



Pam Gabryel with her English class



Sister Mary Wehner

Photos by Susan McKinney

Religious Formation — A New Way of Life

By SHARON DARNIEDER

Something new at the Sisters of Saint Joseph Motherhouse this year is the Formation Community.

Located on the fourth floor, in rooms that had been reserved for marriage encounter groups, it's the home of several women who will eventually become professed sisters. Two are Nazareth College students; the others have jobs.

Previously, women interested in religious life lived in various convents.

Community members number six associates and one novice, plus six professed sisters, including the formation directors, Sisters Mary Wehner and Mary Scollan.

Sister Mary Wehner is pleased with the development of the Formation Community and its life style and stresses that there is a need for grounding in spirituality for those interested in us.

"Beginnings are important," she said. "Prayer and community life are key elements in our lives."

"Now that we have six people starting out at the same time it's important for them to have peer interaction as well as contact with professed sisters."

"The spirit of the community has been really wonderful so far. There's been evidence of a real working together on things and sharing. It's been a good beginning and we really feel quite positive about it."

The formation Community is responsible for its own meals, most of its laundry. It is a self-contained unit within the Motherhouse. Mass is celebrated each evening at 5. Community chaplains are Carmelite Fathers Colman Logan and Joseph DeMaio.

Sister Mary Wehner admits that the transition for everyone got "hectic at times."

"But we're trying to keep our life style simple, so we really don't mind being in a transitional stage in some ways," she added. "Transition has contributed to the spirit of unity over the past few weeks."

She previously taught at Nazareth Academy and before undertaking her new position studied for a year in the University of St. Louis Institute of Religious Formation.

Sister Mary Scollan also taught at Nazareth and recently got a master's degree in science.

Sister Mary Wehner's impression of the associates so far is "very favorable."

"I sense a great deal of enthusiasm, generosity, willingness to learn and a good sense of humor, which provides a nice balance," she observed.

Janet Meeker, a hairdresser from Elmira said she liked the idea of a formation community because "it's easy to get to know people. Anyone who's interested in us can come to see what's going on."

"It's been really good so far," commented Nancy De Rycke, religious education administrator.

at Holy Spirit parish, Penfield. "We get along well together and we're sensitive to each other's needs."

"And we've been made to feel welcome by the whole community too. So many Sisters from the various convents have stopped by to visit and welcome us."

Anne Alderman, a mathematics teacher at St. Agnes High School, pointed out that even though they're a self-contained community, "I don't feel closed off from the world. I think of this as my home. People can come and visit just like anywhere else."

"I'm just glad I had enough everything to get here," added Pam Gabryel, an English teacher at Nazareth Academy.

The other associates are Mary Ellen Campbell, a junior in music at Nazareth College, and Mary Lou Woznick, a senior in Spanish at the college.

Sister Donna Marie, the novice, is spending her novitiate year in the Intercongregational Novitiate Program in Latham, N.Y.

The associates agreed that it helped to have professed Sisters living with them and that they often had interesting discussions with Sisters Mary Paul, Melita, Maria Hoffman and Ann Marie.

After they've finished their associate period, the next step is the novitiate, a year of special emphasis on prayer and the vows as lived in the community.

Then they'll take their first vows or promises and spend a time of living religious life, which can last from three to six years. After that come final vows.

REUNION DINNER

The Genesee Curia of the Legion of Mary had its second annual reunion dinner on the Birthday of Our Lady, Sept. 8, at St. Mary's Auditorium in Darville.

Father Bartholomew O'Brien, spiritual director of the Southern Tier curia, spoke to the 120 active and auxiliary members and their spiritual directors on using the Bible to enrich their spiritual lives.

CABRINI CIRCLE TEA

The Mother Cabrini Circle tea held annually to raise money for scholarships is scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 6, 3-6 p.m., at Cutler Union, 560 University. The circle's scholarship fund this year is divided among 14 black students attending Catholic high schools.

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Nativity Scene Plans Made

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — A Nativity Scene complete with live animals will be staged during the Christmas season on the Washington Monument grounds here, according to the Christian Service Corps Council.

A \$60,000 budget has been established to cover the cost of camel rental, professionally produced soundtrack and lighting systems, and the professional design and construction services," said Robert Meyers, president of the corps, based here.

He said funds would come from donations from around the country. "We want to return to the people the opportunity to present the greatest story known of peace and good will," he said, adding that contributions would be needed.

Earlier, the American Christian Heritage Association of suburban Greenbelt, Md., announced it had been given a permit by the National Park Service to erect a Nativity Scene near the Ellipse in December in connection with the annual Pageant of Peace.

A year ago, a suit against inclusion of a Nativity Scene in the pageant, sponsored by the park service, resulted in a court decision banning the manger scene, citing "excessive govern-

ment entanglement with religion."

The Greenbelt organization is a private non-profit group which erected a Nativity Scene near the Pageant of Peace last year, and will do so again this year, at its own expense.

Pope Pays Homage To St. Thomas

Castelgandolfo [RNS] — Pope Paul paid special homage to the memory of St. Thomas Aquinas by making a private pilgrimage Sept. 14 to the three towns associated with the saint's life. He flew by helicopter from his Summer residence here to the area of the three towns south of Rome.

This year, 1974, marks the 700th anniversary of the death of the renowned Dominican philosopher-theologian.

Visiting the three towns by car, the Pope stopped first at Roccasecca, where Aquinas was born in 1224 or 1225, then to the nearby ancient town of Aquino where he spent his early childhood, and finally to Fossanova where he died, March 7, 1274.



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