

Ceremony Promotes Vocations

By Marc Francis

For The Heights

Published: Sunday, November 6, 2011

Updated: Monday, November 7, 2011 01:11

Daniel Lee / Heights Staff



"My soul is thirsty for you, oh Lord, my God," chanted the audience in St. Mary's Chapel on Sunday evening. Exploring one's thirst for God is exactly what Boston College alumni Mario Powell, Jeremy Zipple, and Sam Sawyer—three Jesuit seminarians studying for the priesthood—spoke about during the celebration of National Vocation Promotion Day. On this day, Jesuits all over the world recognize the constant need to engage men who are contemplating joining the religious life.

"The Society of Jesus is a community of brothers and priests who work for the betterment of society, and on this day we encourage people to embrace a calling," said Rev. Terrence Devino, S.J., director of Manresa House and special assistant to the president.

Sawyer was adamant about this event taking place, since it is the first time BC has honored all those who have undertaken a vocation in such a conversational manner. When asked what the gathering at St. Mary's aims to accomplish, Sawyer said, "We want to give people the chance and opportunity to ask if the religious life is possible for them—'Can I start to think about this?'"

The Jesuits recruit 30 to 40 people every year, one of which is usually a BC graduate. The Society encourages self-exploration and believes in a need for such reflection-centric activities.

"Whatever stage of life we are at, we can always examine how we live our lives, and how we respond to God's grace," said University President Rev. William P. Leahy, S.J., during his homily.

Devino accentuated the importance of reflection through his flier advertising the event, which said, "Ignatius didn't hear God calling until hit by a cannonball. What will it take to get your attention?" The signs present in people's lives can be difficult to interpret. All of us have a vocation. The vocations discussed at St. Mary's are of a religious nature, and the process of recognizing such signs was thoroughly examined. After giving a talk on his personal faith journey, Sawyer said, "We must think about our role in the future. If it involves some combination of service and faith, then maybe we are meant for the religious life."

If someone believes God is calling him, Devino said, "He should come to Manresa House and have a conversation with one of us. But most importantly, he should come with an open heart, a generous spirit, and a sense of humor."

Such qualities are important to Devino, but some students wondered what characteristics a Jesuit must have once he gives himself up to a whole new life. "Key qualities of any Jesuit include generosity, deep faith, big desires, and a persistent dissatisfaction with the status quo," Sawyer said. "We see ourselves as companions of Jesus, and always want to bring about some positive change."

"The first thing that occurs to me on this day is the call to be attentive, but to be attentive is more than being alert—it is to listen closely to the inner self," Leahy said at the beginning of Sunday mass. This call to take note of all the subtleties in our lives was leveraged during the talk of Rev. Mario Powell, S.J. and STM '14. He left his audience wondering what it meant to "live a life of depth," and how our experiences at BC will impact our discernment far passed our expectations.