The city is in ruins. The buildings have collapsed, the streets have been pillaged. The enemy forces have penetrated every stronghold and captured the highest places. Men, women and children have been taken by force and imprisoned. The scene is desolate and seemingly hopeless.

It is not material structures that have crumbled or silos of grain that have been depleted. It is rather the spiritual edifice of Christian culture that has suffered violent attack. It is Catholic minds that have been assaulted in a war of ideas, and have been imprisoned by false philosophies and novel doctrines. It is the unsuspecting masses who have been enslaved to their passions and emotions by an insidious campaign of immorality. Few have survived the onslaught on traditional values and morals, facilitated by a flood of bold technologies wiping out the rustic past and replacing it with a world of softness and convenience. Meanwhile, the Church has seemingly all but collapsed and civilization is plunged into an abyss.

Satan has done his diabolic work masterfully. The captured do not consider themselves prisoners and the enslaved think themselves free. The modern world has truly become his kingdom. What is a young man to think in facing such a situation? His family, his homeland and all that he holds dear have been betrayed and given over to the Enemy. Can there possibly be any hope? Is there any way to fight back? Should he not just step in line with today’s generation!? Not at all. He has the Weapons of Mass Destruction of the forces of evil at his fingertips, “mighty to God unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ” (II Cor. X, 4-5). No situation is impossible with such weapons. The Church can be rescued, the nation can be saved and the family can be delivered from its bondage. One has only to “put on the armor of God, that [he] may be able to resist in the evil day” (Eph. VI, 13).

Two more men have stepped forward this summer in Winona to take their spots in the “wrestling against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places” (Eph. VI, 12). Their hands now consecrated to administer the weapons of their warfare, the grace-conferring Sacraments, they represent the eternal sign of hope that will never dim, no matter how depraved the world becomes, as long as Catholic priests are being ordained. Let us take courage in this sign, and pray that many more men may become true patriots by enlisting in the only army that will deliver Church, family and homeland from their unprecedented crisis, that army being the army of Our Lord Jesus Christ.
So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

(Matt. V, 16)

Rev. Fr. Thomas Hufford

F rom his childhood days in Freehold, NJ, to his high schooling in Monroe, LA, Fr. Thomas Hufford saw the Catholic Faith shining dimly through the storm of post-conciliar changes. Although he learned the Baltimore Catechism and saw his parents resisting the changes within the Church, he had no inkling that he was missing something far brighter. By the grace of God, however, his family’s search for a conservative parish led him to his first Traditional Mass in Vienna, VA, at Christmas time in 1987. The next summer, he went on an Ignatian Retreat, which “laid the groundwork” for his coming to Tradition, and ultimately proved the way for the joyful day of his ordination 15 years later: “I didn’t consider a vocation until after I came into Tradition,” says Fr. Hufford. He explains that this is the logical consequence of the Conciliar Church’s obscuring and misrepresenting the most important articles of the Faith. “When I was exposed to the Traditional Latin Mass in the late 80s, it was clear enough that the New Mass did not express as well the teachings of my Catechism regarding the Sacrifice and the priesthood.” He did not understand until later that it does express a New Theology, contrary to Traditional doctrines.

Father’s first impressions of the True Faith account for his eventual path to the priesthood. “What impressed me first was the piety of good priests, and the zeal they showed in working for the salvation of souls.” They especially communicated this piety and zeal in preaching the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Father attended a number of retreats throughout his college years, and he stresses that the Ignatian Exercitation is an invaluable realty check, as well as an introduction to a thoroughly God-centered piety.

Acting on the recognition of a crisis in the priesthood, Father’s first serious consideration of a vocation began after finishing his undergraduate work in Violin Performance in Rochester, NY. In 1993, he went to the Regina Coeli House at the Society’s U.S. District headquarters in Kansas City, MO, “to discern the will of God.” The following autumn, he embarked upon his Seminary career.

As a “survivor” of the Conciliar Church’s onslaught against Catholics, Fr. Hufford has a clear picture of the battlefield he is now entering. “Today, a Catholic’s efforts to direct his actions to God appear to be thwarted and redirected to other ends.” This tension, Father says, can be resolved by the doctrine of Christ the King. As the world turns more and more away from Christ, it falls more and more under the sovereignty of the rulers of the world of this darkness” (Eph. VI, 12). In order to persevere, Catholics must restore all things in Christ, who reconciles men with God, and not with the world. Today this doctrine is more important than ever. Every Catholic’s part in this spiritual warfare begins by firmly rooting himself in the solid doctrine and piety found abundantly in our sacred traditions, and sadly diminished in the Church of today’s Rome.

Father says that daily Mass, prayer in common and especially the Divine Office

Rev. Fr. Scott Gardner

Ideally, the flame of Catholicism is passed from the Church to the family, which in turn passes it to the individual. Often, however, God has to work outside of this natural process to reach docile souls with the grace of the Faith. The ordination of Rev. Fr. J. Scott Gardner – who was born into a church-going Baptist family in Arkansas in 1971, and educated in the public schools – proves that, if a man is willing to cooperate, God can kindle His “lights to the world” from even the smallest spark.

Fr. Gardner’s road to Catholicism started at age 17, when he began playing the organ for a stipend at the local Episcopal Church. Impressed by the liturgical worship and the dignified exercises he became convinced of the Traditional Catholic Church’s position, and having left the Novus Ordo for good, my friends and I began attending the Society’s chapel at Carthage, TX, three and a half hours to the west.”

In 1996, he contacted former District Superior, Fr. Peter Scott, whom he had met in Carthage. Concerned about the possibility of trying his vocation. After a year of teaching music at the Society’s school in Kansas City, MO, he entered the Seminary in the fall of 1997. Fr. Gardner readily abandoned his secular career prospects because he realized that even if he did have a vocation, he would be relatively rewarded for his sacrifice: “God cannot be outdone in generosity!” Having passed through the banity of the modern world, Fr. Gardner found that the Seminary helped him put his winding and rocky path in its proper perspective: “All of my experiences with university education, different religions, growing up in the ‘Christ-haunted South,’ and finally discovering Tradition gave me a wheel-barrow full of mosaic tiles, but I had only a vague idea of how to put them together in a coherent picture. At the Seminary, the regularity and the sanity of daily life – even abstracting from the supernatural aspects and mind-building studies – helped to clear my head quite a bit.” Fr. Gardner will take many lessons from the Seminary, but perhaps the greatest is that the service of God is, normally, neither glamorous nor emotionally exciting: “To serve God means to do the Will of God, even in small things. No matter how we feel, we must be faithful to the spirit of the Rule and to the 1,001 daily details which, cumulatively, both
The people that sat in darkness, have seen a great light: and to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen. (Is. IX, 2)

Light of the Liturgy Leads Young Priest To Tradition

On a high balcony at the Basilica in Lourdes, France, an American teenager looked out over a throng of people moving to and fro under the shadow of death, though it might be more proper to say enveloping darkness. As he stood watching, he saw more than a conglomerate of hazily mixed and swirling colors – here it was that he was called to the priesthood. That episode in 1992 led Fr. Christopher Danel, a native of Greenville, SC, and a convert from the Baptist religion, to enter St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, PA. After completing two years at St. Charles, he studied for another six years in Rome. There Father was able to acquaint himself with the mind of the Church in an intimate way. In the very heart of Holy Mother Church, the impressive manifestations in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Faith stand, at least as structures, for all to see. Although his Roman academic training was quite useful and even “phenomenal,” as he describes it, Father had to look beyond what he was being taught in many of his classes. Some courses were oriented in the direction of the Conciliar Church’s New Theology and led him in circles. Others provided him with invaluable access to sources which witnessed to the Church’s unambiguous truth.

Through a particular liturgy course, for instance: Father was able to utilize the archives of the Primatial Abbey of St’Anselmo, where the Pontifical Liturgical Institute is located, in order to compare the conciliar missals with the Missale Romanum of 1970, and his findings were tantamount to the rediscov ery of Church Tradition in primary source print.

The obvious break with Tradition was notable in the differences he observed between the Missal of 1970 and earlier ones. Still, it is one thing to find Tradition, living Liturgy in a book deposited in the Pontifical Liturgical Institute; it is quite another thing to find out where the Traditional Liturgy still lives. The evidence of traditional liturgical life was clear on fos silized pages in old missals, but in which part of the Mystical Body was this life-blood of Tradition to be found? Was there even a substantial missing link, which might point the way? It was not until a couple of years after Father’s ordination in 2000 that he found out where he could find Tradition in fullness, though it might be more proper to say that Tradition found Father. While at a diner outing last summer, Father, then a diocesan priest in South Carolina, had occasion to speak with a family whom he had previously come to know during the course of his diocesan work. They mentioned to him that they were attending the Traditional Mass which was offered by the Society. Fr. Danel’s reaction was one of caution; he warned them of the Society’s “schismatic” standing, advised them to beware and told them that he would research the matter in order to help them out in any way he could.

Father took to the Internet, but his findings were not what he had expected. The more he looked into the Society’s position and read various pieces of Archbishop Lefebvre’s writings, the more convinced he became that no “schism” exists. The Roman Catholic Traditional Church of the Church is in fact alive and well, having taken up living quarters in a condemned habitation! After the shock inherent in such a conspiracy-theory discovery, the objective truth was as plain as day for Fr. Danel. He could see as clearly as when at Lourdes what it was that he must do. His realization that “I want to be a part of this” was a logical supernatural step in the direction in which he had been heading all along. From Lourdes’ Basilica balcony to the archival archeological digging done years later, to the inter-settling which nestled Father onto Tradition’s life-raft – all things were coming together in a clear way.

There was then left for Father to make one more transition, difficult but necessary. His ties with the diocese would have to be loosened in some parts and cut altogether in other areas; in either case, he would have to bid many farewells in order to follow where Truth beckoned. In September of 2002, Father made his final vows and wrapped up loose ends with the diocese, Father returned to stay this past April.

Since his arrival, Father is no longer plagued by doubts. He has been offering the Tridentine Mass, and he is seeing the life of Holy Mother Church in Her healthyTradition. As a sort of extended Seminary formation, Father is once again examining the Heart of Holy Mother Church from a perspective closer to home, thousands of miles from Rome: With his current base of operations in Wicoma, he is not only looking into this same Maternal Heart, but he is also experiencing the very pulses which beat with supernatural efficacy for the salvation of Her children.

As for the future, Fr. Danel will continue on the path of Providence, following as God leads. The vision is clearer than ever, but the light comes one watt at a time. And so it is for all Traditional Catholics, who should take encouragement from Father’s walk of faith in which, with the way clear and with strength enough to keep moving forward, he has gladly taken another step. “Who knows?” Father reflects, “Without those prayers offered for priests to come to Tradition (at Society chapels), I might not have found the way here. I know there were people praying for me.”
Each year, after Minnesota’s long winter months have given way to the sultry heat of summer, hundreds of faithful Catholics flood the Seminary grounds to see the new sacerdotal lights of the next generation. People from all across the country make the journey to Stockton Hill to witness the four-hour long ordinations ceremony—the ceremony in which a few chosen men give their lives to the service of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. While Ordinations Week is always a festive time at the Seminary, few realize the amount of work that goes on “behind the scenes” to prepare for such a monumental event.

Three weeks prior to ordinations, as the Seminary's academic year is winding down to its close, the seminarians are busy struggling through a barrage of year-end examinations, written and oral. After two solid weeks of studies and testing, their brains are left deep-fried and smoldering. They are physically drained; they are mentally exhausted. But the labor is only just beginning. Now that the mental exercises are out of the way, it is time for the real work to begin!

The week before the ceremony is filled with hours of sweat and toil. Fortunately, the atmosphere at the Seminary is one of intense satisfaction. The seminarians are relieved to be finished with exams and anxious to apply their muscles rather than their brains to prepare for the hundreds of guests about to flow over the Seminary lawn.

Without delay, the sacristans commence the construction of makeshift alters within the classrooms for the dozens of visiting priests, while others busy themselves polishing candlesticks, chalices and anything else in need of a good shine. Outside the Seminary, the Maintenance department works to erect the colossal ordination tent, hoping and praying that rain clouds will remain far away. Nearby, Br. Anthony and his Grounds crew work for hours under the hot sun, cutting grass, trimming bushes, laying mulch, and planting flowers. Inside the dark confines of the basement, the Seminary’s adroit carpenters hammer, saw and drill into the late evening, rebuilding from scratch the canopy which was destroyed during the storm in last year’s ordination. Inside the chapel, the Masters of Ceremonies practice and re-practice the complicated rubrics of the ordination rite to ensure that the ceremony goes smoothly. Near the Music room, the rich sound of chant can be heard resounding up and down the corridors as the Schola tunes up for the big day. In the kitchen, Chef Johnsrud and his cohort of volunteer ladies, scramble about preparing multitudes of dishes for the hungry guests. In the midst all of this, the small but diligent VERBUM staff struggles to piece together another literary masterpiece for its eager viewing public.

When Saturday finally arrives, the seminarians are running on empty, physically and mentally. But there is no time for rest! It’s the big day, and now it’s time to “kick it into high-gear.” Ordinations Day will push seminarians to the limit, and then a little further. When the sun sets, those who are still standing with their sanity intact represent only a minority of the community. But never fear! The hardest part is over. Don’t sit down, though. It’s time to clean up...