



My Father's House

By Luke Bland, Pre-Theology I — Tulsa

What is your average brand-new seminarian most in need of when he begins formation? Philosophy? It's important, but not number one. Theology? Definitely not until after philosophy. A Bible study? No. From day one, what the new seminarian most needs is to be evangelized. He needs to be convicted of the Father's love for him; His love, and love alone, has brought him into existence and to the seminary, and that it is love that holds him in being. The pre-theology program, situated between Cardinal Glennon College and Kenrick School of Theology, treats this central message of the Gospel as the fundamental starting point of priestly formation: Jesus loves me.

This message is what I appreciate most about the pre-theology program. I do like the philosophy classes, studying Aristotle, Plato, logic, and epistemology. I rest in the daily 6:00 a.m. holy hour in common with my brothers. I relish the opportunity to live with great men who are racing toward heaven. But what I love most about seminary is how this simple, but primary reality, influences every aspect of formation. Everything that is given to me is ordered toward me falling in love with Jesus Christ, knowing and living my identity as a beloved son of our good Father in Heaven (who always keeps His promises), growing in the ability to listen intently to God in prayer so as to respond as generously as I have received, and, ultimately, to become "St. Luke of Tulsa." This house of formation is many things: it's a bit like a university and it has similarities to a monastery. But, most importantly, it is my Father's house. Where else would a son wish to be?



Robert Williams coaches fellow Pre-Theologians during a Theology vs. Pre-Theology/College softball game.

I remember how the words "Jesus loves you" used to make me roll my eyes when I was a teenager. Now they are food for my soul. The truth is, I simply had no idea how much I was in need of this message, and I didn't understand how Christ's gift of Himself on the cross is personally tailored to me. The weakest and ugliest parts of myself that I bear in shame or hide in fear, are what He loves and what He gave His life for. He looks at me and sees a son. Where there is death in my soul, he brings life. Where there is brokenness, he heals and puts back together. This everyday message is becoming ever-incorporated into my soul. I'd say the program is working. +