

so that we could continue to cultivate habits and lifestyles that will lead to a long, healthy and fruitful life of ministry. This presentation provided fodder for many conversations with the other “baby priests”. Especially as one who was just ordained and who is just beginning in this ministry, I feel very blessed to be able to learn from Dr. McClone but more so from the collected wisdom and experience of my brothers in Holy Cross whose footsteps I am closely following.

There was much conversation at this year’s Baby Priest Camp about the fact that it will be the last. No, we have not decided to stop providing this week of ongoing formation, but next year, for the first time in many years, we will count in our number a man from our province who will have recently professed final vows as a Holy Cross brother. Because of this, excitedly, we will no longer be able to call this week of renewal and continual formation “Baby Priest Camp”. While it is sad to see our affectionate nickname - Baby Priest Camp - go away, this change is a great blessing! We give thanks to God for the gift of the brother’s vocation to Holy Cross and to our province. We also give thanks to the many people who support and make possible our continuing formation and the unfolding of God’s plan for us, for our community and for our ministry.

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MONTHLY REFLECTION SERIES

Early Years Gathering Baby Priest Camp Reflection

by Rev. Brogan Ryan, C.S.C.

Every year in the seminary, the summer ends (and the academic year begins) with the formation community gathering at the Holy Cross Center in La Porte, Indiana. We creatively call it “La Porte Week”. The week serves as a chance to reunite, relax and reorient ourselves as a community to the work of formation before the year begins. Filled with prayer, storytelling, conferences and recreation, the week is one that is anticipated and remembered fondly. Because I professed final vows and was ordained last year, I am no longer invited to La Porte Week!

I was recently sharing this reality with a friend of mine who is not in Holy Cross, and he asked if because of final vows and ordination I had, in a sense, graduated from formation. This was a framework that made sense to him and matches how we approach school and many other formative experiences in our lives. In religious life, however, we try to think of formation less as a discrete process and more as a continuous unfolding. As our Constitutions say, *“We pronounce our vows in a moment, but living them for the sake of the kingdom is the work of a lifetime.”* (Constitution 6:57) The vocation which began long before any of us entered Holy Cross is nurtured and discerned in the seminary and continues to be nurtured and discerned differently when we enter into active ministry. Our Constitutions continue, *“At the completion of initial formation...the provinces provide for this transition in the life and work of members so that formation truly continues...Lifelong*

formation is lifelong growth.” (Constitution 6:75, 77)

One of the areas of focus for this continual formation for the United States Province is the annual Early Years Workshop, which we affectionately call “Baby Priest Camp”. Baby Priest Camp happens every summer at the Holy Cross Center in La Porte, Indiana, and is a gathering of all of those in the province who have been ordained in the past 5 years - the baby priests! This past summer, my four ordination classmates and I joined the 14 other newly ordained priests for our first Baby Priest Camp.

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Not unlike La Porte Week during the seminary, this time provided lots of opportunity for prayer, reunion and recreation. Because all of our assignments are varied, the opportunity to be with one another and catch up is cherished. The time is as much about formation of our brotherhood and community as it is about our personal ongoing formation. We gather from all over - from Portland, Santiago, Boston, Austin, Notre Dame and more to support one another in our young



priesthoods and religious lives. As a just-ordained priest, this was a great part of the week for me. I got to hear from all of these brothers in community about the experiences that they’ve had as priests in so many different cultures and contexts. They shared the graces and gifts but also the challenges and struggles of being a young priest in the world today. And all of this was gathered up in our shared ministry and life in Holy Cross, in our shared service to the Church and the world, and in our common vocation to respond to God’s call in our lives in this particular way.

In addition to the informal sharing and community time, this year we also had a presentation and workshop from Dr. Kevin McClone, a psychologist who works primarily with ministers, priests and religious communities in the integration of spirituality and human psychological health and development. Dr. McClone presented on Msgr. Stephen Rossetti’s 2011 study “Why Priests are Happy” and facilitated a discussion on the ways in which this study could be applied and integrated in our lives now