

INSIGHT

by Fr. John Bradley -
President, Belmont Abbey College

The new Honors Program was inaugurated at the College at the beginning of 1975-76 academic year. Rev. John P. Bradley, President of the College, was invited to deliver the inaugural lecture for this new program. Father Bradley is a graduate of the honors program in the school of Literae Humaniores, otherwise known as Oxford Greats, at Oxford University.

The following article consists of some excerpts of Father Bradley's inaugural lecture.

Why Should a College Establish An Honors Degree?

First, any college worthy of the name must do all in its power in various ways to impress on the entire college community the primary importance of academic excellence as a goal to be admired, respected, and sought after constantly ...

Secondly, in most colleges there is a wide range of academic ability within the student body. The truly superior students must be offered intellectual challenge proportionate to their ability. Otherwise, the superior students are apt to become bored, fall into bad study habits, and risk the permanent stunting of their intellectual growth ...

What Is the Goal of an Honors Program In a Liberal Arts College?

John Henry Newman, in Discourse V of his great classic *The Idea of a University*, emphasizes the importance of a broad education so that the students may "obtain a clear apprehension of the great outlines of knowledge, its principles, the scale of its parts, its lights and shades." The goal of this kind of education is "to open the mind, to correct it, to refine it, to enable it to know and to digest, master, rule, and use its knowledge, to give it power over its own faculties, application, flexibility, method, critical exactness, sagacity, resource, address, eloquent expression."

In other words, the pursuit of knowledge in the Liberal Arts tradition is consonant with a person striving to be the best he or she can be as a human being. For a person's reasoning power alone sets him or her apart from all other creatures, and the cultivation of this power is the road to becoming fully human. Having said this, I want to issue a caution that the sheer cultivation of the intellect does not make a person a fully human being. I completely disagree with the opinion voiced by Socrates that knowledge is virtue. To pursue this further, however, would take us deeply into an examination of the right and the good, which, though extremely important in any worthwhile philosophy of education, lies outside the scope of this particular lecture ...

What do we mean, exactly, by the "pursuit of knowledge?" Too often it is regarded as being simply the acquisition of information. Wide reading and a large store of information are, of course, needed if we are to proceed to expand and enlarge the mind. But we must remember that a passive reception of information does not produce mental enlargement. The true pursuit of knowledge, Newman tells us, occurs "when we refer what we learn to what we already know ... when we possess the knowledge not only of things but also of their mutual and true relations ... the mind is not reckoned as enlightened ... unless this analytical, distinctive, harmonizing process is present."

The kind of knowledge that has to be pursued, therefore, in any good education, but particularly in an Honors education within the Liberal Arts tradition, is obtained when our reason actively works on our wide reading and information, relating it, analyzing it, judging it, grasping the "far-reaching principles by which the facts and occurrences of life,

religion, science, and art are arranged in due order ..."

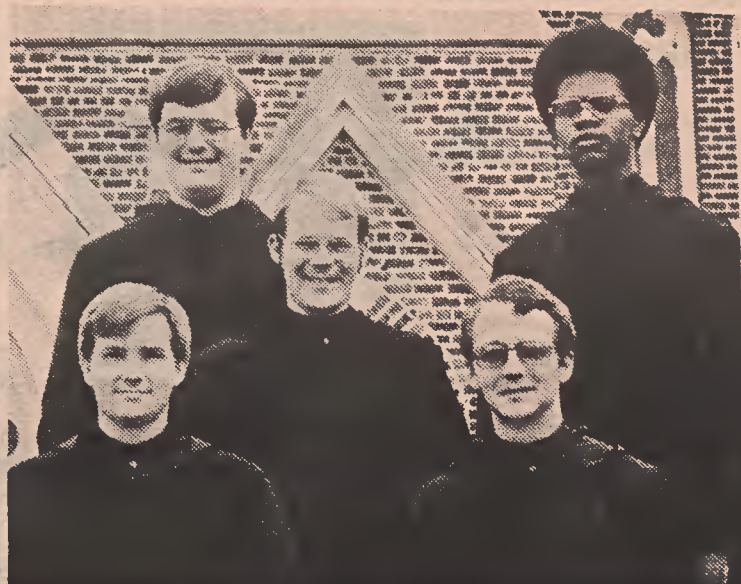
This kind of education is, alas, not very popular in recent times which are characterized all too often, I believe, by the frenetic habit of reaching conclusions that are based mainly on feeling. In this connection, Leon Rosten has said in his book *A Trumpet For Reason*: "Throughout man's history, no group has done more harm, shed more blood, caused more passion, than those who, sincerely ignorant, added passion to their certitudes." In other words, feeling and passion are no substitutes for reason ...

It must be understood that the kind of education we are discussing demands much discipline. Doing the wide reading required and exercising the mind vigorously and critically on the information gathered does, indeed, require tears, toil, and sweat. Despite what some misguided educators say, true learning is not fun; perhaps the fun comes after all the hard work is done. Shakespeare was on the mark when he said, "Knowledge maketh a bloody entry ..."

What Is the Value of an Honors Education Within the Liberal Arts Tradition?

Nowadays it would seem that students choose to seek a college education for its sheer utility value, and consequently, it is not surprising that so much of our higher education today is career oriented. One of the difficulties faced by an educator who believes in the deep value of a good Liberal Arts education is that normally a person has to go through the process of obtaining such an education before he or she can appreciate its real value. Nevertheless, I believe that there are and always will be a few superior students who are able to see that the highest value in life is to be found in striving to be

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Assembled on the steps of Belmont Abbey Cathedral are: (left to right-- front row) - Brother Robert Hagan and Brother Jan Northcott; (second row) Brother Placid Solari; (third row) Brother Simon Donoghue and Brother Mauricio West.

Ceremony Honors Five Brothers

Five young men made their first professions of vows as monks of the Order of St. Benedict on Monday, August 18, at the Belmont Abbey Cathedral. Principal celebrant at the profession ceremonies was Father Peter Stragand, O.S.B., Prior of Belmont Abbey.

Brother Robert Hagan is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert R. Hagan of 1021 Ridge Top Road in Richmond, Virginia. He graduated from Richmond's Benedictine High School in 1970 and from the University of Virginia at Charlottesville in 1974, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Medieval Studies. Brother Robert will remain at Belmont Abbey where he will work on the Monastic Formation program and also in the Admissions Office of Belmont Abbey College.

Brother Jan Northcott, son of Mrs. Helen Northcott of 348 N. Elm Street, Hagerstown, Indiana, attended the public schools and was graduated from St. Meinrad College in 1974 with a BS degree in Biology. On August 19 he entered Mercy Hospital School of Nursing in Charlotte, N.C.

Brother Placid Solari, son of Mrs. Frances M. Solari of 3512 Floyd Avenue in Richmond, Virginia, graduated from Benedictine High School in 1970. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Bellarmine College, Louisville, Kentucky, in 1974. He will enter International Benedictine College, Saint Anselm, in Rome, Italy, for studies in Theology leading to a licentiate in Sacred Theology.

Brother Simon Donoghue, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Donoghue of 30 Bayberry Lane in Levittown, New York, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Medieval History from the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. He will remain at Belmont Abbey to serve as reference librarian in the College Library.

Brother Mauricio Wardell-Aaron West is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Allen West of 907 Johnson Avenue in Columbia, South Carolina. He was educated at St. Martin de Parres parish schools and Cardinal Newman High School. He was graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from St. Meinrad College, St. Meinrad, Indiana, in 1974. He will begin studies in Theology at St. Vincent's College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, this fall.

Art Exhibits

At Abbey

Belmont Abbey College sponsored an art exhibit and sale of approximately 600 original prints from the Ferdinand Roten Galleries on Wednesday, September 10 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Haid was the site of the exhibit which attracted students and area residents alike. Such masters as Picasso, Goya, Renoir, Hogarth, and many of today's American artists were represented. The collection was displayed in an informal manner so that visitors could examine the various graphic techniques of the different artists at close range.