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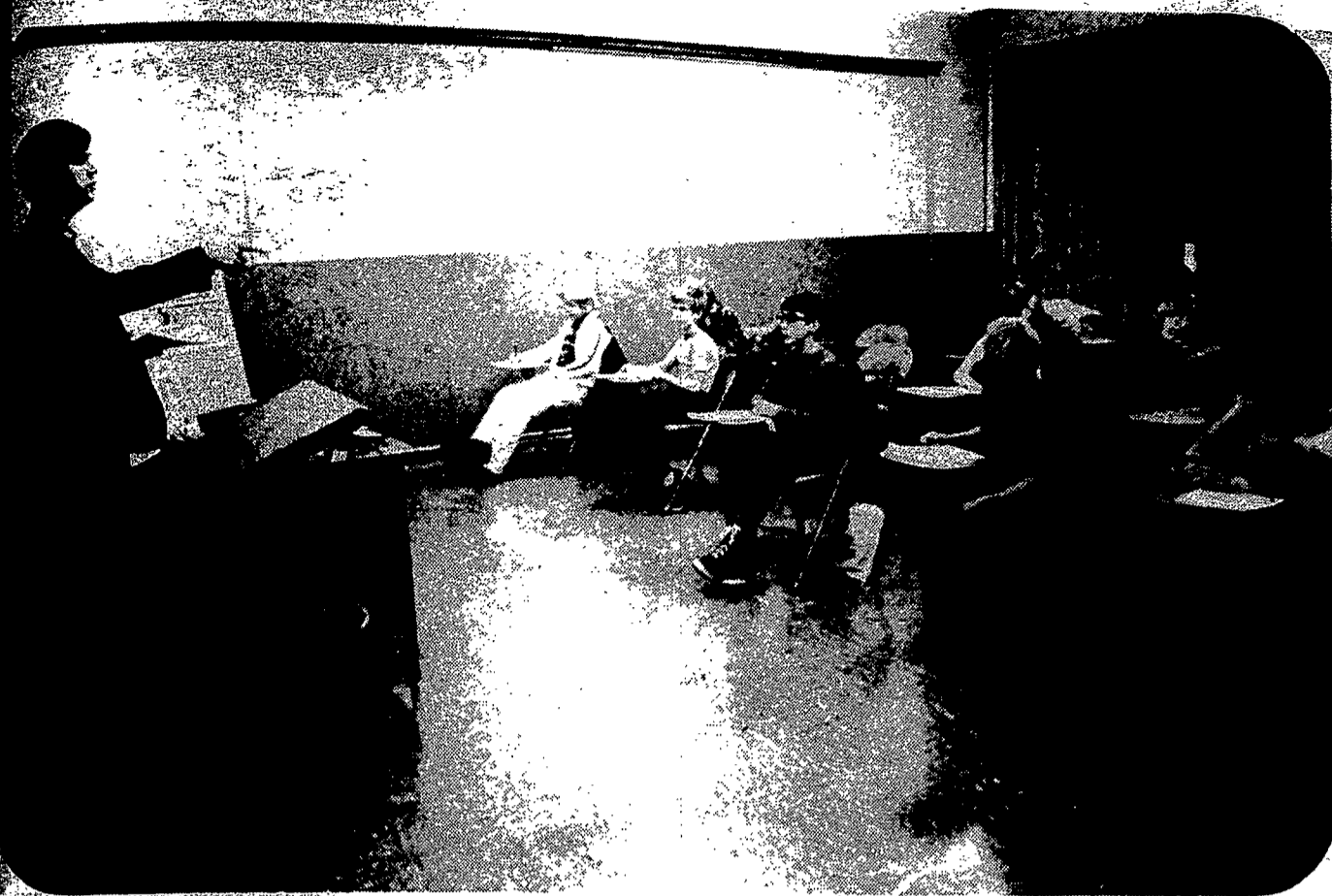
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Becket Hall senior Richard Farrell teaches a fifth grade class at St. Patrick's School of Religion in Victor.

Who Wants to be a Priest?

A surprising group of students filed through the doors of St. Bernard's Seminary and Becket Hall as the institutions began the academic year — the 85th for the seminary. Ranging in age from 18 to 44, these candidates for priesthood brought a variety of life experiences with them.

Dennis Sewar, a Rochester resident and first-year seminarian at St. Bernard's, remembers living across the street from a rectory and "knowing a priest as a person". He never considered priestly ministry until he entered Brockport State. While studying for a degree in English and working on NYS permanent certification, the idea of priesthood seemed to grow strong, but Dennis wanted to be sure. So, after graduating from college in 1973, he put off the decision to enter the seminary for five years. In the meantime, he taught at local elementary schools. "Putting it (seminary) off gave me five years in the real world. It gave me a feel for what people need and want. I've dealt with real people, not textbook people," Dennis said.

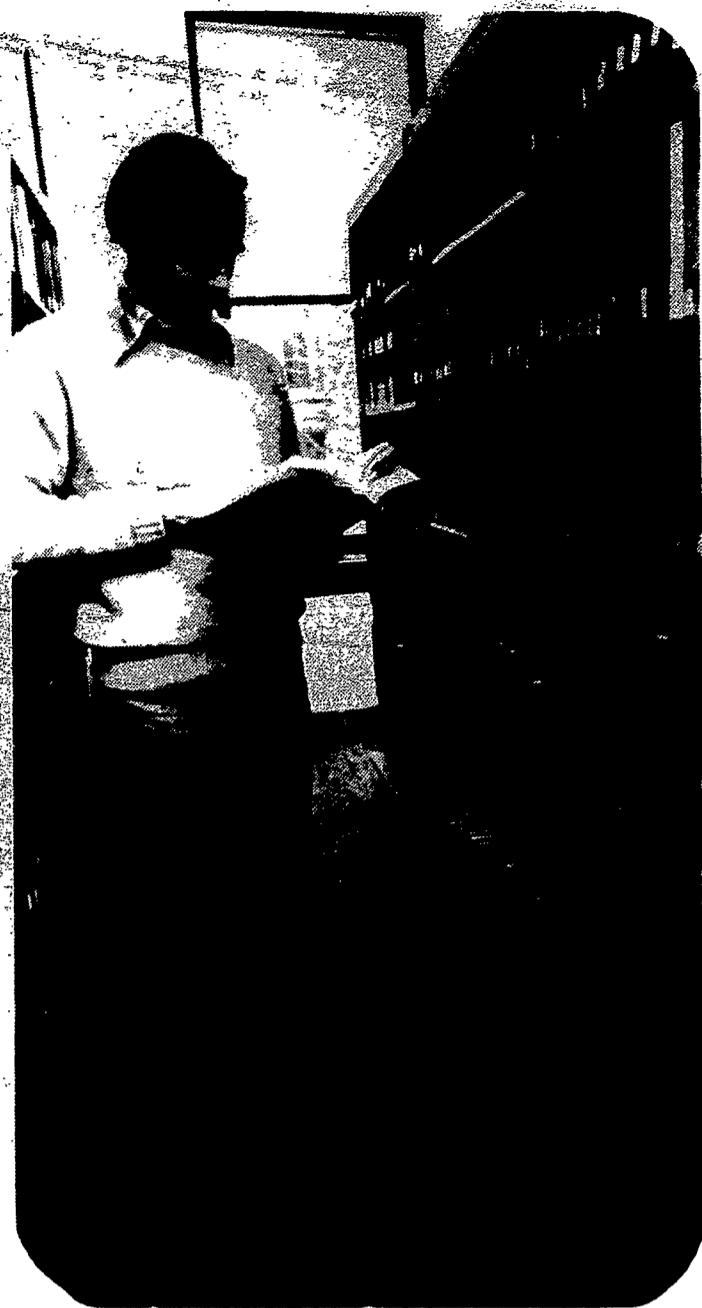
Second-year student Bob Ring is studying for the Diocese of Rochester at St. Bernard's but is a native of Delmar, Md. Bob's desire to be a priest seemed to be bound up with his own conversion from the Baptist faith to Roman Catholicism. Bob attended Cornell University and began going to Mass at the Newman Center. He continued that practice for five years. It was then that he began to ask himself: "What am I going to do with life?". After two years of college, Bob took a year off to formulate his educational and life

goals. During that year, he found the answer to his question. "There was a deep-seated knowledge that this was what I should be doing . . . specifically the priesthood," Bob said. Bob is working very hard to integrate his Baptist heritage with his faith in Roman Catholicism. When asked how he saw himself fitting into ministry, Bob responded, "I see myself strong in parish ministry . . . another obvious area is ecumenism; I think I could offer something there".

Richard Farrell began his studies at Becket Hall in 1975. Currently he is completing his B.A. in Religious Studies at St. John Fisher College, and next fall he plans to enroll at St. Bernard's Seminary. Richard feels his residence at Becket Hall has been rewarding. "I have gained rich experience in community living, found the community supportive of my decision, and Becket Hall has led me into a meaningful life of prayer," Richard said. Richard assists on weekends at the Al Sigl Center for the physically and mentally handicapped and teaches religious education at St. Patrick's in Victor, New York. Richard felt the call to serve when he was 14, and decided to join St. Andrew's Seminary but was refused admittance then. This rejection, Richard feels, gave him more time to reflect on his commitments. He enrolled at Edison Technical School, completed a course in printing, and following graduation, worked in printing for five years. "I could not, however, see myself behind these machines," Richard said. "I continued to feel the call and I felt obliged to respond." Richard admits that his Catholic upbringing was a factor in his choice, but he credits his former assistant pastor at St. Augustine's, the late Father Michael Reagan, with playing the most important role in his decision. Richard believes that pastors and families should keep vibrant vocations in their churches and homes. He is confident that the young people will react to this opportunity for service, and looks forward to his priestly ordination in five years when he will serve a parish and its people.

Who wants to be a priest? These men do and we hope many more like them. They are people who have lived in the complexity of our modern world, addressing its challenges, and bringing a degree of realism and maturity to priestly ministry.

Priesthood today demands openness, professional competence, sensitivity to the needs of others, and experience of the basic human struggles with which people must deal. The priest must exemplify all of these and more. No longer is the candidate for the priesthood someone who comes to the seminary green and leaves even greener. More likely than not, today's seminarian brings a great many competencies with him. At the seminary he develops these further so that his whole self may be at the service of the Gospel.



Bob Ring, a second-year seminarian, does some research in the library at the seminary.



First year seminarian Dennis Sewar finds time for quiet prayer in the main chapel at the seminary.



Students at St. Bernard's gather informally. From left, Jim Belogi, Rob Bourcy, Dennis Sewar, Rino LaDelfa and Patrick Connor.