Dear Brother Priests from SOLA,

Greetings from Niagara University!

I am very much looking forward to the holidays, and I hope you are as well. This year I celebrated Thanksgiving with friends and their extended family.

One of the grandmothers in this family and I made our First Communion together. After ordination, I had the privilege of officiating at the weddings of her and her husband’s two daughters, and of baptizing their six grandchildren.

Thanksgiving is a special event with this family. Before the dinner all the children — there must be at least 15 — gather around in a circle and sit on chairs. The adults line up behind them. Then, beginning with the oldest child, each one mentions one blessing for which he or she is grateful. The adults follow, doing the same. As you can imagine, it’s a powerful moment for all. You can sense the Lord’s presence in the innocence of these children as they offer their prayers of thanks.

In this letter I wish to circle with you, my brother priests, and add my words of thanks for all that you have done for others. Who more than priests, through their celebration of the Sacraments, have handed out the peace that only Christ can give! What a blessing you have been to so many people.

Please know that you are thought of during this holiday season.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas.

In Christ,

John W. Gouldrick, C.M.
Alumni Chaplain
Inspired by the charism of St. Vincent de Paul, Rev. Martin J. Blake, C.M. (1881-1939), or as he was affectionately called, “Pere Blake,” founded Our Lady of Angels Novenas in the spring of 1918. Father Blake was the Director of Seminarians at the Seminary of Our Lady of Angels and Vice President of Niagara University.

The primary purpose of the novenas was to honor the Mother of God and to spread devotion to her under the title of Our Lady of Angels, the patroness of the Seminary and University. It was Father Blake’s hope to have Mary better known and loved and to bring before the people her intercessory power and to inspire in them confidence in the Mother of God.

The secondary purpose of the Novena Office was to raise funds to help support the Vincentians with the education and formation of the seminarians and students attending the Seminary and University. Funds of the Association were also used to improve conditions on the campus, including building Meade Hall and Lynch dormitory.

In 1957, the Seminary was moved to Glenmont, outside of Albany N.Y. In 1967, under the leadership of Rev. Eugene A. Walsh, C.M., Director of Novenas, and Very Rev. Kenneth Slattery, C.M., President of the University, the name of the Novena Office was changed to Our Lady of Angels Association.

The Association celebrated its 95th anniversary in 2013. It continues to promote devotion to Our Blessed Mother under her special title of Our Lady of Angels, and raises funds to help support the education of men studying for the priesthood and brotherhood in the Eastern Province of the Vincentian Community. In addition, following the charism of St. Vincent de Paul, the Association raises funds to help support works for the poor which receive assistance through Vincentian Charities, a program supported by the Province.

The Association raises funds through various appeals sent throughout the year. It also makes available various Mass enrollment cards and affords members the opportunity to have Masses offered for their intentions. The Association also depends upon the generosity of its members who remember it in legacies and bequests.

SOLA Reunion 2014

The next SOLA reunion will be held May 21, 2014. We will be celebrating 50-year anniversaries (1964) and more! Invitations will be mailed out in early 2014.
History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past, trying to reconstruct the scenes, to revive its echoes, and to kindle with pale gleams the passions of former days.” So spoke Winston Churchill on Nov. 12, 1940, at the funeral of Neville Chamberlin.

In this presentation, I will strive to stumble along the trail of Vincent de Paul as a formator of priests, hoping to re-kindle with pale gleams some passionate echoes of former days, and then take a leap from Vincent to the present day.

One of these passionate echoes comes right from St. Vincent himself. Late in his life, he said this: “In the state we’ve embraced, we’ve been called by God to work on a masterpiece; for, if there is a masterpiece in this world, it’s the formation of good priests; nothing greater, nothing more important can be conceived” (May 1658). So, how did he get from a blank canvas to the luminous gleam of a masterpiece?

To set the scene, allow me to take you back to a seminal happening of the 16th century, the Council of Trent. This non-continuous event, beginning in 1545, stretched out for a total of 18 years, in three distinct periods, and finally concluded in 1563. Trent’s agenda was all about doctrine and reform. Reform of the clergy and the papacy was uppermost in the minds of the delegates and in canon 16, the Council mandated every diocese to provide a seminary for those studying for the priesthood. Why the urgent call for seminaries? Firstly, seminaries were virtually non-existent for diocesan clergy. Secondly, the state of the clergy, as one might expect, left much to be desired. For our purposes, one graphic example will have to suffice.

The envoy of the Duke of Bavaria addressed the Council of Trent on June 27, 1562. Citing information gathered from an extensive visitation in Bavaria, the envoy stated that the vast majority of parish clergy was ignorant and infected with heresy. Out of 100 priests, only three or four were not secretly married or keeping mistresses to the great scandal of the faithful. Good formation was necessary; seminaries were part of the answer to the problem and deemed essential for every diocese. There was just one obstacle, a rather big one. Any mandate for reform had financial implications. Reform efforts hit people in the pocketbook. In fact, money played such a fundamental role in the reforms Trent tried to legislate that it explains
much of the resistance those reforms met both
during and after the Council.

Skip ahead now from 1563 to 1615 in St. Vincent
de Paul’s France. It’s more than 50 years after the
Council of Trent. It was only in 1615 that the
Assembly of the Clergy solemnly declared that the
Council of Trent was received in France. Vincent
de Paul was in his mid-30s. Although Vincent’s
own fundamental conversion experience and the
foundation of the Congregation of the Mission
were still to come (1617 and 1625), spirited talk
about seminary formation began to bubble to the
surface in earnest.

And now we sharpen our focus on Vincent de Paul
himself. As you know, Vincent would come to
found three large groups: The Confraternities of
Charity (1617), the Congregation of the Mission
(1625), and the Daughters of Charity (1633).
Little noticed, perhaps, is the simple fact that he
not only founded these three groups, but formed
them throughout his lifetime. He composed
and revised rules; he gave conferences; he wrote
thousands of letters; and he stood fast as personal
mentor, model, and inspiration.

Moreover, Vincent’s influence on diocesan priests
and future bishops was incalculable. He advised
the crown on the selection of suitable bishops.
Many of the great spiritual giants of 17th century
France took part in the formation programs he
organized. More than 12,000 priests made retreats
at Vincent’s house during his lifetime. More than
400 priests came out of Vincentian seminaries
during the Founder’s lifetime. In fact, by the end
of the 17th century, Vincentians ran 42 percent of all
the seminaries in France. Well-formed priests were
catalysts for reform. Vincent transformed God’s
people by transforming their ministers.

Vincent de Paul, of course, is best known as
“Father of the Poor.” So clearly appropriate was
this title that the preacher at his funeral in 1660
exclaimed: “He just about transformed the face of
the Church.” On April 16, 1885, St. Vincent was
declared, for the Universal Church, the patron
of all associations of charity. Vincent was also
described by many as “Lux clerii” (Light of the
Clergy). This title is equally apt, since his work
for priests was joined at the hip with his work
for the poor. He reasoned that work for the poor
would best be served in conjunction with a well-
formed clergy. For what good would it be for the
poor to be attended to in charity if they remained
spiritually abandoned?

As with the Kingdom of God, described by Jesus
as a tiny mustard seed or a bit of leaven, Vincent
began his formation work for priests in small ways.
God would give the growth.

In 1628, now 65 years after the Council of
Trent, in his 48th year, Vincent de Paul began his
formation work with retreats for those about to be
ordained as priests. Whatever their background,
whatever the content of their formation thus far,
Vincent began with an accelerated professional
formation course of 10 to 15 days. It was literally a
break course on the truths of the Christian faith, on
moral theology, on practical training in the rites of
the Mass and the administration of the sacraments.
Admittedly, this venture was a small beginning, but
when it was not unusual for a priest to be ignorant
even of the formula for absolution in the sacrament
of confession, one had to start somewhere.

The next small step came from the realization that
initial fervor in the priesthood was one thing, but
how might fervor’s flame stay lit over the long haul?
In 1633, the Tuesday conferences were born; these
were weekly events in the lives of many diocesan
priests. Under the leadership of St. Vincent, annual
retreats based on Ignatius of Loyola’s Spiritual
Exercises became a way of life, not just for priests
and bishops, but for people of every class and
condition.

The final step in the formation work for priests
started around the year 1642, when seminaries
finally began to be founded in France. Remember that this date was fully 90 years after the Council of Trent ended. Vincent de Paul had by then passed his 60th year. Seminaries then were viewed as extensions of the crash-course retreats given before ordination. Now the total preparation period would last two to three years, not just a few days. Seminaries then were not really schools of philosophy and theology; that was the work of universities. Seminaries then focused mostly on spiritual formation, training in liturgical matters, and preparation for hearing confessions. Time away from the seminary was spent accompanying Vincentian priests and brothers in the work of conducting parish missions.

St. Vincent’s formation efforts were not limited to the diocesan clergy. Ongoing formation for members of his own Congregation began in earnest in 1642. And here, we must leapfrog ahead. With fits and starts, delays and revivals, these efforts continued to be talked about and tried out until almost the present day, when finally an International Formation Center for Vincentians came to be established in Paris in 1993. Interestingly, the history of the continuing formation of the clergy for the Universal Church mirrored the same history in the Congregation of the Mission.

Prior to Vatican II the notion and the practice of ongoing formation of the clergy was largely absent. With the publication of Pope John Paul II’s Pastores Dabo Vobis in 1992, the arena of ongoing formation of the clergy received a big boost. The goal nowadays is not simply “education” but “formation.” Ongoing formation of the clergy today rests on four pillars: human, spiritual, pastoral, and intellectual. The task is one of integrating each of these four pillars into a unified priestly life for the sake of the mission of the Church.

In my own work of clergy formation for the Diocese of Manchester, I try to bring forward much of what I have learned from Vincent himself. In particular, this means a nose for mission effectiveness, collaboration, flexibility and inventiveness, the unity of prayer and action, a spirituality that transforms humanity, and a linkage between gentleness and compassion.

What’s the motivation for today’s ministry of ongoing formation for priests? For me, the motivation comes from St. Vincent himself: “How fervently the poor Missioners must give themselves to you, my Savior, to contribute to the formation of good priests, since it’s the most difficult, and the most important ministry for the salvation of souls and the advancement of Christianity” (July 1655).

Every so often God raises up men and women to distill the central values of a living tradition in a concrete and accessible way. St. Vincent is certainly one of God’s special gifts to the poor and to the clergy. And so, to paraphrase words from the Book of Sirach, chapter 44: “Let us praise this godly man, Vincent de Paul, whose virtues have not been forgotten, whose wealth remains in his ever-expanding family, whose name will never be blotted out.” The force and the fascination of his life remind us that this is the masterpiece we are called to paint.
On May 22, 2013, seven priests came together to celebrate the history of the Seminary of Our Lady of Angels. The anniversary Mass, which includes a renewal of the men’s commitment to priestly service, has become an annual tradition at Niagara University. Mass is followed by a luncheon in St. Vincent’s Hall.

This year’s event was particularly special for Rev. Msgr. James Wall, who is a 1959 graduate of Niagara University, and Rev. Joseph Carlo, who both were ordained in 1963 and celebrated their 50th anniversary of being ordained in priesthood. Msgr. Wall works at Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora, N.Y., and Rev. Carlo is in residence at O’Hara Residence in Tonawanda, N.Y. Both are part of the Diocese of Buffalo, N.Y. Others attending with their ordination years included: Rev. James Connelly, 1949; Rev. Walter Matuszak, 1958; Msgr. Angelo Caligiuri, 1958; Rev. Charles Gaffigan, 1962; and Msgr. Daniel Myszka, 1958.

Before Niagara University was recognized by its current name, it was known as the College and Seminary of Our Lady of Angels (SOLA). The Vincentian founders of the university, the Most Rev. John Timon, C.M., and Rev. John J. Lynch, C.M., purchased two adjoining farms, the Vedder and De Veaux farms, on Monteagle Ridge in 1856.

Over the next 25 years, the college and seminary grew and prospered, producing graduates that entered such fields as the priesthood, law and medicine, teaching, journalism and many others. Indeed, by the spring of 1863, the college had become so successful that the New York Legislature granted a charter empowering the college and seminary to award degrees to its graduates.

It wasn’t until August 1883 that Grover Cleveland, then governor of New York, gave permission to the college and seminary to change its name to Niagara University. The seminary remained a full and vibrant part of the university community until 1961 when it was moved to Albany, N.Y.

Rev. Peter A. Allen, ’67, Cutchogue, N.Y.
Rev. Robert G. Amey, ’69, Silver Spring, Md
Rev. Sebastian V. Annino, ’57, Bridgeton, N.J.
Rev. Joseph Ashe, ’76, Groton, Conn.
Rev. James M. Augustyn, ’59, Lackawanna, N.Y.
Rev. Alfred J. Bebel, ’54, Binghamton, N.Y.
Rev. Robert Biron, ’74, Durham, N.C.
Rev. William Bleiler, ’62, Cherry Hill, N.J.
Rev. Charles P. Boccio, ’57, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
Rev. Joseph A. Boruszewski, ’50, Cheektowaga, N.Y.
Rev. David F. Budney, ’57, Saint Augustine, Fla.
Rev. Angelo M. Caligiuri, ’55, Tonawanda, N.Y.
Rev. Lawrence F. Carew, ’67, Danbury, Conn.
Rev. Joseph C. Carlo, ’63, Tonawanda, N.Y.
Rev. Harold D. Carrier, ’69, Hoosick, N.Y.
Rev. David L. Cassato, ’72, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Rev. Raymond J. Chappetto, ’67, Flushing, N.Y.
Rev. Randolph Chew, ’71, Charlestown, R.I.
Rev. Edward A. Colohan, ’61, Stamford, Conn.
Rev. James N. Connelly, ’45, Tonawanda, N.Y.
Rev. John M. Crable, ’53, Cohoes, N.Y.
Rev. Thomas E. Crane, ’56, Tonawanda, N.Y.
Rev. Vincent M. Daley, ’67, Sunnyside, N.Y.
Rev. Michael DelVecchio, ’54, Orchard Park, N.Y.
Rev. Daniel F. DePascale, ’57, Jacksonville Beach, Fla.
Rev. James Devlin, ’68, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Rev. Edward J. Dougherty, ’50, Lawrenceville, N.J.
Rev. William F. Esmond, ’51, Queensbury, N.Y.
Rev. Joseph Falletta, ’72, Kinderhook, N.Y.
Rev. Michael A. Farano, ’67, Loudonville, N.Y.
Rev. William C. Farrugia, ’59, Astoria, N.Y.
Rev. John J. Fox, ’56, Amherst, N.Y.
Rev. Charles A. Gaffigan, ’62, Schenectady, N.Y.
Rev. Richard Gardiner, ’67, Solomons, Md.
Rev. Gary Gelfenbien, ’71, Chatham, N.Y.
Rev. Paul J. Gozaloff, ’52, Mechanicsville, Md.
Rev. Paul F. Grehl, ’59, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Rev. W.T. Gress, ’54, Buffalo, N.Y.
Rev. Thomas J. Hartman, ’67, Hicksville, N.Y.
Rev. Robert J. Hyl, ’63, Stamford, Conn.
Rev. Pascal A. Iannotti, ’59, Amsterdam, N.Y.
Rev. Overton J. Jones, ’66, Ocean City, N.J.
Rev. James J. Kane, ’68, Ravena, N.Y.
Rev. William Kane, ’60, Bethesda, Md.
Rev. Donald F. Kelly, ’59, Troy, N.Y.
Rev. James G. Kelly, ’62, Tonawanda, N.Y.
Rev. Francis E. Kelso, ’61, New Hampton, N.H.
Rev. Thomas L. Kemp, ’52, Le Roy, N.Y.
Rev. Matthew S. Kopacz, ’63, Boston, N.Y.
Rev. Theodore W. Kraus, ’59, Moraga, Calif.
Rev. Roger E. Laberge, ’72, Quincy, Mass.
Rev. Ronald G. Matulewicz, ’57, Clifton Park, N.Y.
Rev. Walter L. Matuszak, ’54, Depew, N.Y.
Rev. Robert J. McArtney, ’56, Lackawanna, N.Y.
Rev. C. William McGarry, ’54, Lewiston, N.Y.
Rev. Donald L. Measer, ’59, Tonawanda, N.Y.
Rev. Ronald A. Menty, ’69, Albany, N.J.
Rev. William R. Metzler, ’72, Simsbury, Conn.
Rev. Lawrence M. Milby, ’61, Orchard Park, N.Y.
Rev. Sebastian L. Muccilli, ’57, St. Augustine, Fla.
Rev. Walter C.P. Murphy, ’58, Douglaston, N.Y.
Rev. Daniel J. Myszka, ’58, Buffalo, N.Y.
Rev. Peter J. Nabozny, ’50, Rensselaer, N.Y.
Rev. Michael D. O’Hara, ’60, Arcade, N.Y.
Rev. Donald J. Ophals, ’61, Latham, N.Y.
Rev. Frederick J. Pennett, ’67, Manchester, N.H.
Rev. David J. Peter, ’66, Grand Island, N.Y.
Rev. Daniel A. Picciano, ’67, Lake Ronkonkoma, N.Y.
Rev. Edward C. Pratt, ’72, Rensselaer, N.Y.
Rev. John T. Provost, ’72, Albany, N.Y.
Rev. Theodore C. Rog, ’60, Lackawanna, N.Y.
Rev. Nicholas A. Rossello, ’60, Tonawanda, N.Y.
Rev. Anthony M. Rucando, ’66, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Rev. John Sabia, ’60, Monroe, Conn.
Rev. Joseph Sadusky, ’66, Beltsville, Md.
Rev. William Sangiovanni, ’69, Fairfield, Conn.
Rev. Cosmo G. Saporito, ’54, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Rev. Edward J. Scanlan, ’50, Tonawanda, N.Y.
Rev. Leonard G. Scott, ’61, Mount Ephraim, N.J.
Rev. John P. Selleck, ’57, Panama City, Fla.
Rev. Matthew W. Sheridan, ’54, Douglaston, N.Y.
Rev. Robert M. Shurtleff, ’66, Potsdam, N.Y.
Rev. Norman Simoneau, ’67, Manchester, N.H.
Rev. Ralph W. Stansley, ’72, West Trenton, N.J.
Rev. F. Norman Sullivan, ’58, Colden, N.Y.
Rev. Peter J. Sullivan, ’70, Albany, N.Y.
Rev. Thomas P. Taton, ’57, Buffalo, N.Y.
Rev. James A. Thompson, ’67, Laconia, N.H.
Rev. Santino Titta, ’60, Staten Island, N.Y.
Rev. James A. Tobin, ’72, Aurora, Colo.
Rev. Michael J. Torpey, ’68, Sea Cliff, N.Y.
Rev. Thomas S. Tracey, ’63, Cherry Hill, N.J.
Rev. John P. Wagner, ’59, Baldwinsville, N.Y.
Rev. James E. Wall, ’59, East Aurora, N.Y.
Rev. Donald R. Wrangler, ’53, Lockport, N.Y.
Rev. Francis G. Weldgen, ’59, North Tonawanda, N.Y.
Rev. Charles M. Werth, ’50, Corona, N.Y.
Rev. Thomas J. Wopperer, ’64, Dunkirk, N.Y.
Rev. George B. Yengst, ’62, Buffalo, N.Y.
Rev. Francis J. Zmoynski, ’53, Lancaster, N.Y.

“Lost” SOLA Alumni/No Addresses

Please let us know if you have any information on the following alumni:

Rev. Marcel Allard, ’65
Rev. Robert L. Beloin, ’69
Rev. Louis P. Bonardi, ’62
Rev. Robert G. Calles, ’63
Rev. Nicholas A. Campagnone, ’65
Rev. Ivo J. Corazza, ’57
Rev. Brian R. Cormier
Rev. Michael E. Crinnin
Rev. Daniel Davis
Rev. Earl DeBlieux
Rev. Albert Del Vecchio, ’61
Rev. Anthony V. Dell Anno, ’69
Rev. Eugene T. Dyszlewski
Rev. Herbert Engelhardt, ’37
Rev. Eldridge T. Evans, ’65
Rev. David W. Farland, ’72
Rev. Thomas I. Flynn, ’40
Rev. George W. Forsyth, ’41
Rev. Andrew J. Franko
Rev. Ramon Frias, '72
Rev. Leo Gagnon, '69
Rev. Edward V. George, '59
Rev. Ernest G. Geresy
Rev. Lawrence R. Gonneville, '67
Rev. William A. Gorman, '73
Rev. Mark R. Grimes, '60
Rev. Daniel Harren
Rev. Robert S. Hatela, '60
Rev. Thomas R. Hibbard
Rev. Richard J. Hoare, '69
Rev. James R. Joslin, '74
Rev. Leon J. Kelly, '63
Rev. Richard Lavigne, '66
Rev. Raymond W. Liszewski, '67
Rev. Thomas J. Lyons, '48
Rev. Edward C. Madore
Rev. Thomas P. Murphy
Rev. James D. Nicholls, '67
Rev. Chap V. Nicita
Rev. Daniel Norton, '61
Rev. Joseph T. Pinatauro
Rev. Edward P. Porada, '72
Rev. Joseph A. Ranieri, '57
Rev. William J. Reidy
Rev. Charles H. Rourke, '58
Rev. Joseph P. Rush, '58
Rev. Frank Ruzza
Rev. John M. Ryan, '52
Rev. Thomas F. Saccone, '72
Rev. William N. Schmidt, '72
Rev. Michael Schmitt, '70
Rev. Joseph J. Shaheen, '59
Rev. Dennis W. Slater
Rev. Alfred D. Smith, '53
Rev. Paul G. Stevens
Rev. Kenneth Swain, '72
Rev. John C. Szantyr, '72
Rev. Michael A. Szczesiul
Rev. David J. Szymanski
Rev. William O. Wangler, '63
Rev. John P. Ward, '61
Rev. Michael Weaton, '65
Rev. George S. Worgul
The Rector’s Message to the Ordinandi of 1955

Your training at the Seminary of Our Lady of Angels has taught you above all else that the priest of God is an “Alter Christus”. His mission is the mission of Christ. “Through Him and with Him and in Him” the priest must continue the great work of the Redemption of the world. Always and everywhere, the priest bears upon his immortal soul the sacerdotal character which makes him resemble in a special way his Divine Master, the High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Christ has given His priest divine powers and duties. To offer up the adorable Sacrifice, to save people from their sins, to teach and preach Christ’s doctrine is the office of the priest. What a consoling mission! What sublime powers! What a terrible responsibility!

To use these powers for your own sanctification and the salvation of immortal souls, fruitfully meditate daily on the example of our one High Priest, Jesus Christ. Meditate upon this imitation of Christ and become the perfect “Alter Christus”.

God bless you,

Francis X. Desmond, S.M.