



Santa Croce



PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY OF THE HOLY CROSS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER • FALL 2003

Meet Fr. Paul Kais: Recent graduate of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

Tell us about your life prior to Rome?

I grew up in Biloxi, Mississippi, on the Gulf coast. This is where I spent my childhood and attended school. After high school, I attended the University of Dallas, where I studied political philosophy and history and earned a Master's degree. That's where I met Opus Dei. I then went to New York to work as a teacher of history for a middle school and high school. Next I went to Chicago where I was also a teacher at Northridge Prep, and then to Milwaukee where I directed a tutoring program.

Can you describe your training to us?

When one joins the Prelature of Opus Dei, one receives continuous formation at all levels – doctrinally, spiritually, humanly, apostolic, etc. In 1998 I began my studies at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, where I studied philosophy and theology full-time – four intense years, ending with the fulfillment of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Ethics.

When were you ordained?

I was ordained on September 1, 2002. There were 37 priests ordained that day. I then had various pastoral assignments of a very broad spectrum, until I came to Washington D.C.

What attracted you to the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross?

Many reasons. The opportunities, of course, to study in Rome and to be near the Holy Father. As St. Josemaría used to say, “become more roman” – that is, develop a universal, catholic spirit. I saw the Holy Father often and was able to meet him personally a few times. I went to Santa Croce to experience the universality of the Church, which is very palpable in Rome. Another reason was my confidence in the faculty there. Their faithfulness to the Magisterium and the seriousness with which they undertake their research and attend to the needs of the students is truly edifying. I knew people who went there. They told

me of the real interest in “forming the priest”, not simply as an academic exercise of studying theology, but the interest in forming the whole person – someone who is capable of responding to all pastoral needs. The University's environment fosters a sense of supernatural optimism and piety, which is essential in the interior life of the priest.

What made the greatest impression on you?

It would be difficult to limit it to one thing. When I think of my years at Santa Croce, I can't separate them from Rome itself. My most vivid image is of the Holy Father, which is not separated from my University studies because we studied a lot of his teachings and writings. I was also moved by his example as the Vicar of Christ, seeing him being faithful to Christ's teaching, and carrying the cross for the whole Church, which we've all seen in his suffering and in his dedication.

When I met him and told him I was studying philosophy at Santa Croce, he responded with a big smile and patted me on the head saying, “Santa Croce, Santa Croce...” I got a sense of his profound approval. He knows many of the professors there, he knows the Chancellor of the University, the Prelate of Opus Dei. The Holy Father knows of the faithfulness of the University, the dedication and true piety fostered there. He has great confidence in the University.

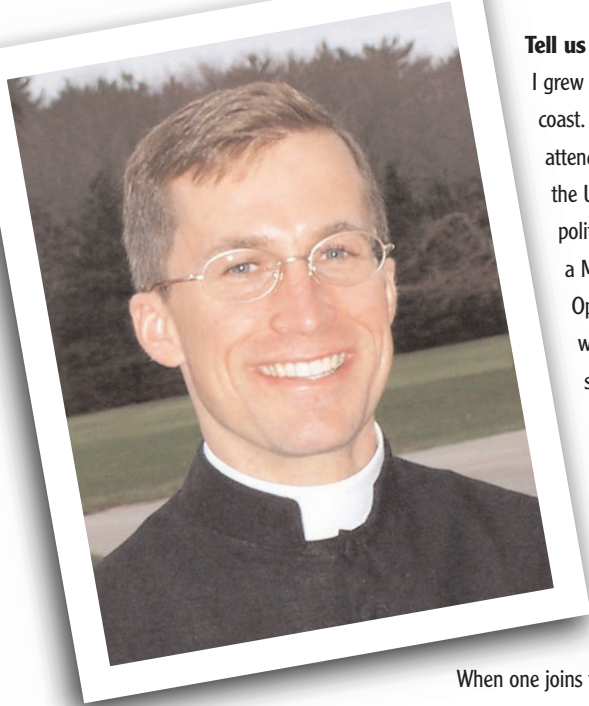
What about the other Americans?

I met many students from the States studying there and got to know them. We were very enthused about being there. I also got to know other Americans, not students, who were participating in conferences held at the University. Many who attended the conferences thought seriously of transferring to the University as a result of their experience. Everyone I met had a positive experience. We considered it a hidden treasure. I see Santa Croce as a natural fit for American students for the reasons I found it so appealing - studying in Rome, being near the Holy Father, experiencing the tangible universality of the Church, being faithful to the Magisterium, profiting from the emphasis on piety. As an American, there was this sense of being leaders in the world, which entails for us a special responsibility to the

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“They contribute to this civilization of love. This new millennium of hope requires the assistance of many people. This is what it's all about.”

- Fr. Paul Kais



Prelate of Opus Dei visits “Sedes Sapientiae”

Last spring, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría visited the International Ecclesiastical College Sedes Sapientiae, where 80 seminarians belonging to more than 54 dioceses of the World are preparing for priesthood while studying the philosophical and theological subjects at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

After celebrating Holy Mass in the Church of the Seminary, Bishop Echevarría addressed the Philippine MCST Sisters, the religious community in

ordained a deacon the week before, Bishop Echevarría repeated to the seminarians that they had to be very pious men, especially when participating in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

“Love the Holy Mass! Now that you are waiting to receive the priesthood, do not get used to the Holy Mass. Start now showing that love: make paused genuflections, be pious and reverent with the Lord in the chapel. Afterwards when you are alone in your

bedroom or walking in the streets, pray, knowing that God is with you. You are preparing for the Mass.

The Holy Mass is not a matter of fifteen, twenty or thirty minutes: the whole day has to be a prolongation of the Holy Mass. If we live in this way, how many graces we will receive for ourselves and for everybody.”

The questions followed, one after another, including the most various subjects:

obedience to one’s bishop, detachment from family, the need of living

a life of hope and faith, etc. The get-together ended with a particular request from Rainer Bandel –a seminarian from the diocese of Vaduz, Liechtenstein. He asked the Prelate to give the College a present.

“We want an image of Our Lady for the main courtyard of the College. Without this gift, the house is incomplete,” said Rainer. Bishop Echevarría immediately agreed to the request and before leaving the Sedes Sapientiae asked to have a photo taken with everyone.

“Sedes Sapientiae” International Ecclesiastical College was formally established at the beginning of 1991 by the Holy See as a seminary for training of candidates to the Catholic priesthood from dioceses all over the world. The direction of the Ecclesiastical College is entrusted to the Prelature of Opus Dei.

charge of the domestic administration of Sedes Sapientiae, and then met with the seminarians and priests in a lively get-together in the main living room of the College.

During the meeting, the Prelate of Opus Dei exhorted the seminarians to pray to Saint Josemaría asking him for many vocations for the diocesan seminaries all over the world.

Replying to a question from Eliéser Rivero –from the diocese of San Felipe in Venezuela– who was just

A Letter From Rome

My name is Thomas Thanikkal. I come from India, in the southern state of Kerala, known as the “Land of the Lord.” This region is notable for its religious, cultural and geographical diversities.

I came to Rome five years ago for my priestly theological formation at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross and the Ecclesiastical International



College Sedes Sapientiae. As I prepare to go back to India, I thank God for this unique experience. To be formed at the center of Christianity near the successor of Saint Peter, Pope John Paul II – a living example of the faith for all of us – has been a blessing.

During these years I met many men from different cultures who seriously prepared themselves for priesthood. I thank all the benefactors for their sincere prayers and assistance during these years. Your help was instrumental in providing for our needs and the University as a whole.

Earlier this year, on May 10th, I was ordained a deacon. The ceremony was in the Siro-Malabar Rite. For that occasion my Bishop, S.E.R. Mar. Jacob Manathodath, of Palakkad, India, travelled to Rome. It was a very moving ceremony. Now I am preparing to receive my Priestly Ordination this December 2003.

I ask for your prayers and once more thank you for everything.

United in prayer, Thomas Thanikkal

Rev. Prof. Mariano Fazio, Rector



"I welcome your support for our students and the University. We depend on your generosity and couldn't provide a rigorous intellectual education and spiritual training without your assistance. For all you do, I am grateful."



A Letter From a Seminary Director

"I thank the Lord for our recent meeting in Rome. After a year of hard work and difficulty, one of the two seminarians of our diocese has finally obtained the necessary documents to leave the country. With regard to the approval of the Italian authorities, he still needs your help. With full confidence, we entrust him to you and to the sons of Saint Josemaría whom we greatly admire. I hope that one day the spirit of Saint Josemaría may be brought to this country by our seminarians and

that our persecuted Church may also share his charism. I am deeply moved by your generosity and enthusiasm towards the work of our Church. I thank you again for the great help of all of you. I will always have you present in my prayers. Please do not forget to pray for all these brothers and sisters in this country who today live under persecution."

This letter was sent to the Secretary General of the University.

The seminarian mentioned now attends Santa Croce.

John Paul II

"In the exercise of our ministry and throughout our life, we are truly men of God. Not only the faithful who are closest to us, but also those persons who are weak and unsure of their faith and distant from practicing a Christian life are sensitive to the presence and witness of a priest who is truly a man of God."

**- John Paul II - Address To Priests,
March 6, 2003 in Rome**

Former Students Become Bishops

Recently the Holy Father appointed two new bishops, both former students of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

Msgr. Jesus Tomás Zárrega Colmenares was named the Bishop of the diocese of San Carlos (Venezuela). Bishop Comenares studied Canon Law and completed his doctorate in 1998.

Msgr. Rainer Woelki was recently appointed auxiliary bishop of Cologne, Germany. He obtained a doctorate in Theology in 2000.

There are now five former students of the University who have been named bishops (in Kenya, Colombia, Ukraine, Venezuela and Germany).





The Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

The University is an institution of research and study in the ecclesiastical sciences established by the Holy See. It includes schools of Theology, Canon Law, Philosophy, and Institutional Social Communications and an Institute for Advanced Religious Studies. The schools grant Bachelor's, Licentiate, and Doctoral degrees. A Bachelor's degree in philosophy and theology satisfies the full academic requirement for priestly ordination. Currently there are 1,340 students from 64 countries around the world. Since the beginning of its academic activities in 1984, there have been 2,981 students who have attended the courses of the four schools.

The University is entrusted to the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei. It was inspired by the vision of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, who desired to develop a university in Rome dedicated to the intense training in the ecclesiastical sciences, at the service of the universal Church.

For further information,
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www.UniversityHolyCross.org

The Foundation

The Pontifical University of the Holy Cross Foundation assists the University in its financial needs and grants scholarships to students from poor dioceses wishing to attend the University. In the past 15 years donations from benefactors in various countries have allowed the University to award 2,140 scholarships to priests and seminarians from 95 countries around the world.

In 2002, the University awarded 155 scholarships. The goal for the 2003/04 academic year is 180 scholarships. Please consider making an investment in the formation of a priest.

Fr. Paul Kais *continued from front page*

whole Church. We need to be well educated and pious, for we will be held up as a model for others.

Any words for Santa Croce's benefactors?

First of all, I'd like to thank all the benefactors. The University wouldn't be possible without their assistance. Consider these two reasons. One is the most obvious, faced with what the American Church has gone through in recent years and the current shortage of priests, there is an even greater need for good, pious, well-formed priests. The University answers that need. Second, the University provides hope. When I was there, among everyone I talked to, there was a tremendous sense of hope and optimism. Part of it was fostered by the Holy Father. Part of it came from being surrounded by young people from all over the world. We focused on the great good we could accomplish. Not simply reacting, but being hopeful. Just as the Holy Father has done so much good with his vision and his willingness to dedicate his

life to the new evangelization and his hopefulness in the new millennium. That's what each person, each benefactor can contribute to. They contribute to this civilization of love. This new millennium of hope requires the assistance of many people. This is what it's all about.

Fr. Paul Kais is Assistant Chaplain at The Heights School, a boys day school in Potomac, Maryland. His primary duties include celebrating Mass, hearing Confessions, and giving catechism classes to the 465 students. He also teaches freshman religious classes including an Introduction to Sacred Scripture and Salvation History. The students are very enthusiastic to know and deepen their faith, and his studies at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross have been a great preparation to meet their expectations. He resides in Washington, D.C.