

Avian fancying Auburn priest fills

By Teresa A. Parsons

Father Conrad Sundholm has never enjoyed coming home to an empty house.

That's one reason he keeps the likes of Jacinta, Murphy, Snowflake, Buttercup and Sheba in a back room of Auburn's Holy Family Rectory.

They are by nature a jealous lot, demanding a good deal of care and attention. But when the 58-year-old priest returns from a late-night meeting or hospital visit, his friends are always glad to greet him with a whistle or a throaty word of welcome, to keep him company as he prays or writes a homily, to relax and listen with him to a favorite album.

"It's reassuring to come home to a place where something's alive," he explained.

That's true even when the "something" is only

a bird, or in Father Sundholm's case, many birds.

Nearly a dozen large macaws, cockatoos and other parrots clamber about on chains and perches in the spacious bird room just inside the rear entrance to the rectory.

Upstairs, Father Sundholm has given over much of his bedroom to more petite species, including cockatiels and canaries. A chorus line of canaries in cages line one wall of the dining room. Just around the corner, a couple of lorries — including one named Scarlet whose shriek is as shrill as her brilliant plumage — have recently staked a claim to part of his office.

Father Sundholm plays no favorites among his birds. "It's like if you have children, your love for each child is different because each has a different personality," he explained. "The macaws, for

example, are very competi

African grays make the bes

Elijah are the disciplinaria

Other birds' names reflect

interests. Nadia, a macaw, v

Romanian gymnast who st

medal at the 1976 Olympics

cinth macaw that Father Su

boat to purchase, recalls on

children to whom the Bless

at Fatima. A long-time frie

boring St. Mary's Church,

mer, was the namesake for a

the slogan "E.Z., come ho

a brief flirtation with free

Father Sundholm believes

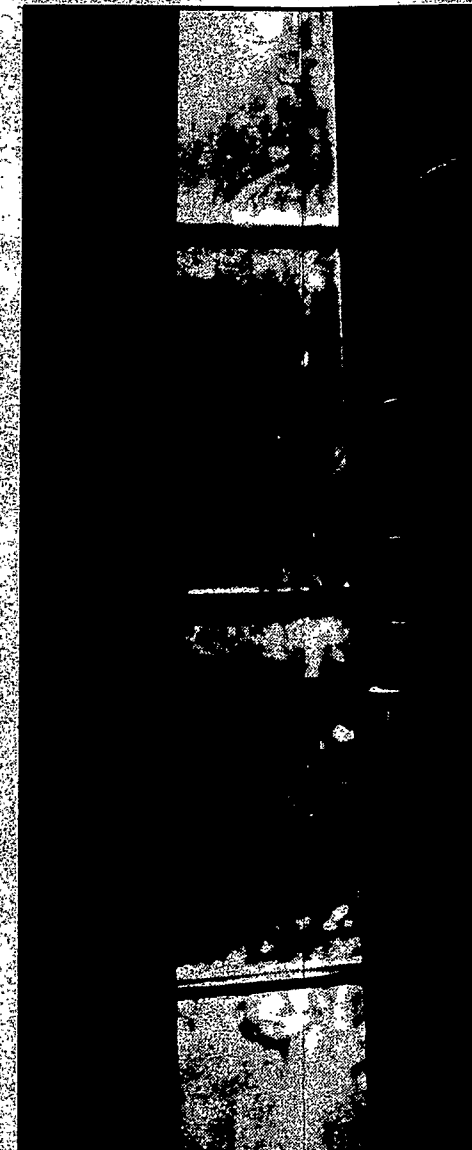
a present-day priest's life



Scarlet tries to distract Father Sundholm from his work.



Father Sundholm talks to his two cockatoos Snowflake and Snow White while taking break from his pastoral duties at Holy Family Church in Auburn.



Father Sundholm has collected so many b



Scarlet mistakes berries on piece of stado