



The Shepherd's Staff

***Newsletter of the
Diocese of the Western States***

July 2021

The Right Reverend Donald M. Ashman

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Saint Joseph of Arimathea Seminary

Summer Session

The 2021 Saint Joseph of Arimathea Seminary Summer Session will be held during the last two weeks of July (19th to 30th) on the Zoom platform. Due to Covid-19 restrictions and other concerns we are not able to offer student or auditor “in-person” classes until next summer. But the internet and the Zoom Platform does allow for us to offer “at-distance” learning. Of course, expenses will be much less for “at-distance” learning, but students who wish to take classes for credit must set aside their 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. time slots to fully participate. Auditors are warmly welcome and can pick and choose their classes.

Morning Prayer will be read at 9:30 a.m. and lead by various students and clergy. At 10:00 a.m., during the first week Bishop Ashman will guide a Directed Reading Class concentrating on difficult passages from Scripture and the Church Fathers; the second week Bishop Upham will teach Early Ecclesiology. After a short break, at 11:15, Bishop Ashman will teach a Deacon’s Practicum for all current deacons and postulants who are considering ordination in the next two years, even if they have already passed their canonical exams and been cleared by their Standing Committees and (for the priesthood) successfully passed their interview by the Council of Bishops. We will break for Lunch from 12:00 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. after which Father Dr. Paul Russell will conduct an interactive seminar until 2:15 p.m. Tentatively, the first week will focus on the Holy Trinity and the second week will focus on the Book of Daniel. Each day will close at 3:15 with Evening Prayer read by various students and faculty.

The cost for students is \$100.00 and auditors \$50.00. – and registrations are coming in. Students and auditors will need a computer, internet access and time to complete assignments. The provost would like to remind the clergy that this summer session is a great opportunity to grow and interact with their brother clergy. Send your fee to the Registrar, Canon Ben Jones at Saint George’s Anglican Pro-Cathedral, 1210 Dixie Trail, Raleigh, NC 27607 and he will send you an application form via email the student can fill out and return.

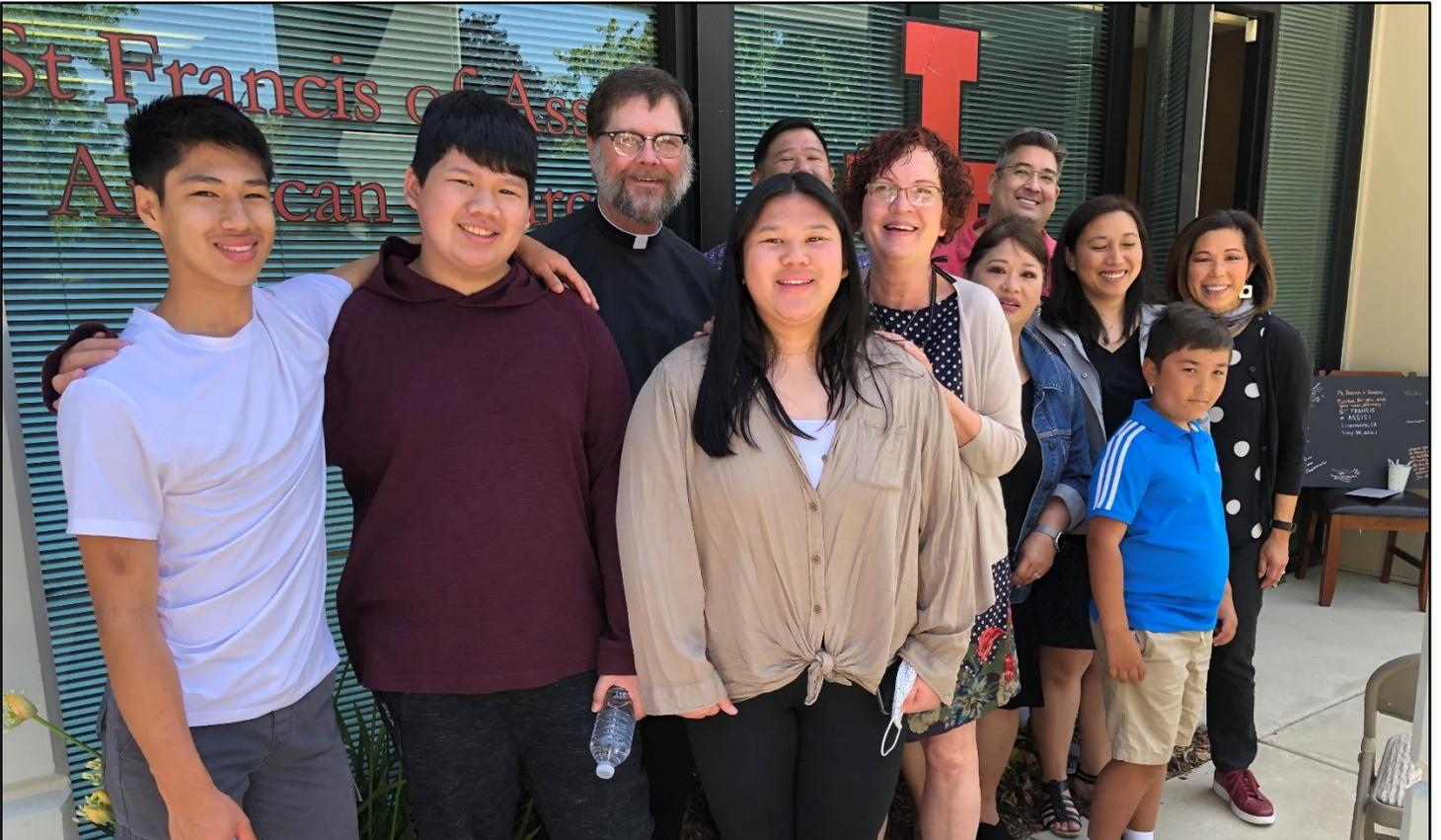
FALL SESSION

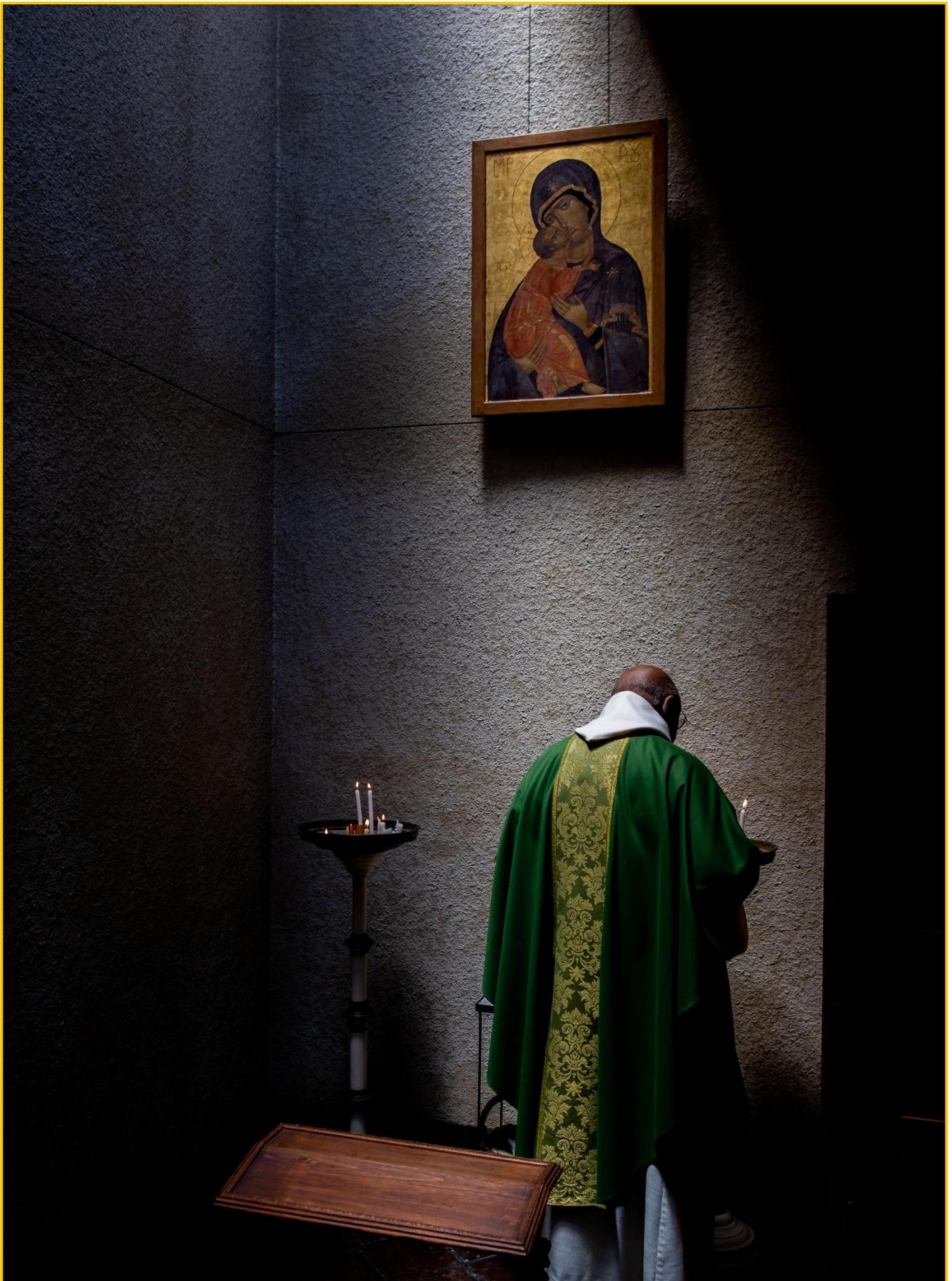
Starting in September 2021, five classes will be offered all via the Zoom Platform – and all available for credit or audit, for laity, postulants, and clergy.

1. Bishop Blair Schultz will teach an expanded year-long class in *An Analysis of the Book of Common Prayer*. This is an excellent refresher course for all clergy, even for senior clergy.
2. Archbishop Upham will teach *Ecclesiology* in the Fall and *Ecclesiastical Polity* in the Spring (2022).
3. And Bishop Ashman will teach Biblical Greek Five-Six, First-Year Ecclesiastical Latin class and College Level World History and Religions.

A Fond Farewell at Saint Francis of Assisi in Livermore

Last month we showed pictures of Father Shaddix's Farewell at Saint Joseph of Arimathea Seminary Chapel. On the same day, the good folks of Saint Francis of Assisi said farewell to Father Ben and Sharon Brown as Father celebrated his last mass at Saint Francis. Father Brown attended St. Joseph's Seminary and was instituted Rector of Saint Francis in 2016. Father has served as Secretary of Synod and as a member of the Standing Committee





The Very Reverend David Napier, Dean of Saint Joseph of Arimathea Chapel

Synod of the Diocese of the Southwestern States

May 24 to 27, 2021



Rear: Bishop Scott Mitchell, Archbishop John E. Upham, Bishop Peter Hansen, Canon Steven Dart
Front: Father Jamie Torres, Father John Les Callet, Father Gordon Hines, Canon Ben Jones, Father Edward Jones



Funeral of Father Robert Ponec

June 26, 2021



Over one hundred family, friends, clergy, and colleagues in the Omaha Police Chaplains came to the Requiem Mass for Father Robert Ponec. There were Presbyterians, Baptists and Anglicans who all mourned but rejoiced in the heavenly graduation of their dear friend. I had no idea how much Father Ponec was esteemed until this outpouring of love and affection for a good and sincere priest. Father Ponec like Father John Pennington and Canon David Rodier will live in our memories until our graduations into the glory of the heavens to join them.

After a wonderful luncheon, Bishop Ashman, Ernie, and Sean drove to Tulsa and on Sunday the I filled in as a supply priest and celebrated the Eucharist at All Saints' Cathedral with Father Jamie Torres assisting. I am sorry no pictures were taken of the service but, after a delicious luncheon served by the parishioners of All Saints', I got this pic with Father Torres.



The Legend of the Starfish

[A High School Graduation Speech]

Many years ago, a high-powered, successful executive was walking along a beach taking a much-needed vacation away from the vicissitudes of the dog-eat-dog world. He noticed that there were many starfish along the shore, which had been washed up by the tide and were sure to die before the tide returned. Then he spied a boy walking slowly along the shore and occasionally reaching down and tossing each starfish back into the ocean. The man, hoping to teach the boy a little lesson in common sense, walked up to the boy and said, "I have been watching what you are doing, son. You have a good heart, and I know you mean well, but do you realize how many beaches there are around here and how many starfish are dying on every beach every day. Surely, such an industrious and kindhearted boy such as yourself could find something better to do with your time. Do you really think that what you are doing is going to make a difference?" The boy looked up at the man, and then he looked down at a starfish by his feet. He picked up the starfish, and as he gently tossed it back into the ocean, he said, "It makes a difference to that one."

We all remember those who went the extra mile for us. Our parents, who have loved us, have supported us, and have given of their time, treasure, and talents to help us arrive at high school graduation. The counselor, administrator, teacher, or even true friend who did not just lecture us for our mistakes, but took the time to listen and help us get back to center. The teacher who did not say, "Open the history book or the science book and answer the questions," but opened our minds and understanding so that we might understand why the questions were important in the first place. High School was your beach, and the little boy symbolizes those who went that extra mile for you.

The Legend of the Starfish has been told many times and in many ways. It is not a new story, but it is a timeless parable, and it is my gift to you this afternoon, as you prepare for life after high school. As you walk down the seashore of that life, with its ebbs and flows, its challenges and joys, its triumphs, and sorrows, you will be the leaders, parents, teachers, counselors, and friends to the starfish of this world. Will you imitate the little boy or the hardened executive? The choice is always the same: consider the selfish self-first, accept the status quo, be content with the mediocre, or open your understanding, make a difference in someone's life, - and never accept indifference!

A Homily for the Third Sunday after Trinity 2021

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

One of the great “Confession Stories” in all literature is found in Graham Greene’s *Monsignor Quixote*. The monsignor who on his holiday hears the confession of a suspicious looking businessman in a black suit. The penitent told Father that he was an undertaker and that he had just returned from burying his dear friend and parish priest, Father Gonzales. Father Quixote asked what was bothering him. The man hesitated and said that, after the funeral, he had removed the brass handles from the casket. Father asked if he had ever done this before and the undertaker replied “Yes; it is a sort of a service charge for all funerals. All of my competitors do it.” So Father Quixote asked him what was different about Father Gonzales. Why was his conscience guilty? The man replied that he was very fond of Father Gonzales and that Father Gonzales would have been so proud of the shiny brass handles on his casket!

Father Quixote then told the surprised undertaker, “Now wait, if it is only a rental charge or service fee, why are you so worried about it? Aren’t you really stealing from yourself? Don’t worry! Do you think God cares about such little things? You have sort of stolen two brass handles while God has created a universe. Say you are sorry; go home and have a siesta.” “But, said the undertaker, my absolution! I must have my absolution!” So (in old school Latin), the monsignor pronounces God’s forgiveness. Let us understand that when Monsignor Quixote said, “Do you think that God cares about such little things” he did NOT mean that God doesn’t care about our sins. God wants us to return to the sheepfold because we are priceless in his eyes. However, the undertaker didn’t really say he was sorry, did he? He was more interested in form than intention. He wanted something for something. And that is what many Christians do, don’t they?

Many Anglicans (and other Christians) often argue (sometimes with a complete absence of charity) about which is better: Auricular Confession in front of a priest or the General Confession we use in the Daily Offices and the Eucharist. Some High Churchmen say the General Confession is not valid and some Low Churchmen say Auricular Confession is too Romish. How foolish those attitudes are, especially when we consider that both forms of confession are equally valid **if** we have the proper intention; and if we are truly sorry and intend to make amendment of life. Confession brings us back to the sheepfold. We are like the ninety and nine lost sheep and lost piece of silver. And even if we can’t make restitution, we can live our lives forgiving those who have hurt us and being generous with our time, treasure and talent for friend and stranger alike.

Consider the analogy of fishing. Our Lord is a **THE** fisherman without equal; a number of his apostles were secular fisherman; some of us like to fish for sport. Whichever, it takes years to learn how to fish. In fact a fisherman of souls never stops learning how to fish. When I fished the High Sierras I learned that fishing is more than baiting a hook or tying a fly and seeing what happens. I had to learn a repertoire of strategies that enabled me to think like a fish, so that I could capture a fish. In like manner, a Christian takes years to learn how to be a Christian – and a Christian Fisherman. A Christian never stops learning how to be a Christian. The maturing Christian learns a repertoire of skills based on what Jesus told us to do that enable him to know what Jesus would say or do in any situation – to help him bring people to the Shepherd of their souls.

And in like manner, the same holds true for making our confessions: privately to God or on our knees at the General Confession or during Auricular Confession. It always takes a lifetime to learn how to say we are sorry to God and to our brothers and sisters. That’s why we go to Church; that’s why we have confession (Auricular or General) as we learn strategies to save our souls and help others find God. We never stop learning how to be Christians. We never stop fishing for souls. We never stop learning how to say we are sorry – and mean it. And let us stop stealing from ourselves and cast all our cares on God whose angels rejoice when we truly repent of our sins – and here’s the kicker, even when we know that we will backslide again and know the intolerable burden of our sins.