

A *destiny delivered* through a lifetime of service

BY FATHER DAVID LOWELL '71

It's a pleasure to be back at Birmingham-Southern, where I was a student from 1967 to 1971.

Like so many students when they are starting out, I was not sure what I would end up doing or how I would make my living. But I did have a sense that a liberal arts degree is a great foundation for life, so I picked a major that was interesting to me personally—Religion and Philosophy—with no plan in mind as to what I would do with the degree. I just knew I wanted to serve God by helping others.

As it turns out, I have spent the last 23 years living in a homeless shelter which my wife and I run, and where we have raised our own two children alongside hundreds of other children every year. It has been a great deal of fun seeing very young children grow into creative and thriving adults.

Oddly enough, my rapid assumption of responsibilities after leaving Birmingham-Southern meant that I never received any higher degrees, even when ordained into the priesthood in the Eastern Orthodox Church, because I was constantly "in harness," so to speak. Nevertheless, in my private time, I have always kept myself active and closely linked to scholarly circles such as the Society of Biblical Literature where I frequently run into the very influential Roy Wells, my Old Testament Professor from right here at Birmingham-Southern.

What my degree from Birmingham-Southern gave me was a foundation for an intellectual life that I have been building on ever since. I cannot emphasize enough how important this has been in my life. Here on this campus, I developed a love for learning and the capacity to *compete* with others intellectually, and to learn from them.

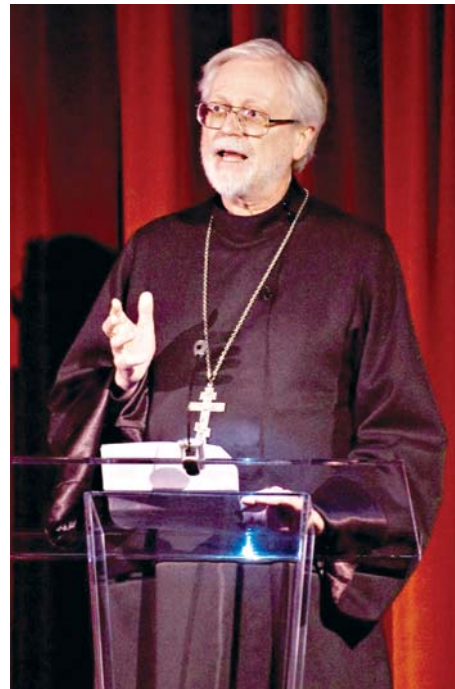
The liberal arts foundation I received at Birmingham-Southern

College gave me the confidence I needed to talk to anyone in the world on any subject. A great education doesn't give you all the answers. It shows you how to find them.

It's misleading to talk about any institution *giving* an education, because so much of what we carry away with us is the time, work, and study that we put in ourselves. It is more accurate to use the old fashioned concept of *earning* a degree, because that is closer to the heart of the matter. But looking back I also have to say that the context in which we *earn* our education *affects* us forever. We gain confidence in how we speak when we are in the presence of other students and faculty who have the highest strivings and standards. This is why I came to Birmingham-Southern in the first place. It had the reputation of being one of the best schools in the South for combining academic excellence with intimacy and warmth.

I loved the discipline of steady reading that I developed at Birmingham-Southern. I missed the intellectual disciplines and deadlines after I graduated, and I spent the next 25 years trying to get back to the same pace of reading and study as I had while I was at BSC, and that in itself is a testament to the impact of the education I received here. It became a discipline of learning which I internalized and carried forward into my life, which is exactly what a good education is supposed to do.

For the past 22—now well into 23—years, I have been running San Francisco's oldest shelter for homeless families. It is very concrete, time-consuming, and real. What makes it possible to live this kind of life is a healthy faith in God complemented by a strong intellectual life, a good sense of humor and irony, and a love of



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people. My young adulthood was formed in precisely that kind of milieu at Birmingham-Southern, and I am doing the best I can to live that way today. I want to thank all of you for your support of the education we are continuing to grow here at Birmingham-Southern.

Editor's Note: *Father David Lowell is an unsung hero. He is one of the thousands of Birmingham-Southern alumni who are making a difference in the world—who are making the world a better place for all people. For the past 23 years, Father David, a 1971 BSC graduate, has been executive director of Raphael House, San Francisco's oldest homeless shelter for families. He also is a priest in the Orthodox Church in America. The above are remarks he prepared for the March 1 Destiny: Delivered campaign launch event on campus, and it is appropriate that we share them with you in this special campaign issue of 'Southern magazine.*



World changers—

Six Birmingham-Southern alumni—often unsung heroes who are making a profound difference in the world—shared their career and life experiences at the March 1 *Destiny: Delivered* campaign launch event on campus. Those BSC heroes are (from left) Ansley Collins '01, trajectory operations and planning officer in NASA's Mission Control; Jim Newman '86, Broadway actor currently appearing in *Curtains*; Father David Lowell '71, executive director of the Raphael House, San Francisco's oldest homeless shelter for families; Patricia Kendrick Simpson '80, principal of Edgewood Elementary School in Homewood, Ala.; Bishop Bob Morgan '56, BSC bishop-in-residence and former president of the worldwide Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church; and Dr. Donald Harrison '54, senior vice president and provost emeritus for health affairs for the University of Cincinnati Medical Center and past president of the American Heart Association.

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