

Pope calls faithful to aid priests' formation

Continued from page 1

thy document on priestly formation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, issued April 7. The document's English title is "I Will Give You Shepherds," which is drawn from a verse in the Book of Jeremiah in which God says, "I will give you shepherds after my own heart."

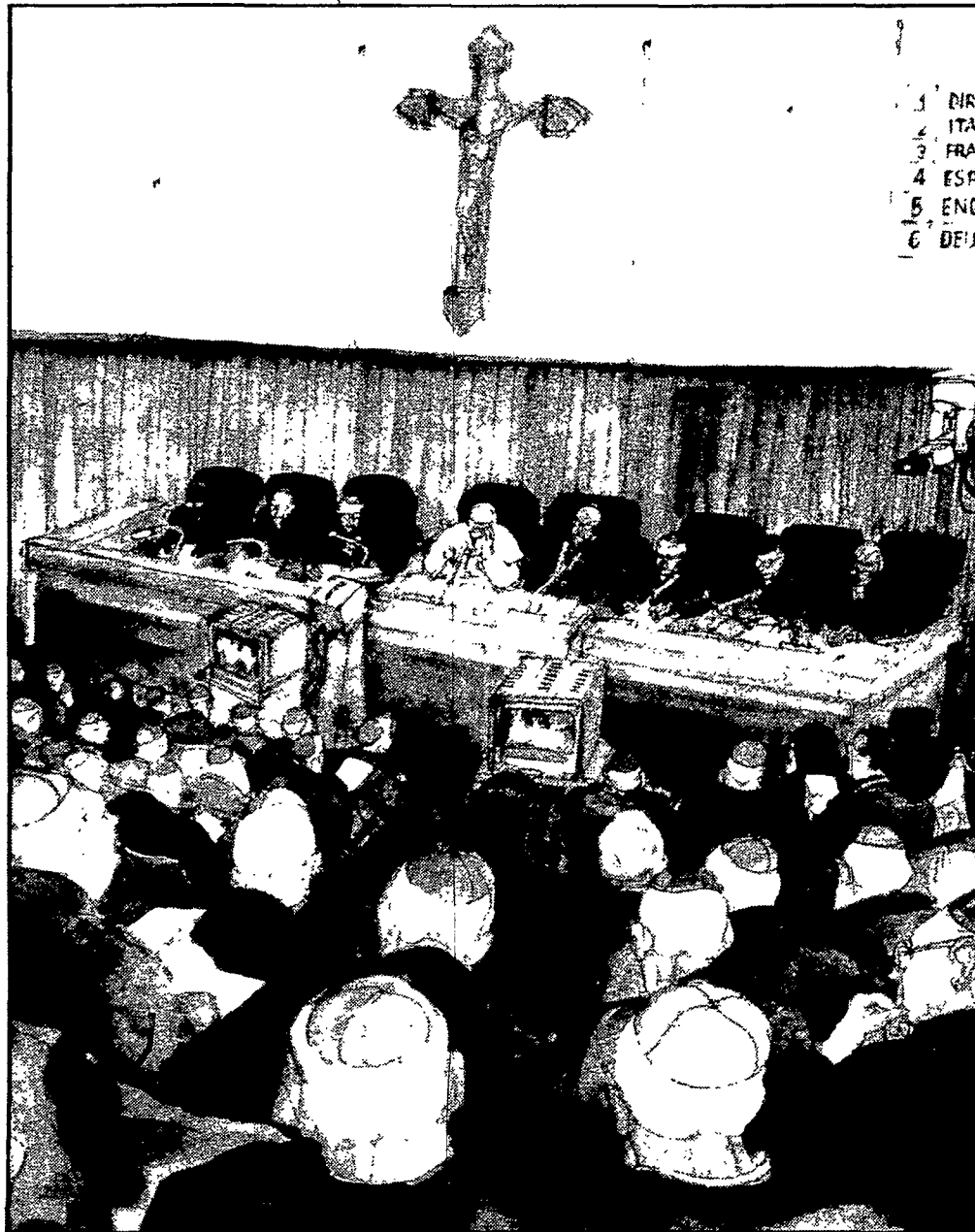
Noting the scarcity of priestly vocations in certain areas of the world, the Holy Father used the document to analyze factors that hinder vocations and to envision means by which the church can form both potential priests and enliven the ministry of those already ordained.

"The new generation of those called to the ministerial priesthood display different characteristics in comparison to those of their immediate predecessors," he wrote. "In addition, they live in a world which in many respects is new and undergoing rapid and continual evolution. All of this cannot be ignored when it comes to programming and carrying out the various phases of formation for those approaching the ministerial priesthood."

Pastores Dabo Vobis also reaffirmed a number of traditional visions of the priesthood.

"The priestly vocation is essentially a call to holiness in the form which derives from the sacrament of orders," the pope asserted. "Holiness is intimacy with God; it is the imitation of Christ, who was poor, chaste and humble; it is unreserved love for souls and a giving of oneself on their behalf and for their true good; it is love for the church which is holy and wants us to be holy because this is the mission that Christ entrusted to her."

Father Valenti noted that the pope did not pave much new ground in the



This illustration depicts Pope John Paul II presiding over a session of the extraordinary world Synod of Bishops. The pope produced the vocations document *Pastores Dabo Vobis* as an exhortation to the faithful following the October, 1990, Synod of Bishops focusing on priestly formation.

family trip to Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, for planting the seed of his desire to become a priest. Rothfuss visited the site of reported Marian apparitions when he was in seventh grade, and is currently a member in the high school discernment group that meets twice a month at Becket Hall in Rochester.

Upon his return from Medjugorje, Rothfuss began attending daily Mass, a practice he continues today. He also recites the rosary daily, and advised any young man considering the priesthood to establish a regular prayer life.

Another factor that seems to turn young men toward thoughts of the priesthood is the parish life they encounter. A friendly priest or a helpful youth minister — combined with a parish that offers programs geared to young people's needs — can make the crucial difference in the mind of a young man who seeks the priesthood, many observers noted.

"Many young people, in and through these groupings, have heard the Lord's call to follow him along the path of priestly ministry and have responded with a generosity that is reassuring," the pope wrote of teenage lay associations in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.

Twenty-two-year-old Eric Phillips, a Becket Hall resident participating in a pre-seminary program, recalled his involvement in the youth group at Assumption Parish in Fairport as instrumental in forming his vocation.

"It got me interested in faith and church," Phillips remembered. "It just gave me a chance to share more deeply rather than just the evening news or sports."

Diocesan youth programs, such as the annual Catholic Youth Leadership Institute program at Camp Stella Maris, can also create a desire for the priesthood.

Matthew I. Theilmann, a freshman at Rochester Institute of Technology, attended a leadership institute the summer before his sophomore year at Bishop Kearney High School. He remembered lengthy, deep conversations with one counselor as having a positive spiritual influence on his life.

That experience combined with the Bishop's Day With Youth in 1989, persuaded Theilmann to explore becoming a priest. Fortunately, Father Valenti was also present at the Bishop's Day conference, and the priest invited Theilmann to check out Becket Hall's programs.

The success of Father Valenti's personal invitation to Theilmann suggests the need for Catholics to encourage vocations on a personal basis.

"Each Christian vocation comes from God and is God's gift," the pope wrote in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. "However it is never bestowed outside of or independently of the church."

The Holy Father stressed that the Lord's desire to save people within a community requires that community to embrace those who wish to serve. Father Peter A. Deckman wholeheartedly agrees with that assertion. Pastor of St. Francis of Assisi in Rochester, Father Deckman works with diocesan men over the age of 30 who feel called to the priesthood.

Father Deckman believed that many men — especially older Catholics — considered the priesthood at one time or another, but dismissed or buried the idea because no one ever asked them to become priests.

"I think the best thing that any people can do is encourage folks to respond," he said. "It means a lot to someone if you walk up to him and say, 'Hey, did you ever want to be a priest?'"

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Kenneth Lee Smith, at 67; former dean and professor of applied theology at Crozer

ROCHESTER — Kenneth Lee Smith, a professor of applied theology for 41 years at Colgate Rochester Divinity School/Bexley Hall/Crozer Theological Seminary, died on April 25, 1992. He was 67 years old.

Born at Willis Wharf, Va., Mr. Smith began his teaching career as a professor of Christian ethics and sociology of religion in 1950 at Crozer, then located in Chester, Pa., before the school

moved to Rochester in 1970.

He also served as dean of Crozer from 1984-89 before retiring in 1991.

A frequent lecturer, Mr. Smith spoke often about the mission of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Author of many articles and reviews, he co-authored two books: *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King Jr.*; and *The Life and Works of Morgan Edwards: America's First Baptist Historian*.

Mr. Smith is survived by his wife, Esther Shrieves Smith, of Rochester; two sons, Matthew Kenneth Smith, of Ithaca, and Michael Lee Smith, of Arlington, Va.; a daughter, Meredith Smith Felio, of New Port Richey, Fla.; his mother, Peggy Bonniwell Smith of Exmore, Va., and a granddaughter, Audrey Felio.

A memorial service for Mr. Smith was held on May 1 at the First Baptist Church, 175 Allens Creek Road, Rochester.

document. Rather, the Holy Father expanded on several themes he has raised throughout his pontificate, and explored concerns that were examined by several prior church documents on the priesthood and vocations.

Although the pope points out ways in which modern society works against priestly vocations, Father Valenti added that the struggle for men to answer God's call is as old as the church itself.

"I think the priesthood has always been counter-cultural," he said. Young people, in particular, "are not going to find themselves in a group where too many people are thinking about it."

Such factors point to the importance of creating an environment friendly to the priesthood, diocesan observers said.

In particular, a family that encourages regular religious practices may foster the possibility of priestly vocation among its male members, according to a number of diocesan men exploring the priesthood. And even if the family is not particularly religious, parents at the least should not discourage their offspring from exploring religion, they said.

Christopher Rothfuss, a junior at McQuaid Jesuit High School, credited a

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Kids' Chronicle Answer Key

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, this person will live forever." John 6:51