

REFLECTIONS ON TERTIANSHIP

From Seattle Prep President Greg Vance

This fall, Father Greg Vance, 38, was installed as the President of Seattle Preparatory School, shortly after his arrival back from his Tertianship in Australia. Tertianship is the last formal stage of Jesuit training. The entire formation process usually takes anywhere from 10-15 years. Greg Vance joined the Jesuits in 1986 and was ordained in 1998.

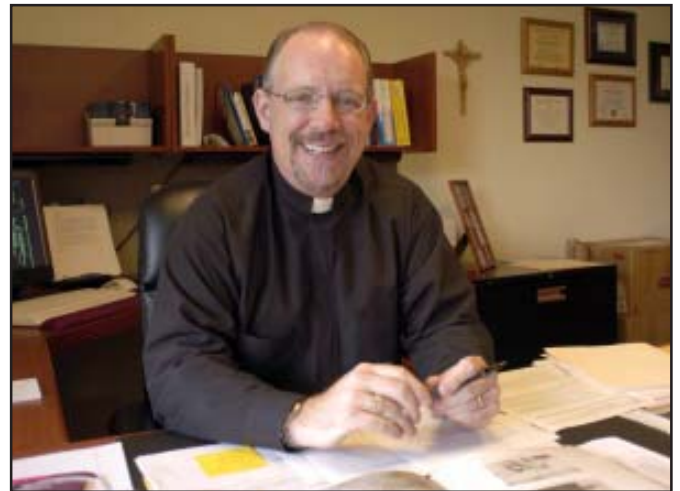
Some describe the Tertianship experience as returning to the foundation of a man's training that first began in his novitiate. Many of the class subjects and apostolic experiences are similar. And both novices and tertians undergo the Long Retreat – the Spiritual Exercises. But after 10, 15 or more years of living in the Society, a man brings a different set of questions with him than he did when he first joined. And the subsequent years of experiences form the basis for prayer and reflections he never could have had during his novitiate.

Tertianship, in a way, is the opportunity to go back in time, to review one's reasons for joining the Society, and one's reasons for remaining. As Father Vance notes, it is a time for the Tertian to recognize "the mind and heart of Ignatius" that now lives inside himself.

When I was asked to describe what it feels like to move from Tertianship into full-time ministry, my first response was that it's about time! I have been a Jesuit for 17 years, and I feel like I am finally being entrusted with long-term and full-time ministry. When I was in Australia for Tertianship, we engaged in a workshop called "The Jesuit at Mid-Life." It was a good few days of reflection and sharing, but it honestly didn't fit where I feel I am in my life. I told my Tertian brothers that, far from being in a "mid-life crisis," I felt more like an adolescent who was finally being given the keys to the family car!

On a much more serious note, moving into long-term apostolic work after my semester of Tertianship means that the Society of Jesus, its works, its identity, its effectiveness and yes, its issues, are my own as well. We were told in Tertianship that the purpose of this last stage of Jesuit formation is for the individual Jesuit to feel that he has been given, over the course of his training, "the mind and heart of Ignatius." What a wonderful and necessary grace that has been for me. The question I brought with me to Australia last January was: "Did I become the person I wanted to be when I entered the Jesuits?" I feel that the last semester was a privileged opportunity to hear God answering in the affirmative! So now I come to the leadership of Seattle Prep with energy, commitment, rest, and a deep sense of doing work not for my own sake, but for the sake of the mission of the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus.

That is, ultimately, what I have worked for these past years of formation. It is what we all work for. May God bless us all in the apostolates to which he calls us!



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