

VICAR'S BEACON

- Father Anthony Holder

JANUARY TERM AT TRINITY

Whenever I attend interterm studies at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, I always feel a sense of camaraderie with a wider fraternity of colleagues, from various Christian denominations, who are experiencing some of the same challenges that I encounter in ministry. This January term was no different. I pursued a pastoral course in *Spiritual Direction and Guidance* and a Systematic Theology course on one of the great apologists – *Lesslie Newbigin*. To say the least, they were both educational and enlightening courses.



The *Spiritual Direction and Guidance* course was held during the first week with seven D Min students in class – two Presbyterians and five Episcopalians, including myself. We hailed from various parts of the United States – Pennsylvania, Florida, Mississippi, Maine, Texas and Illinois. In that class, we were occupied in both theory and practicum as to how to engage in both one-on-one and group spiritual direction and to be effective spiritual directors. In addition to the professor who ably taught the course, he invited three other individuals – two priests and one layperson who are all engaged in spiritual direction. The different perspectives gave an added bonus to the course. My colleagues and I shared a phenomenal intimacy during the week learning from each other in terms of how we engage in ministry in our various parishes. To conclude the week, we celebrated our professor's birthday with cake and party hats. What a treat!

The second week's course was equally as interesting. It was a course on one of the great modern apologists *Lesslie Newbigin*. *Newbigin* (1909-1998) was a Presbyterian who became a missionary and later Bishop of the amalgamated Church of South India (CSI). He was involved with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the International Missionary Council (IMC). He wrote numerous books, articles and made several presentations including some to various Ivy League institutions both in North America, England and various parts of the world. *Newbigin* was a "jack-of-all-trades" when it came to religion, theology and most of all Christianity for he was a "confident believer," "direct evangelist," "ecumenical advocate," "pastoral bishop," "missionary strategist," "religious interlocutor" (the topic on which I made my presentation), "social visionary," "liturgical preacher," "scriptural teacher," and "Christian apologist." Fourteen of us (a few were M Div students preparing for ordination) learnt quite a lot about this eminent theologian, scholar and Christian through students' and video presentations and the knowledge of another competent professor.

The weekend between my two courses was highlighted with my attendance to the evangelical Episcopal Church of the Savior in Ambridge, PA, the parish of my hosts. At the end of the service I thought of my congregation at St. Michael's, for it was a two hour long service and the priest preached for about half-an-hour. (Need I say more – laugh)!

It was truly two weeks well spent. I meet some very interesting colleagues from various parts of the United States and the world including Peru, Brazil and Uganda. I stayed with some beautiful and wonderful hosts and had dinner with my colleagues at two of my favorite spots – The Bamboo Bar and the Rook's Saloon.