

The challenges and rewards of doing campus ministry as evangelizing the next generation of adult Catholics was the topic and focus at the recent Sunday “Conversations at the Center” in Brighton, MA. After celebrating the liturgy for the Second Sunday of Advent, the community, residents and guests listened to Fr. Bernard Disco, O.S.B. address the topic. Fr. Bernard, a resident at the Center since August, 2011, is a Benedictine monk and was campus minister at St. Anselm’s College in Manchester, NH from 2006-2011. He is now in graduate theological studies (S.T.L.) at Boston College’s STM.

Based on his experiences, Fr. Bernard shared stories, his perspectives and questions about ministry to college-age young adults for our reflection and conversation in order to illustrate approaches to this ministry in our contemporary culture.

Beginning with the person of the campus minister, he set forth three preliminary challenges to consider while considering this ministry. First, self- knowledge is important in being aware of one’s temperament, talents and limitations. Secondly, self-care requires a healthy balance in all aspects of one’s life. Thirdly, one must have realistic expectations of limited financial remunerations.

Considering the challenges in communicating the Gospel in words and deeds on college campuses, we must include: the need to be a good listener, being aware of the generational and cultural gaps young people face and being pastoral in one’s approach while being attentive to appropriate boundaries in relationships, just to mention a few.

In addition, it soon becomes clear for anyone working with this age group how generous, active

and service-oriented they are, while searching to find their own individual identity. For them this is a time of major transitions personally, socially and academically, while asking the “God questions” that accompany these changes, as they mature in their faith.

To see this growth take place, often through much struggle, is a great reward for the campus minister. Ultimately, it is the goal of the campus minister to prepare these young adults to become faith-filled, active members of their parishes and the broader Church, after the college experience ends.

It was also well noted that this ministry goes beyond the student body and reaches out to the whole college community, including staff, faculty, administration and beyond nationally and globally.

After an engaging discussion which included present and former campus ministers, everyone moved into the dining room for a delicious brunch and more conversation well into the afternoon.