



Relaxing in the social center of Nazareth College where both are students are Sisters Kathleen Neuback, left, and Ann Dobbertin. They are 'juniors' in the Sisters of St. Joseph, and are preparing

to take final vows. Below, Sister Mary Edwards, RSM, teaching science at Mercy High School, leads the kind of unselfish, productive life many nuns do.

My dear people:

This Sunday we celebrate a world day of prayer for vocations, a universal day of prayer throughout the entire church.

Within recent years there have been many analyses of the decline in religious vocations. The crisis is universal, and I suppose a variety of factors are at work.

In everything that we find in sacred scripture about a vocation we find two elements. First there is the call of God, always unmerited, always mysterious; and then the response to the call which comes from a generous heart.

Certainly in our present crisis we can never blame God. The fault would have to lie, therefore, somewhere in the human response. I see many elements which could be contributing to this lack of generous human response.

We do not live in an age of faith, and faith would be an essential element in making a lifelong commitment to the religious life. I find also that in a society in which discipline is not a key word there is a lack of sacrifice and generosity for the response that would be needed for God's call.

I see also the materialism of our day. We live in a relatively affluent society and this does not get people on their knees. They develop an attitude toward life which says, "All this and heaven too!" So we do not know how to live with an abundance of material possessions.

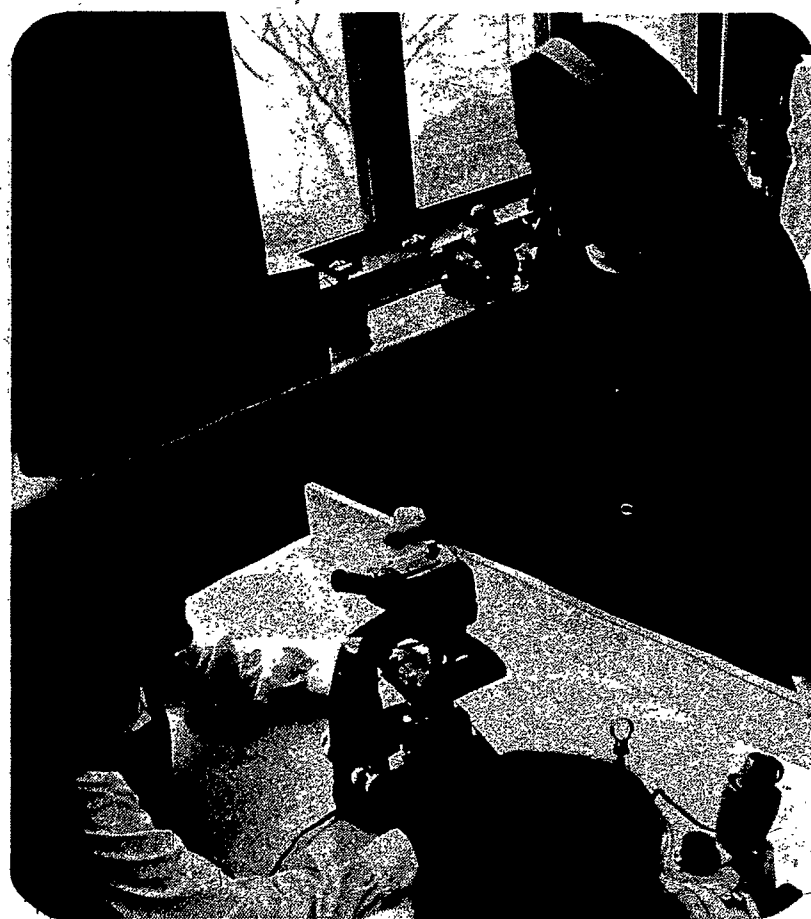
There is also abroad today a philosophy of individualism which would say we should be doing our own thing — this is not exactly an ingredient which we are looking for in people to be subject to the will of God and to be subject to the discipline of training which is involved in preparation for the religious life.

Also because of the materialism of our society we are not finding stability in home life, and after working for many years with young men on their way to the priesthood I am totally convinced that one of the most basic ingredients for a vocation under God is the stability of a good home.

I feel today in many ways it is not a crisis in numbers as much as it is a crisis in quality and certainly as leader of the diocese I would never sacrifice quality just to have numbers.

The first recruitment program in the Church took place on the first Pentecost Day. With only 120 members in the original Christian community, there was a crisis. Judas had defected, and someone was to take his place among the twelve.

There were two qualifications for such a man: he was to have a strong faith in Jesus Christ, and was to be a witness to Christ's Resurrection. And so the community gathered under the leadership of Peter, and first of all, they prayed, "Lord, You can read everyone's heart, show us therefore which of these two candidates who have been proposed to us should be chosen for this ministry and apostolate which Judas abandoned to go to his proper place."



History records that their prayerful choice was Matthias who was listed then as a witness to Christ's Resurrection.

Ever since Pentecost times vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life have been a Christian community project. The Second Vatican Council spoke of this in its decree on the ministry and life of priests. It very clearly brought the recruiting procedures of the apostles right up to date with this directive. The whole Christian people should be taught that it is their duty to cooperate in one way or another by constant prayer and other means at their disposal so that the Church may always have the necessary number of priests to carry out the divine mission. And I might add to this also the necessary number of religious.

We honestly feel that God gives religious leaders to a society that really wants them, and the way we manifest our desire is through our prayers. Prayer is the expression of our expectations and of our desires.

That is why we are encouraging all of you to join with all peoples of good faith in the world praying for the increase in worthy vocations to the religious life.

May God bless you.

Joseph L. Hagan



ernard's, many young men in St. John Fisher college. Mark Shaw, Gary Hayes,