

## The Seminary and Western Culture: Relationships that Promote Recovery and Holiness

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“THE FAULT LINE OF OUR CULTURE . . . is that we have been willing to sacrifice objective truth in order to save subjective freedom, understood particularly as freedom of choice by an autonomous self. . . . This fault line will eventually erode our civilization from within, just as the willingness on the part of Marxist societies to sacrifice personal freedom for social justice (. . . brutal equality) eroded those societies.”<sup>1</sup>

This quote from Cardinal Francis George, echoing ideas of St. John Paul II, highlights the corrosive effect the autonomous self can have upon culture when such autonomy is that culture’s supreme principle. In contradistinction, he raises the example of Marxism, as well. These remarks from Cardinal George were written in 2008; and by our current time, not only had the North American population been long *tutored in autonomy* by the popular culture, but also its government and professions had begun *tutoring the populace in Marxist principles* as well. For example, the United States Government promulgated the Affordable Care Act, *undermining religious freedom* as it sought to impose a universal duty for employers to provide abortifacients, as well as other contraceptives, in their health care benefits. A weakening of religious freedom was also recognized within the culture as government leaders

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<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I., *The Difference God Makes* (New York: Crossroad, 2009), 68.

narrowed their articulation of such from the “right to religious freedom” to the “right to worship.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the triumph of gay marriage in the US Courts created a cultural condition wherein individuals find it more burdensome to refuse to cooperate with same sex weddings, leaving private businesses exposed to punishment for not assisting homosexuals with the supplies or services they need to legally wed and celebrate such a wedding.<sup>3</sup> In Canada, further individual freedoms were sacrificed for “justice” when the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons declared that physicians had to refer women to doctors who would perform abortions if, in conscience, the referring physician could not himself or herself perform such a procedure. It was declared by the College that referring clients to such abortion providers was not cooperation with evil, since no woman should ever be refused an abortion and be given no alternative for her “care.”<sup>4</sup>

In the area of the triumph of the autonomous self, it has become a sign of “intolerance” to make moral judgments about the sexual behaviors of others. When the archbishop of San Francisco attempted to update his teachers’ moral clauses as contingent upon further employment, 80 percent of the teachers employed by the archdiocesan school system revolted. Apparently, even if one is employed by the Church, subjective freedom trumps truth.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “Religious Liberty vs. Erotic Liberty—Religious Liberty Is Losing,” January 12, 2015, on Albert Mohler’s official website (copr. 2002–2016), last accessed August 8, 2016, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2015/01/12/religious-liberty-vs-erotic-liberty-religious-liberty-is-losing/>. See also Paul Moses, “Freedom of Worship vs. Freedom of Religion,” *Commonweal*, February 22, 2012, last accessed August 6, 2016, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/blog/freedom-worship-vs-freedom-religion>.

<sup>3</sup> Alyssa Newcomb, “Washington Florist Sued for Refusing To Provide Flowers for Same Sex Wedding,” *ABC News*, April 10, 2013, last accessed August 6, 2016 <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/washington-florist-sued-refusing-provide-flowers-sex-wedding/story?id=18922065>.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Swan, “Ontario Doctors Must Refer for Abortions, Says College of Physicians,” *The Catholic Register*, March 5, 2015, last accessed August 6, 2016, <http://www.catholicregister.org/item/19833-ontario-doctors-must-refer-for-abortions-says-college-of-physicians>.

<sup>5</sup> Kevin Fagan, “S. F. City Attorney Argues Against Archbishop’s Morality Clauses,” *SF Gate*, March 6, 2015, last accessed August 6, 2016, <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/S-F-city-attorney-argues-against-archbishop-s-6119697.php>. “Hundreds of San Francisco Catholic School Teachers Urge Archbishop To Remove Morality Clauses,” *Huffington Post*, March 4, 2015, last accessed August 6, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/04/san-francisco-catholic-teachers-morality\\_n\\_6799864.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/04/san-francisco-catholic-teachers-morality_n_6799864.html).

This strangely divided culture where the autonomous self reigns alongside governmental and institutional attacks on the individual conscience in the name of “justice” calls for a profound deliberation on the part of seminary formation staff. What kind of formation is needed today so that these future priests may preach the Gospel to such a culture and, at the same time, “recover” from such a culture themselves? Such recovery may be necessary due to a man’s exposure to either the ideology of *subjective freedom over truth* or an understanding that “justice” *warrants the undermining of freedom of conscience* (or to both). Beyond these two distortions of public life, recovery may also be needed because of the personal “wounds” present in seminarians as they disentangle themselves from popular culture to enter formation: gaming addictions, addictions to pornography, effects of parental divorce upon maturation, drug or alcohol use, a history of unchaste behaviors, resistance to authority, and so on. Men interested in entering the seminary should, of course, not be admitted if addictions are present or serious emotional wounds remain from aspects of their upbringing. However, even those not-so-burdened may carry the marks of a culture that gives a man little or no guidance on personal freedom or how to appropriate a way of life marked by spiritual discipline.

This article will first look at the Catholic understanding of culture and its importance for forming character and then notice what unique features of seminary formation offer ways to both engage culture and be healed of its deleterious effects.

### **How Does the Church Understand Culture?**

Culture arises from man’s self-understanding regarding the use of reason and freedom. In this way, culture is basic: it is present and is established wherever man endeavors to express what he has judged to be the meaning of existence.<sup>6</sup> Due to freedom and sin, this judgment is not infallible and cultures can be corrupt or anemic in expressing values that carry truth and beauty to the persons being formed within them. Therefore, culture contains and conveys the values of any current epoch. Culture necessarily carries with it morals and religious meaning and patterns of whom or what is to be worshipped. The Book of Wisdom gives a primordial view of culture when it says, “And in your

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the meaning of culture, see Robert Barron, “To Evangelize the Culture,” *Chicago Studies*, last accessed August 6, 2016, [http://chicagostudies.org/Barron\\_Evangelization\\_Article](http://chicagostudies.org/Barron_Evangelization_Article).

wisdom [You] have established humankind . . . to govern the world in holiness and righteousness, and to render judgment in integrity of heart” (Wis 9:2–3). Such was noted by the Pontifical Council for Culture:

[Culture] is the whole of human activity, human intelligence and emotions, the human quest for meaning, human customs and ethics. In a pastoral approach to culture, what is at stake is for human beings to be restored in fullness to having been created in “the image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:26), tearing them away from the anthropocentric temptation of considering themselves independent from the Creator. . . . Man always exists in a particular culture, but it must also be admitted that man is not exhaustively defined by that same culture. Human nature is itself the measure of culture and the condition of ensuring that man does not become prisoner of any of his cultures, but asserts his personal dignity by living in accordance with the profound truth of his being.<sup>7</sup>

In the educational and political culture, many subscribe to postmodernism, where language has little or no meaning and so Catholicism’s approach to objective truth and even the existence of a “human nature” is irrelevant and passé. From a faith perspective, Western culture can become wearying to live in because it carries in its institutions and governments a “radical emancipation of man from God” and, therefore, from a clarity regarding truth. In the end, the truth is relativized, as in the case of postmodernism, or narrowed, as in the case of scientism. Could it be possible that one reason seminary enrollment has increased in the twenty-first century is the spiritual fatigue carried in Western men as they labor to breathe in the culture’s thin air of unmoored reason passing for philosophical inquiry? While cultures corrupt, they are never intrinsically evil, since the Church and others who perceive that truth is accessible to human reason hold such absolute denigration at bay.<sup>8</sup>

While cultures are subject to change and decay, the primacy of Christ is an unquenchable source of life (cf. Col 1:8–12; Eph

<sup>7</sup> Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture* (1999), §2, quoting Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), §53.

<sup>8</sup> See Thomas Woods, Jr., *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2005), 9–10.

1:8). As bearers of the absolute novelty of Christ to the heart of different cultures, Gospel missionaries incessantly exceed the limits of each individual culture, without allowing themselves to be ensnared by the earthly visions of a better world. Since the kingdom of Christ is not of this world (cf. John 18:36), the Church does not take away anything from the temporal welfare of any people. Rather, she fosters and takes to herself, insofar as they are good, the abilities, the resources and customs of peoples. In so taking them to herself, she purifies, strengthens, and elevates them.<sup>9</sup>

The Church (and therefore its future priests) loves the culture it is living within.<sup>10</sup> Despite a culture's challenges, one cannot simply critique culture; one also has to behold the beauty of what humans create and sustain within any given historical epoch. "A culture is transformed only by those who love it, just as individuals are converted only by evangelizers who love them. . . . The best way to evangelize is through witness and the practice of holiness. . . . The saints will always ratify what is best about a culture, and they will always properly critique what is demonic about it."<sup>11</sup> Holiness, the search to remain in unceasing union with the Trinity and bear the fruit of such union to the culture, provides the best platform from

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<sup>9</sup> Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach*, §4.

<sup>10</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (1965), §19: "Since human culture and also sacred science has progressed in our times, priests are urged to suitably and without interruption perfect their knowledge of divine things and human affairs and so prepare themselves to enter more opportunely into conversation with their contemporaries."

<sup>11</sup> Cardinal George, *The Difference God Makes*, 58. Pope John Paul II highlights the ambivalent nature of our current age regarding moral values in culture in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), §§8–9. He also mentions there the progress that some cultures can embody as they move beyond certain ideologies and how new generations affirm what is good and noble about the human vocation: "First of all, mention should be made of the decrease of certain phenomena which had caused many problems in the recent past, such as radical rebellion, libertarian tendencies, utopian claims, indiscriminate forms of socialization and violence. It must be recognized, moreover, that today's young people, with the vigor and vitality typical of their age, are also bearers of ideals which are coming to the fore in history: the thirst for freedom; the recognition of the inestimable value of the person; the need for authenticity and sincerity; a new conception and style of reciprocity in the rapport between men and women; a convinced and earnest seeking after a more just, sympathetic and united world; openness and dialogue with all; and the commitment to peace" (§9).

which to both affirm and critique the culture. The way of holiness is the way of priestly formation. And yet, holiness is cautiously held as an “ideal” on some seminary faculties who see such as “premature” for seminarians or simply a poetic way of encouraging what is real but not yet relevant. However, if seminary formators would invite men to relentlessly relate all that they need to the One who desires to give them all that is needed, then the very ground for holiness is fixed.

This reality of a providential God is itself mediated by the spiritual vulnerability possessed by formators in their duty to facilitate human and spiritual maturation in seminarians. This *vulnerability* can be *secured* by way of the laudable commitment of rectors to encourage universal spiritual direction for their faculty and formation staff. Similarly, maturation in seminarians can be achieved only through their hospitality to the truth as it is mediated by *the relationships that are the seminary* (God, staff, teachers, peers). The seminarian, like the culture, needs to be receptive to the truths God wishes to impart about himself and about those aspects of each man that need both purification and affirmation.

**The Formation of Holy Priests as a Response to Culture:  
Recovery by Way of Relationships of Love and Truth**

One of the consistent themes in priestly formation is the goal of forming integrated men. To be integrated is to have suffered in one’s own body the coming together of theological truth, prayerful availability to God in all things, moral maturation, and pastoral charity. This integration occurs through the suffering that happens in a man over time as his ego makes room for theological truth and the needs of the poor, prayer as his very breath, and moral and emotional conversion as his ready disposition. Most basically, seminarian formation facilitates a capacity to undergo repentance over any *refusal to love* and to welcome healing around any *incapacity to receive love*. The relationships within the seminary are a progressive conspiracy by God and staff to bring the seminarian deeper into reality and disabuse him of any habit of hiding in culturally acceptable fantasies. These fantasies could be nesting in disproportionate use of technological devices, escapist behavior in entertainment or food or sex; they could be neurotically sought after in a the search for influence, power, “success,” or an independent spirit. As the *Program of Priestly Formation* indicates, a seminarian leaves fantasy, enters reality, and is sustained in it only if he suffers the coming

of Christ and endeavors *to remain in him* (John 15:4).<sup>12</sup> *To remain in him is to exist in reality.* To remain in him and, therefore, exist in reality is to be a man who is spiritually formed.<sup>13</sup> Such a formation is a suffering of detachment from both the imaginary visions within the mind and heart and the objective fantasies that are communicated to a man by culture. The man who “remains” in Christ is free. Only those who commune with the source are free (John 15:5). Such communion allows a man to see that any one culture does not exhaust the meaning of one’s own being.

If successful seminary formation is a progressive “breathing together” in the Spirit (con-spiracy) by those who want to be brought deeper into reality, then what moves a man to such depths? Primarily, it is the capacity of a seminarian to entrust himself to the Spirit in and through the relationship he forges with his formators. If a man wants to recover from the culture that has wounded him, then he needs to be able to stand the pain of self-examination. Such pain is borne well only because the seminarian “remains” in Christ and decides to entrust the truth about himself to the formation staff—even if this means that no vocation to priesthood is discerned. The seminary, viewed as a set of relationships, aids seminarians in recovering from the culture by having them seek freedom from all that binds them to ideology,<sup>14</sup> or in the realm of spiritual progress, all that binds them to lies about themselves or their relationship with God. One enters the relationships that are a seminary, of course, to seek priesthood, but a man cannot assume that, once he is “set free” (John 11:44), an

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<sup>12</sup> United States Council of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2006), §115: “Since spiritual formation is the core that unifies the life of a priest, it stands at the heart of seminary life *and is the center around which all other aspects are integrated.*” See also §108.

<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, §45: “Spiritual formation . . . should be conducted in such a way that the students may learn to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Those who are to take on the likeness of Christ the priest by sacred ordination should form the habit of drawing close to him as friends in every detail of their lives. They should live his paschal mystery in such a way that they will know how to initiate into it the people committed to their charge.”

<sup>14</sup> See Vatican II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, §8: “In building the Christian community, priests are never to put themselves at the service of some human faction of ideology, but, as heralds of the Gospel and shepherds of the Church, they are to spend themselves for the spiritual growth of the Body of Christ.”

ordination date will be given.<sup>15</sup> A man enters seminary to hear the voice of Christ call. But he cannot listen if he is bound to lies about his identity or enmeshed in habits that prevent him from receiving the consolation of Christ's own voice, a voice carrying truth in love.

If the seminarian becomes free enough to hear Christ call and then becomes a priest, he will then, as a sacrament, descend upon the culture to affect it by way of his freedom, a freedom that is a binding to Christ. In this man's very communion with Christ is the source of his public witness. Without seminary facilitating this realignment of what binds a man, the priest would simply be a citizen of his time, possessing no more fecund imagination than one found within the limits of politics, economics, entertainment, and higher education (and the insipid values found therein). Instead, through faith and faith's profound unity with the eternal wisdom given by God to the Church, the priest, if he remains disciplined, can breathe air that freshens culture. This air is circulated by God by way of the altar and then is circulated in culture through witness. The priest is an intellectual, but not in the sense of being defined by the theories learned in a university. He is an intellectual who measures all thought against the Incarnate Word, the Logos, and Reason-Itself-Become-Flesh. This kind of thinking is, in its essence, the result of prayer, not calculation. As Pope Benedict XVI noted, "the faithful expect only one thing from priests: that they be specialists in promoting the encounter between man and God. The priest is not asked to be an expert in economics, construction or politics. He is expected to be an expert in the spiritual life."<sup>16</sup> From this expertise, the priest shares the mind of Christ with the culture by way of this study and his own affective and spiritual maturation.<sup>17</sup> Being a man of prayer, however, does not guarantee either intellectual acumen or facility with the knowledge

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<sup>15</sup> There are men in the seminary who resist formation out of fear of the pain of conversion, a small fraction simply trying to "play the game" and "get through," and then another portion of the population who are sincere but slower in welcoming the truth about themselves unto needed conversion through intimacy with the Trinity. What possibly new and creative ideas can seminaries develop to minister to these men who truly want to mature but, through no ill will on their part, cannot cooperate *just now*?

<sup>16</sup> Benedict XVI, "Meeting with Clergy," Warsaw Cathedral, 25 May 2006, last accessed August 8, 2016, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/may/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20060525\\_poland-clergy.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060525_poland-clergy.html).

<sup>17</sup> See James Keating, "Theology as Thinking in Prayer," *Chicago Studies* 53.1 (2014): 70–83.



and experience necessary to guide people in the spiritual life. This comes about only through the integrated formation previously noted. To be integrated is to have suffered in one's own body the coming together of theological truth, prayerful availability to God in all things, moral maturation, and pastoral charity.

Such integration is a remedy for any of the dark influences or partial truths conveyed from the culture to a man. In this integration, a man suffers the reorientation of habits, the purification of desires, and the healing of any intellectual bias or partisan ideology as he bathes in the singular resources that make up the reality and relationships of the seminary: spiritual direction, human formation, intellectual formation, pastoral competency, liturgies, private prayer, spiritual reading, exposure to the lives of the saints, fraternal or peer correction, the example of mature priest role models, self-discipline and virtue, development in prudence, temperance, chastity, immersion in Scripture, and, finally, guidance from one's bishop.

Such a structure of relationships mediating truth and inviting conversion is, of its very nature, a sign that the seminarian is loved by both God and the Church. Such a structure bears on it the capacity to convey truth to the man as a remedy to any lies or bias he carries within his heart. Such love and truth must be actively received by the man himself, since it is acknowledged that the structure and content of seminary alone are not sufficient to heal someone. A man cannot become holy if he passively exists within the set of relationships that is seminary. It is Christ himself whom the relationships are communicating when both the formators and seminarians make themselves available to truth and love. It is Christ who converts and heals the seminarians and replaces their bias or ideology with a new mind, one beyond the limits of culture (1 Cor 2:16; Isa 43:19; Rev 21:5). When the seminary exists in a circulation of grace and vulnerability to one another in truth, then the seminarians cannot remain dull from unthinking participation in culture but, instead, come alive by way of "unveiled faces" gazing on the beauty of the Lord (2 Cor 3:12–18). It is God who humanizes the culture through the vulnerability of those who allow themselves to be affected by him. It is the priest whose work is to impart a life that is more than human: "We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), §8.

**The Formation of Holy Priests as Missionaries to Culture:  
Eternal Wisdom in a Time of Autonomy and  
Imposed “Values”<sup>19</sup>**

In the face of all the different and, at times, contrasting cultures present in the various parts of the world, inculturation seeks to obey Christ’s command to preach the Gospel to all nations, even unto the ends of the earth. Such obedience does not signify either syncretism or a simple adaptation of the announcement of the Gospel, but rather the fact that the Gospel penetrates the very life of cultures, becomes incarnate in them, overcoming those cultural elements that are incompatible with . . . Christian living, and raising their values to the mystery of salvation which comes from Christ.<sup>20</sup>

In their own way, priests carry a true missionary spirit, and they open people to a larger vision of reality in an era that diminishes the world of wonder and establishes meaning only in a narrow band of “more of the same.” This lack of wonder leads to a bored and boring culture, even though its activities are frenetic.<sup>21</sup> It is bored and boring because much of its activities flow more from the individual ego and less from the love relationship with God. The Gospel, received as flowing from the sacramental ministry of the clergy,<sup>22</sup> ends this imprisonment and opens people to a wider field of living: participation in the mysteries of Christ. The priest, in other words, opens and guards the doorway to divine love. It is this divine love that establishes culture upon a firm foundation whereupon reason can be ordered toward truth and action ordered toward goodness and holiness. By presiding at the origin of all human flourishing, the adoration of God in the celebration of the Paschal Mystery, the priest dedicates his life to seeing that love, his own

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<sup>19</sup> See USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, §110: “Seminarians are to have a spiritual formation grounded in Trinitarian communion that leads them to solidarity with others, especially those most in need, a commitment to justice and peace, a reciprocal exchange of spiritual and material gifts, and an authentic missionary spirit expressed in a willingness to serve where needed.”

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, §55.

<sup>21</sup> See Jean-Charles Nault, O.S.B., *The Noonday Devil* (San Francisco: Ignatius 2015), 120.

<sup>22</sup> See Aidan Nichols, O.P., *Yves Congar* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), 83: “[The hierarchy] must teach, yet the laity must ‘receive’ their teaching—not in the sense of conferring on it a . . . validity by their assent, but of rendering it fruitful in the Christian life of the entire body.”

and his people's, does not run cold (Matt 24:12). Such adoration transforms persons and deepens their participation in reality. Thus culture is re-aligned by these fruits of adoration and wonder.<sup>23</sup>

The ascendancy of subjectivity and freedom, so characteristic of our modern age, is plunging us constantly into a climate of anthropocentrism which is aided and abetted by a mediating culture which closes the individual in on himself and keeps him from achieving a liberating communion. . . . There is perhaps nothing more urgent today than a new evangelization of contemplation, if we wish a return of the sacred to produce salutary results in our contemporary culture. . . . A new inculturation of the Gospel can only arise from the intimate encounter of man in the flesh with the Word of Love which calls him and ravishes him, rooting him in Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup>

This is the highly specific work of the priest—first to suffer an encounter with the Word of Love in his own flesh, which is seminary formation at its best, and then to facilitate this same path for his parishioners. In so doing, the priest identifies himself as one who is not ashamed of the Gospel, not reticent to breathe the supernatural, and, thus, eager to lead others into a communion with Christ by a disciplined contemplation of the beauty of his actions. This beholding of the actions of the Christ, which began for the Church with the Incarnation and continues now in its sacramental life and in the lives of the saints, allows persons to be affected by the truth carried in such actions. Being so affected, the person is established as such a one in culture and becomes, at first, a curiosity, maybe a threat, but optimally, an occasion of grace. The priest spends his entire life dedicated to mediating spiritual sustenance to lay people so they can have the courage to give such witness.

By way of his own formation, a priest can guide others through the way of no longer accepting a culturally imposed identity as exhaustive of one's dignity and meaning. As the priest has first suffered a recovery from culture, he may be able to reach his parishioners and awaken within them a new Christic imagination. This Christic imagination replaces the anemic cultural tutoring that furnishes a mind with only

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<sup>23</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 104–05.

<sup>24</sup> Marc Ouellet, "Hans Urs von Balthasar: Witness to the Integration of Faith and Culture," *Communio* 18.1 (Spring 1991): 124–25.

a political, economic, and entertainment imagination. The Christic imagination is new and rightly theological, born of the contemplation of Christ's own actions that gracefully come to inhere in the mind and move the will to a dedicated mission to culture: witnessing to the baptized life. Such a mind is now substantial as a result of the grace of contemplating Christ and suffering his coming by way of the sacramental life and moral conversion.

### **Discerning Cultural Recovery**

The effects of being disproportionately formed by “this passing age” (Rom. 12:1–2) upon a seminarian's thinking and character have to be eased in seminary if that seminarian is to be one who is directed by the Spirit *from within*. In seminary, a man is intentionally placed within a set of relationships that conspire to mediate an encounter between Christ and that seminarian. For various reasons—some intentional, others not—some seminaries may order their relationships primarily in accord with the customs of academia. This type of reductionism is fought against right at the heart of the Church, in both *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and the *Program for Priestly Formation*, which both advocate that a man be immersed into a communion of relationships, relationships that mediate an encounter with Christ. Seminary is a conspiracy of relationships that relentlessly encourage a man not to settle for an ideological view of his own formation. Seminary is not simply school, not simply counsel, not simply charitable work, not simply prayer; seminary is the orchestrated facilitation of an encounter with the living, loving Word mediated through the four areas of formation, and all ordered toward a man's participation in the one priesthood of Christ. One area of formation alone does not take the ascendancy, as all are to be vulnerable to the heart of priestly formation: unceasing communion with the Word. With such integration the seminarian is fully oxygenated—as the Spirit circulates freely through spiritual direction, pastoral work, academics, and human formation. One might argue that the most vital role of the rector is to see that a man is being formed by an encounter with Christ and not simply served by specialists in any one area (academic, spiritual, human maturation, pastoral training) of competency.

A personal way seminarians can show they love the culture they live in and wish to further evangelize it is to render their hearts completely available to formation. In this way, the culture is gifted with one more man mature in both spirit and affect. In facilitating a seminarian's integration of affective and spiritual maturation with

pastoral and academic competency, the seminary sends a man of wholeness and peace into the culture. In so doing, the seminary gifts the culture with a man who can be sought after as a spiritual and moral leader, one who has suffered peace and healing in his “bones” and wishes to share this way of life with those who are still embedded within any of the negative values of popular culture.

When seminarians (as well as formators) agree to suffer the integrative and creative tension of all four areas of seminary life, seminary becomes an antidote to cultural ideology. This tension, never to be relaxed, but only suffered, is the genius of Catholic seminary formation as it seeks to purify any cultural pollution irritating seminarians and replace such with the breathable “spirit” (Hebrew *ruah*) who carries only life (John 10:10; 6:63). N&V