

SEMINARY PREPARATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES MOUTENOT, SJ, RECTOR OF THE JESUIT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT BERKELEY



Q & A

by Gerry Labedz & Pam Bradley

Q What is the mission of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley?

A The mission of the Jesuit School of Theology (JSTB) is to form ministers, both lay and ordained, for pastoral and intellectual leadership in the Church of the 21st Century. This mission is carried out in and through the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), a consortium of nine member schools and several institutes (Jewish, Buddhist, Science and Theology, and Women's Studies). The GTU provides a rich ecumenical and interreligious context reflecting the diverse world in which our graduates serve God's people. The basic philosophy of the GTU is that each student be formed as deeply as possible in his or her tradition while being exposed to the traditions of others. This context reflects the real world of today in which our students will be intellectual and pastoral leaders.

Q Describe your role as rector of the Jesuit Community at JSTB.

A As rector I provide care for each member of the Jesuit Community associated with the Jesuit School of Theology. The Jesuits I care for are from nearly twenty different countries and every province of the United States. They include the president, dean and faculty, graduate students pursuing doctorates in theology and other areas, Jesuits on sabbatical and those preparing for ordination. As rector I support and care for each man's vocation as a Jesuit. For those in formation I am charged with the overseeing of the spiritual, communal, intellectual, and apostolic dimensions of their vocational growth, and I assist each man's province in determining that he is ready for ordination.

In the educating of both Jesuit and lay ministers together, I seek opportunities to collaborate with the Graduate Theological Union by using the resources of the Jesuit Community to foster this mission for the whole Jesuit community. I foster a sense of prayer, mission, and community, in support of the educational and formational mission of the school.

Q Lay students also attend JSTB. How does lay presence and participation contribute to a Jesuit's formation?

A The Society of Jesus made a commitment years ago to collaborate with lay people in carrying out the evangelizing mission of the Church. This complex mission is the service

of faith which includes the promotion of justice, a positive sense of interreligious dialogue, and the critical engagement of culture. In 1934, at the beginning of the Jesuit School of Theology in Los Gatos, Calif., our students were 100% Jesuit. Today we are composed of more than 40% lay people; quite a change over the past 67 years!

Embracing this change, we go for-



Chicago Province Jesuit Bill O'Brien (right), with Charles Moutenot, SJ, studies at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California. Bill will be ordained in 2002 in Chicago.

ward together with our lay brothers and sisters who come with rich experiences of service as ministers, counselors and educators, spiritual directors and youth group workers. They bring to JSTB a sense of what is happening in the contemporary world. They are from Wall Street and the advertising industry; they are psychologists, writers, computer programmers; they have families. Jesuits and lay students discover the depth of each other's commitment, vocation, and prayer in the courses they take





There are two Jesuit theology schools in the United States—one on each coast. Chicago Province Jesuits Jeremiah Lynch, SJ (left), and Bernie McAniff, SJ, attend the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts where John Privett, SJ (center), is rector.

together, in the apostolic work they are required to do while in their studies, and in liturgical worship together. Jesuits and their lay colleagues come to see, understand, and affirm each other's call and place in the Church.

The Spirit has called us and we want to work together in the evangelizing mission of the Church. Our school would not be what God wants it to be today without our lay brothers and sisters. We are profoundly enriched as Jesuits and as a school by the presence of our lay members.

Q Does this presence at JSTB help Jesuits realize and embrace the role of lay collaboration in the Church?

A By all means, but it is not without its challenges. The Jesuits know where they are headed—towards ordination and then an assignment from their respective provinces. For our lay people at JSTB, however, the future is more tenuous. They do not receive a mission as clearly as Jesuits do from a superior. They are obliged to search out their placements after their studies and formation. It's a real challenge for them, for the school

and the whole Church as we struggle to find the place of lay people in the Church. But as a community and as a school we are totally committed to accepting this challenge and walking forward with our lay brothers and sisters in our evangelizing mission.

Q Rick Millbourn, SJ, a student at JSTB, was ordained June 9th in Cincinnati. What can you share with readers about Rick for his future priestly ministry?

A Rick is a most gentle Jesuit. He is a bright and happy person with a great sense of humor and equanimity. He spent the last year, after his basic degree and formation at JSTB leading to ordination, preparing himself for the ecumenical challenge of our day and age. I think he will be working in one of our high schools which, today, are very diverse. They are no longer mostly Catholic, but include students of the various Christian faiths as well as Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and those without any faith at all.

Rick will be uniquely prepared for working in such a setting. He's an excellent teacher and his preparation

at JSTB and his work in ecumenical dialogue after the basic degree will make Rick a very sensitive presence to these students and their questions about God, our Church, and the other religious traditions they will encounter during their education. I surmise that he will foster a sense of appreciation for and wonder about other traditions while deepening all in their love of God.

Q Would you describe for province benefactors how the expenses for Jesuits' education at JSTB are paid?

A Each Jesuit who comes to JSTB is supported by his province's benefactors and by the Jesuits working at JSTB. His province's donors pay for his tuition, housing, books, clothing, medical insurance, etc. In addition, the Jesuit faculty and staff of the school give their salaries back to the school and to the Jesuit community.

This important contribution helps both to support the expenses of the Jesuit community, a community of about 90, and the tuition for lay students. In addition, the Jesuit Conference gives a very generous annual subsidy to the school which helps to lower tuition for both Jesuits and lay students. The Jesuit Conference also gives scholarships to international Jesuits from developing countries who will teach in seminaries in their homelands. The Jesuit School of Theology thus has an outreach to the Church throughout the world. ■

