



vocation
office
archdiocese
of
Louisville

May, 1979

This report is a response to the faculty evaluation of Daniel Clark, given in February, 1979. It will be a fairly thorough history of Dan's seminary career since enrolling in First Theology at Mt. St. Mary's.

*aim of this
report*

The report will ultimately recommend that a faculty vote on the readiness of Dan Clark for major orders be taken before the end of the current (spring, 1979) academic quarter. The recommendation will be based, among other things, upon data regarding Dan's preparation, to which data some faculty members may not have had previous access. This data comes from evaluations prepared by supervisors and co-workers in field education placements, some of which are affiliated with and some of which are unaffiliated with the St. Mary's Field Education Department.

As a student in Third Theology, Dan Clark would have, following the normal scheme of things, petitioned ordination to the diaconate during third quarter. The faculty recommendation of the acceptance of that petition, would have been subject to their evaluation and vote, (taken normally in January).

*suggestion
made that Dan
not petition
at usual time*

However, recognizing certain difficulties which Dan had encountered, it was suggested in spring, 1978 by the seminary rector, that Dan not petition at the normal time, but that he wait until a subsequent time to petition orders and seek the faculty's recommendation. (cf., letter of April, 1978). On the strength of this recommendation, Dan's faculty advisor, Sister Deborah, and his vocation director, Father Brown, similarly advised Dan to wait until fall, 1979 to petition.

*new rector
informed*

In a meeting at Mt. St. Mary's on 16 November, 1978, Father Brown acquainted the newly-appointed rector, Father Breslin, with Dan's situation. Father Brown made the rector aware, that it was the aim of the Archdiocese of Louisville to invite Dan's petition and call him to Diaconate in December, 1979. In response to Father Brown's question about how the faculty might best be able to evaluate and vote on recommending acceptance or denial of Dan's petition in fall of 1979, Father Breslin suggested that, 1) input from Dan's summer field education placement, and, 2) the faculty's observation of Dan during the fall quarter at Mt. St. Mary's, would enable the faculty to offer a vote on Dan prior to the proposed December ordination date. Thus, it came about that Father Brown recommended an accredited experience of supervised ministry for the summer, a return to the seminary for the fall and winter quarters, and a field education placement for the spring quarter of 1980. (cf., Faculty Evaluation of February, 1979).

*Archdiocese
proposes
deferred
ordination
date*

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proposal of
Field Ed. Dir.

Another recommendation was made by the Director of Field Education of Mt. St. Mary's, Father Proud, that Dan participate in a protracted (i.e., summer plus one quarter), non-ordained internship before a faculty vote be taken and a recommendation given, (cf., recommendation of Field Education Director, 1979). According to the faculty evaluation, (February, 1979), most of the faculty agreed that this latter program was the more suitable of the two, and many questioned whether Dan will be ready for ordination to the diaconate as early as December, 1979, (cf., Faculty Evaluation; February, 1979).

This recommendation, that is, the further deferral (beyond the deferred date of December, 1979, submitted by the Archdiocese in light of the rector's recommendation of April, 1978) of Dan's ordination, and the requirement of a protracted, non-ordained internship (not normally required), is precisely what this report is meant to analyse and challenge. It would seem, this report will contend, that this two-fold recommendation could be valuable and appropriate, but that it could also be damaging and even unjust.

Even though such a protracted internship is not normally required for an evaluation for major orders, such a requirement might well be in order. It is not normally required, because, by the time the faculty is scheduled to vote prior to the recommendation for major orders (January of Third Year), the student has successfully performed several tasks which give faculty members a picture of the student's suitability. Specifically, there are, 1) academic endeavors: six quarters; there are, 2) field education experiences: one quarter of full-time work and several quarters of part-time work which is concurrent with class-work; there are, 3) formational and behavioral tasks: maturity displayed through some 2½ years of residence in the seminary.

Dan's
problems

In Dan Clark's case, the performance of these tasks appears to be somewhat wanting. Therefore, the additional requirement of a non-ordained internship might well be in order. He was on academic probation until the end of his second year. His grades and yearly averages were as follows:

First Academic Year: 1976-77

academic

- 1st Quarter - 1.20
- 2nd Quarter - 1.80
- 3rd Quarter - 2.20

Cumulative Average - 1.73 - Probation

Second Academic Year: 1977-78

- 1st Quarter - 2.40 - C.A. - 1.95 Probation
- 2nd Quarter - Field Education
- 3rd Quarter - 2.66

Cumulative Average - 2.05 - Probation Lifted

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storal

There have also been some negative comments regarding an element of Dan's Field Education Quarter, which occurred during the winter of 1978. His assignment was to the Community Correctional Institution, Department of Safety, City of Cincinnati. He was assigned residence at St. Leo's parish, whose pastor, Reverend James Shappelle, made a report to Father Proud at the seminary and to Father Brown in Louisville. Father Shappelle's report stated essentially this: While the expectations of a resident must be understandably minimal, Dan failed to fulfill even minimal expectations; much of the time which was not required at the CCI, was spent not at the parish, but away, visiting a fellow seminarian in another parish; he gave indication that his interest in people and concern for their needs was genuine and potentially deep, but it lacked energy and consistency; regular attendance at the parish liturgy could have been a relatively undemanding contribution, but even this was infrequent.

behavioral

In faculty evaluations of May, 1977 and April, 1978, some negative comments were made regarding Dan's performance of formational and behavioral tasks. It was pointed out that he had only minimal community spirit, that his attendance at Mass was not what it should be, and that his appearance (specifically, the length of his hair) could be a hindrance to future ministry. (cf., Faculty Evaluations of 1977 and 1978).

And so, there are some cogent reasons for expecting of Dan the additional requirement of a protracted period of non-ordained internship. When a student has failed in some measure to perform tasks which help to determine his suitability for orders, it should not necessarily be thought inappropriate if he is not allowed to be ordained with his classmates who have more successfully performed those same tasks.

further deferral

However, Dan has already been deferred. When he entered First Theology, he was given to understand by the Seminary and by the Archdiocese that he could expect to petition diaconate in the spring of the Third Year. As has been pointed out above, Dan was told that, because of his problems, he would be deferred until December of Fourth Year. The faculty recommendation (February, 79) thus constitutes a further deferral.

Dan's strengths

In the light of Dan's poor performance the substance of which has been detailed above, one deferral would seem to be in order. However, in the light of his subsequent improvement, some would find it difficult to see the need for further deferral. These "some" would include his faculty advisor, Sister Deborah, his spiritual director, Father Sena, his vocation director, Father Brown, his co-workers in field education, Mr. & Mrs. Sonntag, his supervisors in field education, Mr. Buschmann, Ms. Walters, Fathers Sciarra and Wilson, and his friend Father Morley. Their comments constitute an analysis of the positive aspects of Dan's performance.

It is pointed out by Sister Deborah and Father Brown that Dan's academic performance improved consistently and, at present,

*academic
improvement*

continues to be quite adequate; his academic difficulties seem to be "behind him." His G.P.A. for the first two quarters of 1978-79 was 2.50 and 2.60 respectively. The grades he received during that First Quarter (1976-77) could have warranted his removal from the seminary. It seems that the faith in him demonstrated by the rector at that time, has now been rewarded.

*Spiritual Dir.
comments*

Father Sena, staff member of Mt. St. Mary's and spiritual director for Dan for three years, regards him as "a suitable candidate for the priesthood," one whom he would "approve for ordination." He feels that Dan "has given evidence of growth, that he displays many skills, that he has a concern for people and a depth of spirituality."

*pastoral
skills*

The supervisors for Dan during his Field Education Quarter were Mr. David Buschmann and Ms. Ruth Walters of the Social Work Department, Community Correctional Institution. Each prepared a written evaluation and addressed it to Father Proud; copies were sent to Father Brown. The evaluation by Ms. Walters included such comments as: "Dan is compassionate and sympathetic; his greatest pastoral problem will likely be the (personal) anguish caused by his compassionate involvement. (At the CCI), he was able to adjust to the style of ministry needed in this special context. He has (qualities) which make for a wonderful pastor." Mr. Buschmann said: "he impressed me very much; I was sorry to lose his services (at the end of the assignment). I had great confidence in Dan...did not hesitate to send to him inmates with severe personal problems." This assignment to the Community Correctional Institution was Dan's full-time work while residing at St. Leo's Parish (mentioned above), during the Field Education Quarter, sponsored by Mt. St. Mary's. Dan has also had field education assignments under other auspices.

*Field Education
Quarter*

*Ministry Program,
Indianapolis*

For example, during the summers of 1972, 1973, and 1974, Dan was assigned by the Ministry Program for Seminarians of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, to St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, and to St. Lawrence Parish, Lawrenceburg, Indiana. In a written evaluation, Father John Sciarra, Pastor of St. Barnabas, referred to Dan as "dependable and responsible"; he described him as "well-accepted and appreciated by the people of the parish"; and, he said that his reference of Dan could "only be favorable." In separate letters, Mr. Robert Sonntag and Ms. Jo Ann Sonntag of St. Lawrence Parish, described Dan as having an ability to "work well with all age groups", they further described him as "an inspiration to the youth, and asset to the parish, and a fine candidate for the priesthood, who will lead people of God."

*Ministry Program,
Louisville*

During the summer of 1978, under the auspices of the Seminarian In-Service Ministry Program of the Archdiocese of Louisville, Dan served at St. Basil Church, under the supervision of Father Albert Wilson. In his evaluation of Dan's experience at the parish, the supervisor pointed out a need for improvement on Dan's part in the area of punctuality with regard to prayer services and the like, which he was called upon to lead; he pointed to Dan's need

to be realistic in his commitments. Father Wilson described Dan's overall performance with these phrases: "his work was excellent; he related well with parishioners; he was a big help to me." He said that he would recommend him for ordination to the priesthood because of Dan's qualities of faith and service of people."

A personal friend of Dan for some ten years, Father William Morley is pastor of St. Jude's Parish, Indianapolis. In his letter of recommendation, he described Dan as being "dependable, responsible, and of impeccable moral character." His recommendation was "with great assurance."

The recommendation that Dan's approval for ordination be deferred until after he has served a protracted, non-ordained internship seems to be based on his poor performance in his first two years at Mt. St. Mary's and upon his seeming lack of pastoral experience. It has been suggested in this report that Dan has "made-up" for that poor performance quite adequately. It is similarly suggested that, even though his pastoral experiences have been of relatively short duration (usually three months), and even though they have taken place in settings and programs not recognized by the seminary's Field Education Department, they are, nonetheless, valid and show evidence that Dan possesses considerable ministerial qualities and skills. On this basis, it would seem appropriate that a faculty vote be taken and that approval be given for the acceptance of Dan's petition for ordination to the diaconate in December, 1979.

Dan's performance is one basis for requesting a faculty vote; there is another, inherent in the faculty's role as an agent in a student's discernment process.

When a faculty votes on a student, it has the opportunity to not only evaluate that student, but to thus aid him in his discernment of the Lord's call and challenge him to grow that he might appropriately respond to the call. The faculty, as a well-spring of expertise and wisdom, can then offer advice and guidance. Dan has never had a faculty vote. No vote is taken in First Year; the vote prior to Candidacy (taken normally in Second Year), was deferred. Thus, the faculty has never had the opportunity, as a group, to exercise its role in Dan's discernment.

By the same token, the absence of a faculty vote has, at least tacitly, been an indication to Dan that there are expectations which he still has not met. When no vote is taken, the individual faculty member does not have to specify those unfulfilled expectations. One serious consequence of this is that the student becomes unsure of what the faculty thinks of him with the result that the student, without the challenge and affirmation he needs throughout the discernment process, tends to have doubts about his vocation. Thus, further deferral puts the student under stress, and prevents the faculty from offering appropriate service.

*overall
performance
improved*

*faculty's
role*

*no faculty
vote has ever
been taken*

*effect on
student*

*faulty advice
given*

It will be remembered that Dan's faculty advisor Sister Deborah, and his vocation director Father Brown, advised him (in light of Father Favret's April, 1978 opinion) not to ask for a faculty vote in January of 1979. They now feel that they offered faulty advice, advice which deprived Dan of the benefit of the faculty's judgement and placed him under no small amount of stress.

summary

This report is made to the faculty and staff of Mt. St. Mary's, in order to provide them with elements of a picture of Dan Clark which they might not heretofore have had. It is meant to suggest his readiness to be approved for major orders. It is meant as a request that a faculty vote on Dan, be taken before the end of the current academic quarter.

exhortation

The Vatican II document on Priestly Formation, (Optatam Totius) the NCCB Program of Priestly Formation, and current spokesmen in the ministry of priestly formation, call for the cooperation of seminaries and dioceses in this enterprise. This report, made by the student's Archdiocesan Vocation Director, and the response to it by the faculty of Mt. St. Mary's, could be an excellent example of just such cooperation and sharing of resources toward a common goal.

CLARK.DOC 0058