

Cassadaga Reunion

On Sunday July 9, a large contingent of former staff and students of Our Lady of Lourdes High School Seminary (together with a good representation of spouses) attended the first ever reunion, held at St. Anne's Shrine in Sturbridge, MA. Our Lady of Lourdes opened its doors in 1960 in the western New York village of Cassadaga, an hour's drive southwest of Buffalo and remained open until 1967. This seminary continued a long tradition of Assumptionist minor seminaries throughout the world known as alumnates. Fr. d'Alzon himself, the founder of the Assumptionists, was responsible for the very first alumnate, not far from his hometown of Nîmes in southern France, Notre Dame des Châteaux. The originality of these alumnates consisted in several factors: that graduates were free to choose any diocese or any congregation they wished; that they welcomed teenagers with very modest means; that classes were kept quite small; that a strong classical curriculum was offered. In approximately the one hundred years of their existence these Assumptionist alumnates worldwide provided the Church with over 4,000 priests and religious, including more than a few bishops.

What became clear at the July 9 reunion was that all graduates, those who went on to pursue priesthood and/or religious life and those who did not, deeply appreciated the formation they received for life: a spirit of community, a sense of responsibility, a cultivation of one's talents, discipline, an understanding of virtue, and a life of faith. Participants commented that the lessons and habits they learned during these early years of their life shaped them in ways that have marked their entire lives and still remain with them to this day.

Cassadaga graduates and former staff members came from all over the country to attend, from as far away as San Diego, West Palm Peach, and Vancouver, British Columbia. Fr. Camillus Thibault, the former vice-rector of the seminary, who is currently the pastor of the Assumptionist parish in Mexico City, flew up to celebrate the opening Mass of the reunion. It coincided with the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination.

The universal sentiment at the end of the day was one of gratitude for those who had organized this wonderful event. Time and again participants expressed a hope that it would not be the last and all looked forward at least to the year 2010 which will mark the 50th anniversary of the

opening of the seminary.

For more stories about the reunion go to http://www.cassadagaseminary.org/