
Workshop

For my message this week, I thought I would give a little explanation of what I'll be doing in my time away from the parish for the week of August 8th-12th. For a handful of years now, the Bishops of Western Canada have organized a workshop for recently ordained priests, hosted at St. Joseph Seminary, Edmonton. The intent was to provide a time and place for priests who have recently been ordained (in the past 6 or so years), serving in dioceses in Western Canada, to be able to gather together for an intentional time of ongoing formation on a topic relevant to them. The Western Bishops of Canada have fostered this initiative in response to the reality that many priests can suffer greatly in trying to adjust to their new experiences, particularly within the first five years or so. Along with regular conference talks given by a specialist, there are plenty of opportunities to meet, share experiences, encourage one another, and pray together. This workshop is typically offered every other year during the summer months when the seminary is empty and parish ministry (generally) slows down a bit.

Obviously, with the pandemic it's been a few years since having one, so this will be my first time attending it and I look forward to it. I already know a decent number of priests who will be attending from my time in seminary, and I also look forward to being back at the seminary; my last year there cut short when we were sent home due to the pandemic. It is also a good custom for priests to return to the seminary to preside at a Mass in the place where they spent many years in formation, and a good opportunity to encourage the seminarians that there is "light at the end of the tunnel". I haven't had this opportunity yet with the pandemic, and though the seminarians and formators won't be present, it will still be good to visit my "home away from home" of eight years.

This year's workshop will be on "Navigating Pastoral Realities; Emotional and Spiritual Well-Being." The conferences are being led by Fr. Stephan Kappler, a very qualified speaker, who will cover important topics such as pastoral realities and ideals, loneliness, healthy boundaries, stress management, and fostering priestly fraternity and support. I recall from my time in seminary touching upon each of these topics, though I'm sure going over these foundations will be good and we will now be looking at them from the perspective now of being priests, rather than seminarians. A few bishops organizing the workshop will also be present to lead us in other times through their preaching and presence. Please pray for myself and the 30 or so other priests who will be attending.

I am, in our Lord, yours.

Fr. Brian Trueman
