

Internship grants seminarians glimpse of future priesthood

By Teresa A. Parsons

In some ways, it was a trial by fire. But for three third-year diocesan seminarians, this summer was also an initial glimpse of the realities in store for them as parish priests.

From early June until late August, Timothy Brown, Michael McHale and Paul Bonacci were each assigned as interns at diocesan parishes. In the process, they gained their first taste of practical parish experience, from hospital visits to preaching and living in a rectory.

During the academic year, all three men attend Immaculate Conception Seminary, which is affiliated with Seton Hall University in New Jersey. The seminary is one of the few such institutions still operated by a diocese — in this case the Archdiocese of Newark.

They agreed that their training to date left them well-prepared for the demands of parish life.

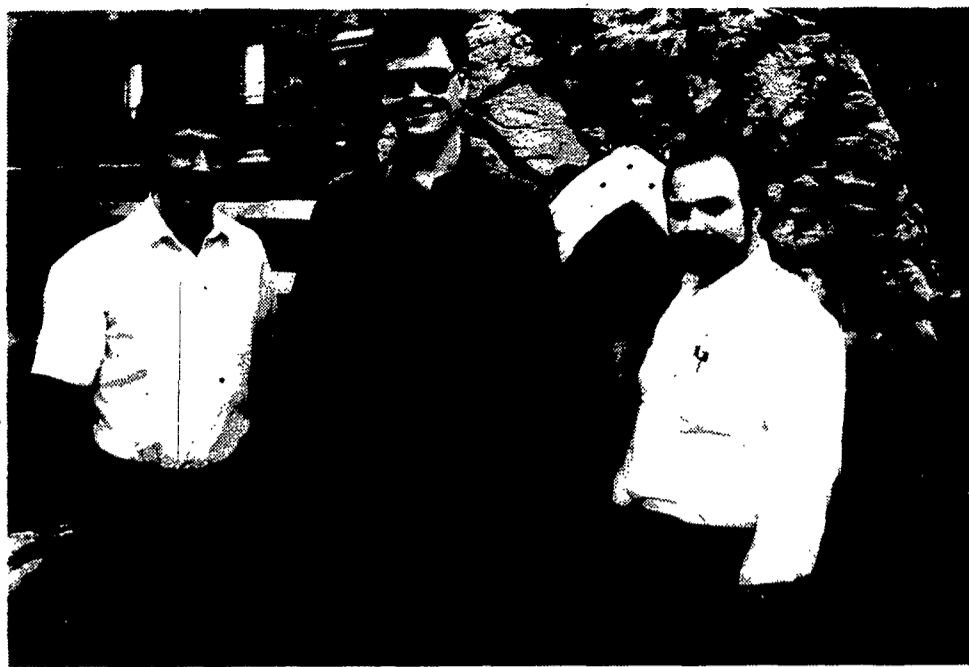
"One of the main words in our training today is enabling — helping people learn how to minister to each other," Bonacci said.

"(At Seton Hall) they try to keep a balance between education and pastoral theology," McHale added. "You can only get so much formal education and then you do need time to learn your way around a parish."

Although seminarians are free during the summer after their first year of study, their second summer is spent doing clinical pastoral education (CPE) in some kind of institutional setting.

By the third summer, Bonacci explained, "we have enough theology to do solid parish work." It is also the first available time before ordination to the diaconate, he added.

Their assignments are determined by Bish-



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Third-year seminarians Timothy Brown, Michael McHale and Paul Bonacci worked as parish interns this summer in the Monroe County area.

op Matthew H. Clark in consultation with the Priests' Personnel Board and the Diocesan Vocations Office. Pastors to whom seminarians are assigned must have taken part in supervisor and leadership training. The needs of the parish and the seminarian are among the factors considered in making assignments.

"You work out a contract with the pastor to help with whatever needs he has," McHale said.

Because there are fewer priests to go

around, today's candidates for priesthood are entrusted with more responsibility, and earlier than were their predecessors.

In the past, Brown explained, an intern was "on the steps," with as many as three associate pastors above him in addition to the pastor. Nowadays, parishes are fortunate to have one parochial vicar in addition to the pastor.

"Learning priesthood is from the school of hard knocks nowadays," Bonacci said. "It's a trial by fire, definitely."

Although all three put in long and irregular hours, they agreed that the toughest part of the internship was the adjustment to a different lifestyle.

"The rectory is home, but it is also the workplace," Bonacci said. "You're always doing ministry. The phone rings 24 hours a day. And when no one else is there, the secretary or somebody on staff may come to you with a problem."

In his view, the pastor's role is becoming increasingly like that of a personnel manager. "He's working at guiding the people he works with," Bonacci explained. "A good percentage of his ministry is ministering to other people who then minister in the parish."

A Waterloo native, Bonacci, 27, attended St. Mary's Church. He graduated from Cayuga County College in 1979 with an associate degree in criminal justice. During his college years, he worked for the Seneca County Sheriff's Department and was active in the community as a volunteer fireman and member of the Seneca Ambulance Corps, assistant district administrator for Little League, a school board member and wrestling official.

During one year spent at Becket Hall, Bonacci worked as a youth minister at Our Lady of Mercy Parish, Rochester. This summer at Holy Cross Parish, he plunged readily into census work — filing cards, visiting homes and "playing with the parish computer."

"At the same time, Bonacci realized the potential for loneliness in the life of a priest.

"You have contact with 900 people between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. on a Sunday, and then at 3 p.m., all of a sudden, you're alone. I saw how you have to work at dealing with the loneliness that comes with the lifestyle," he said.

The support and encouragement of parishioners at Good Shepherd Parish in Henrietta was a pleasant surprise for Brown after three years of seminary life.

"When people find out you're a semi-

narian, they just welcome you with open arms," he said. "You're just not used to it after the seminary grind."

Brown, 26, grew up in St. Pius the Tenth Parish in North Chili. In 1980, he earned an associate's degree in business administration from Monroe Community College, then continued his studies in political science at SUNY Brockport. In the meantime, he worked for the Monroe County Home Energy Assistance Program.

He entered the seminary in 1983, spending last summer's clinical pastoral training at a Columbia, S.C., state psychiatric hospital.

This summer, Brown tried his hand at preaching. Although most parishes suspend meetings during the summer, Brown said he was also able to attend several at Good Shepherd. "You go and contribute the best you can," he said.

"They are a reality you have to face," Bonacci added. "As pastor, you at least need to keep in touch with all the meetings and know what's going on."

For McHale, a native of Corning, the greatest adjustment was to life in a city the size of Rochester. "It's a little bigger than Corning," he said.

This summer, he worked at St. Andrew's Parish on the city's north side. For the most part, McHale said, parish activities slow down in the summer. He spent much of his time visiting elderly parishioners and playing basketball with younger ones.

"Getting in touch with the different neighborhoods and races, and seeing how they all form one community, was one thing that was new to me," he said. "Learning the streets with all the construction going on was another challenge. And then there was the water (which city residents had to boil for several weeks)."

McHale, 33, grew up in St. Mary's Parish, Corning. After graduating from Delhi Agricultural and Technical College with a degree in food management service, he pursued a religious studies degree at Michigan State University. Next, he spent a year in Alaska working in a cannery, and later worked as an orderly in a hospital. His experience in the hospital prompted McHale to return to Corning, where he studied nursing at Corning Community Hospital. After working for two years as a nurse, he entered the seminary.

"Priesthood today offers the greatest challenge to follow Christ, to bring Christ to people," McHale said. "The greatest threat is to get burned out ... Both priests and laity will have to meet it by working together."

"You hear people talking about 'the good old days,' but we'll never be able to go back," he added.

Bonacci, for one, has no desire to go back. "Some people say 'it's already been 20 years since the Second Vatican Council.' I say it's only been 20 years and look how far we've come. To be part of that is exciting," he observed. "When the Spirit works, it works as a gentle breeze, not like a tornado."

All three seminarians agreed that one of the difficulties with the summer assignment was that by the time they finally got to know most of the parishioners, the summer was ending. "You're just getting comfortable with the people and then you're gone," Brown said.

For that reason, he and his counterparts hope to be reassigned to the same parishes after their ordination as deacons next spring.

But first, they will have to get through another academic year, beginning August 31.

"Next June, God is either going to prove He makes mistakes or that He has the greatest sense of humor in the world, because we are the future of the Church," Bonacci said.

Why the Robinsons' home is 15 times less likely to be robbed than yours.



It's protected by ADT. And with this special offer, you can purchase ADT's Safewatch Home Security System for only \$995, or \$29.95 per month*, installed.

Fact: The majority of homes burglarized each year do not have a security system. Fact: With an ADT Security System, the chances of your home being robbed drops dramatically from 1 in 3 to 1 in 50. That's why families like the Robinsons are turning to ADT for reliable, affordable, effective security.

ADT — trusted for over 100 years. Nationwide, ADT has helped protect everything from Fortune 500 companies to thousands of American households. And with a network of local offices, our security specialists can install and service an ADT Security System in your neighborhood.

Simple to operate. Your basic ADT Safewatch System includes magnetic contacts to help protect doors, a dual motion detector that can pick up the movement of a potential intruder, and a smoke detection system that can warn of smoke or fire. All are

simply operated from a control panel with built-in siren and emergency call buttons. All can be linked to a nearby ADT Central Monitoring Station, manned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (There's a small monthly charge for this service.) ADT Safewatch can even help you qualify for lower rates on your homeowners insurance.

Easy to afford. Now for only \$995, or \$29.95 per month*, installed, with our low-cost monthly purchase plan, it has never been so affordable to protect your family. ADT Safewatch.

*NO DOWN PAYMENT Based on 47 equal monthly payments at 18% annual percentage rate.



ADT SECURITY SYSTEMS
16 Capron St. • 546-6120
Security is ADT.

SPECIAL LIMITED OFFER

Own an ADT Security System for \$995, or \$29.95 per month*, installed, with our low-cost monthly purchase plan.

Mail this coupon, or call (716) 546-6120 for a free home demonstration.

Name _____
(Please Print)

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Home phone () _____ Business phone () _____

I'd like more information on home security.
Please send me ADT's free booklet, "Safe at Home."

ADT Security Systems
18 Capron Street
Rochester, New York 14607

New chaplain named at Fisher; position effective September 1

Father Philip Acquaro, director of campus ministry, succeeds Father Joseph A. Trovato, CSB, who has been chaplain at St. John Fisher College for the past 26 years. A trustee of the college, Father Trovato will continue to assist campus ministry efforts on a part-time basis.

A native of Detroit, Mich., Father Acquaro joined the Congregation of St. Basil in 1965. He was ordained in 1970. He holds a master's degree from the University of Nebraska and a master of divinity degree from the University of St. Michael's in Toronto. Father Acquaro, who earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Windsor in 1966, also completed postgraduate work at Idaho State University in 1976.

From 1980 to 1985, Father Acquaro acted

as principal of Detroit Catholic High School. Prior to that time he was head of the science department of the school, teaching biology, general mathematics, algebra and senior theology.

Statue to visit area parishes

Area parishes will host the Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima during the last half of August.

The schedule for Pilgrim Virgin visits is: Thursday, Aug. 28; St. John of Rochester — Friday, Aug. 29; and St. Francis Assisi, Auburn — Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 30 and 31.

For information on times, contact the individual parishes.