

NILES COLLEGE

Tuesday, January 8, 1974

10:00 pm

(Mr. John Hall)

Topic: THE THEORY BEHIND SEMINARIES

Reverend Thomas J. Murphy

Permit me to introduce myself. My name is Father Tom Murphy, I am rector of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein. It is a real pleasure to be with you this evening.

I have been asked to share with you the theory behind St. Mary of the Lake Seminary and to respond to questions raised from your point of view as to what role does Mundelein play in forming men for the priesthood -- what role does it play in the complete seminary structure. Moreover, I have been asked: where has Mundelein been and where we hope for it to go in the coming years. And finally, what do we expect of the Niles graduate who comes to Mundelein.

Mundelein has been described by various people in various ways; some complimentary, some uncomplimentary. It was called the "enchanted forest," the "winter wonderland," the "middle of nowhere." But far too often, I believe, when reference is made to St. Mary of the Lake, we fail to see the seminary in its proper perspective. Mundelein is not only a place, not only a school, not only a residence, a faculty, a group of students, a community -- we hope it is an atmosphere. An atmosphere, a climate where men are prepared to respond to the challenge of preparation for priesthood for the Archdiocese of Chicago. We hope and we trust that this atmosphere that we call Mundelein is the compliment and completion of all that has gone on before it.

A young man who begins first year Quigley -- for various reasons he has chosen Quigley... there is, more or less, a sure notion of Quigley being associated with priesthood. At least as far as many of you men were concerned, the idea of priesthood was a far off reality -- but yet you began with whatever aspirations, motives, whatever dreams.

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The four years at Quigley, North or South, were years of questioning, of doubting, of inquiring, of seeking, of searching. The decision was made to come to Niles - or else you came for the first time into what we call the seminary system to Niles College. Niles College has been described and experienced by all of you. Niles College is also more than a place. It is an atmosphere, a climate, a getting ready, for a decision making experience, for men to search, to seek, to inquire whether they individually and collectively want to make the Roman Catholic priesthood a reality in their lives.

If the decision is yes, or if the decision is inclined toward that way, then the man chooses Mundelein.

Mundelein is a four year theologate that emphasizes a multi-dimensional program which concentrates on the growth experience. A growth experience spiritually, a growth experience academically, a growth experience formationally, and finally, a growth experience in an organized way of contact with people, of ministering to others. This four dimensional program is at the heart of the experience called Mundelein. In a sense it is a four track system, but hopefully, the tracks are not isolated and independent from each other. Hopefully, they are integrated into the very fiber and marrow of this entity we call St. Mary of the Lake Seminary.

The product of the Mundelein experience is not only a Roman Catholic priest, but also an individual. Consequently, great emphasis is placed on the individual needs, dreams, visions, hopes, aspirations of each young man who comes to St. Mary of the Lake Seminary.

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The end result of the Mundelein experience is Roman Catholic priesthood. But we know full well that this end result is not a completed product, a finished product -- rather, we hope, that during the experience at Mundelein we will have instilled in men the desire to continue the growth experience - formationally, spiritually, academically. Priesthood is not a static experience, but rather a constant, growing experience. Priesthood is not only a ritual, a Master of Divinity degree -- it is a daily living out of service to people, to God, and to oneself.

Where has Mundelein been...and where do we hope to see it go in the future? Like the Church itself, Mundelein has been in transition. A transition of establishing new structures, new modes of operation to respond to the challenges of a church in transition in a world of turmoil. Mundelein has been subject to all the forces of the educational revolution that have taken place in seminaries since Vatican II. Monsignor John Gorman, my predecessor, was most instrumental in not only bringing about the change in Mundelein, but most influential in preparing and establishing the guidelines for priestly formation which is the basis for seminary training in our country.

The key element in the changes that have taken place at Mundelein has been the emphasis switch from an imposed, authoritarian expectation to the key words -- accountability and responsibility.. on the part of the student. Seminary is not a "do your thing" experience with no one to call you on it or blow the whistle. But, rather, Mundelein is an experience of accepting the young man of

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today and realizing that he is to be the priest and minister to the people of today and tomorrow.

Where do we hope Mundelein will go in the coming years? Most of all, we hope we will build on what has gone on these past years. We hope that Mundelein will be a challenging experience for men...to take theology seriously, ..to take pastoral ministry and care of people seriously.... to take their own spiritual growth and formation seriously.

Mundelein is an exciting experience because it is at Mundelein that the priests who will usher in the year 2000 are now being trained. Inherent in our hopes and dreams and visions for the seminary is to develop and increase the pride that must be associated with service and priesthood to the People of God. This pride in the best sense of the word is essential to seminary experience and seminary atmosphere.

What do we expect of a Niles graduate who comes to Mundelein? Most of all, we expect an openness of mind and spirit. An openness to learn, an openness to listen, an openness to grow. We will expect from the Niles graduate awareness, to be involved in atmosphere and climate which we hope will be challenging, stimulating...but, also, very human. Because Mundelein is composed of human beings, all the dimensions of human experience will be part of Mundelein. There will be frustration, there will be disappointment -- but, we hope that at the same time, there will be joy, there will be exhilaration.

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Because Mundelein has the ultimate responsibility of saying to the Cardinal Archbishop and the people of Chicago ... "these men who will be ordained are certified to be ordained" we believe at Mundelein that we have a weighty responsibility. We expect the highest and the best performance. We expect the highest and the best response. We expect the highest and the best from everyone who is involved. We cannot afford at this point in history to let people slip by, to let or allow mediocre performance. People will not tolerate this. The Church will not tolerate this and, most of all, God will not tolerate this.

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Mundelein, we hope, will be a tremendous experience for you ~~in the years~~ ahead. We hope you will come we hope we can be of service to you we hope that Mundelein will be a challenge for you.