).

Fall Location – As outlined below, some directors may meet with their directees in their offices or outside and all may use technology.

Directors residing in the seminary community or monastery – may meet directees in their offices with chairs so that director and directee are at least six feet apart. Masks are to be worn by both directors and directees. Directors also may ask some directees to meet through technology or give directees the option to meet that way. Directors should be attentive to adequate ventilation and sanitizing.

Directors not residing at Saint Meinrad – will meet with directees through technology.

Confessions

One resident priest-director was available during Adoration two times each week for confessions after on-campus classes ended and for a few weeks after the end of the semester. Since then, the confessor has been available at a scheduled time once each week.

Fall Frequency – A resident priest-director will be available to hear confessions on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 7-8 p.m.

Fall Location – The confessionals in St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel are not adequately ventilated, so they will not be used. Confessions will be heard in one of the practice chapels. A screen and kneeler will be set up and the confessor seated six feet from the screen. There will be chairs available for face-to-face confession, six feet from the confessor. Seminarians also can make an appointment with one of the resident priest-directors to celebrate the sacrament in the director's office. There will be no extraordinary confessor.

Highlights

- Spiritual directors will be available for all seminarians. Some will meet with their directors through technology.
- Confessors will be available at scheduled times four days each week. For other times, seminarians may make an appointment to meet with a resident priest-director for confession in his office.
- When a seminarian is not feeling well, he should cancel his appointment for direction. If a director is not feeling well, he should cancel his appointments and inform the formation staff.

Counseling

By Sr. Diane Pharo, SCN, and Sr. Patty Lasher, OSB

The Counseling Center Staff strives to provide a safe, welcoming and respectful environment for all who seek counseling services. The Counseling Center will be open for in-person appointments as the Fall 2020 semester begins. If a seminarian prefers to meet virtually or by phone, that preference will be honored.

Safety precautions to prevent a spread of COVID-19 will be in place.

Highlights

- The door at the entrance to the Counseling Center will remain open throughout the day, thereby eliminating the need for multiple hands touching the door handle.
- Appointments will be kept to 50 minutes, allowing time between appointments for sanitizing surfaces.
- Efforts to maintain social distancing of six feet within the counseling offices will be challenging. Counselor and client will wear face masks throughout the session.
- When a seminarian is feeling sick at the time of his scheduled appointment, he will be expected to reschedule his in-person appointment.

Graduate Theology Program

By Sr. Jeana Visel, OSB

The Graduate Theology Program serves laypeople and deacons pursuing studies in various formats. Students typically attend some combination of weekday courses alongside seminarians, on-campus weekend courses, weeklong intensive-residency/hybrid classes, and asynchronous online courses.

In response to COVID-19, during the 2019-20 school year, spring and summer weekend and intensive courses were shifted online. Some courses kept live synchronous elements, while others shifted to Saint Meinrad's more typical asynchronous online format.

For the Fall 2020 term, we anticipate making the following adjustments:

- Graduate Theology students will be restricted to course formats that do not include in-person study alongside seminarians.
- An in-person orientation will be offered the evening of September 11; an online orientation module also is available for students on Moodle, our learning management system.
- Two weekend courses will be offered in person in September, October and November. Respecting the cloister spaces of the monastic community and seminary, our students will utilize St. Bede Hall and the Guest House. Classes will take place with social distancing; both students and instructors will wear masks. Graduate students will also use St. Bede Chapel.
- A third weekend course will be offered in a synchronous online format.
- Three regularly scheduled online courses will run asynchronously through the term.

Continuing Formation

By Mrs. Agnes Kovacs

The Continuing Formation Program offers a range of for-credit and non-credit programming. In 2020, coursework for the Certificate in Reflective Practices and Certificate in Spiritual Direction took place in January and February, respectively.

By the time COVID-19 hit in mid-March, Continuing Formation was getting ready for the late spring and summer offerings: a Catechesis of the Good Shepherd training, a summer chant workshop, the Parish Catechetical Leadership Institute, and the Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising course. These programs were canceled, postponed or recalibrated for online delivery.

- Three priests were taking their sabbatical at Saint Meinrad at the time the seminary community moved into cloister. One sabbaticant decided to leave, but two of them decided to stay in the cloister and even extended their stay until July 1.

- An Ancient Christianity tour to Georgia and Armenia was canceled.
- The summer chant workshop at Saint Meinrad was canceled, but Sr. Jeana Visel, Br. John Mark Falkenhain, and Br. Joel Blaize led a six-session pre-conference chant workshop online for the National Pastoral Musicians.
- Instead of the July 12-16 on-campus gathering of the Parish Catechetical Leadership Institute, we are offering an online gathering July 14, from 1-4 p.m.
- The start date for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd training has been pushed back to January 2021, with follow-up sessions in March and May 2021.
- The Lake Institute canceled in-person workshops for the summer, so the Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising course has been shifted to late October. The summer intensive week for the Spiritual Direction certificate course was moved online.
- Seizing the opportunity of the moment, Continuing Formation is offering two new online pastoral formation workshops: “We will Serve the Lord: The Domestic Church” on July 28, and “Emerging with Grace” on August 12. We are planning to add a workshop on “Theological Reflection” in September. A scheduled October formation workshop on “Young Adult Ministry” will be on campus, with social distancing measures in place.
- We plan to have a fully online option ready for the Reflective Practices session scheduled for January 2021.
- No decision has been made yet about the Spiritual Direction Practicum week scheduled for mid-February 2021.

Permanent Deacon Formation Program

By Deacon Rick Wagner

The Permanent Deacon Formation Program serves various dioceses, sending instructors during the academic year for monthly academic formation sessions. Typically, fourth-year candidates come to campus in the summer for a weeklong homiletics workshop. Saint Meinrad also provides ongoing formation offerings.

Given the pandemic, we have consulted with each diocese regarding local virus-related protocols. We have made efforts to connect assigned lecturers with the formation directors of the diocese to which they have been assigned well in advance of the scheduled course. Lecturers and directors have worked through Plan A and Plan B scenarios, such that the instructor is always ready to teach the course in person, but prepared to do so online if needed.

Three of our partner dioceses, Springfield, IL, Cheyenne, WY, and Wilmington, DE, are planning to offer their scheduled homiletics week in the local diocese this summer.

The Diocese of Evansville rescheduled its April-May Pastoral Care and Counseling class to be offered in July-August. However, they are still unable to host the course in-person, so it will now be taught remotely.

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, WV, canceled its ongoing formation programming for both May and August. An October program is still to be offered as scheduled.

All 12 of our partner dioceses have been contacted and put in touch with their assigned lecturers for August and September courses. As virus-related protocols are continuing to evolve, plans are in place for the lecturers to teach the courses remotely, if needed.

Institute for Priests and Presbyterates

By Fr. Julian Peters, OSB

The Institute for Priests and Presbyterates serves as Saint Meinrad Seminary's arm for the ongoing formation of priests. Regular programming serves recently ordained/associate pastors, newly appointed pastors, international priests, priests preparing for retirement, and those seeking a summer mini-sabbatical. In addition, the Institute regularly facilitates presbyteral assemblies and retreats held at Saint Meinrad and provides retreat/meeting opportunities for support groups and individuals.

The pandemic has necessitated the cancellation of a number of our programs through the summer months. We expect, however, to resume our regular programming in September 2020. IPP programs are held in St. Bede Hall, which provides for separate housing, chapel, meeting and dining facilities.

Scheduled for the fall term are the following events and programs:

- September 9-10: Institute for Priests and Presbyterates Advisory Board Meeting
- September 14-18: New Pastors Workshop
- October 12-16: World Priest Workshop
- November 9-13: New Pastors Workshop
- November 30-December 4: Encore Priests (Pre-Retirement Program)

"One Bread, One Cup" Program

By Tammy Becht

Sadly, "One Bread, One Cup" was forced to cancel all three summer conferences planned for 2020. We had held out some hope for a modified College Ministerial Internship Program, but that hope was dashed by the continued spread of COVID-19.

As a result of cancellations, OBOC contacted several of the scheduled catechists and musicians and proposed that they offer online options for youth and their leaders throughout the shutdown. Katie Prejean McGrady offered some Thursday evening live chats on Instagram, Robert Feduccia produced a nine-week Bible study series for high school teens, Fr. Eric Augenstein offered "Today's Liturgical Moment" videos to make some great points about celebrating liturgy virtually, and Steve Angrisano is still going strong with the daily Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

We are currently brainstorming additional ways to stay in touch with our parish and high school groups as the distancing measures remain necessary. We are planning for the 2021 conferences as well as planning new intern application processes. We hope to welcome our current and former interns to the annual Wintern Reunion in December. We also are taking this time to review practices, curriculum, and programming to ensure that OBOC remains effective in enhancing the liturgical experience of our clientele.

Young Adult Initiative

By Michal Horace

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Saint Meinrad Young Adult Initiative (YAI) continues to accompany our 15 partner parishes in engaging young adults, ages 23-29, especially through these trying times. While most of our partner parishes have decreased their YAI efforts to varying degrees during the crisis, some of them see the crisis as a unique opportunity to engage young adults.

Our spring gathering with parish representatives was successfully pivoted to a virtual event that included keynote presentations and small group sharing. We are reviewing whether to change our fall gathering to a virtual event. Normally each spring and fall, the YAI program director physically visits each partner parish for consultations. However, the spring visits were held virtually, and the fall parish visits mostly likely will follow suit.

In addition, a fruitful virtual meeting was held with each parish's YAI core team members to discuss how they can engage young adults during the pandemic. We also are assisting our parishes in strengthening the domestic church of young adult households within our partner parishes.

By sending copies of the recently published *Prayers and Blessing for the Domestic Church* by Agnes M. Kovacs and Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, to select partner parish households this summer, we intend to gauge the book's effectiveness while inspiring households to develop their own household faith practices. Our YAI intranet hub provides communication and collaboration opportunities and has proven even more valuable during the pandemic disruptions and stay-at-home orders.



Very Reverend Denis Robinson, OSB
President-Rector
July 16, 2020



Saint Meinrad
Seminary &
School of Theology