

More hearing second calling

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iety, noted Father Paul Theroux, STD, secretary to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation.

"It seems that a lot of people are waiting longer to make career decisions," Father Theroux remarked in a telephone interview with the *Courier*. "I don't think it's unusual for people today to get more life experience before settling into a commitment."

Indeed, Father Theroux observed, the average age of today's seminarians is 30; 20 years ago the average age of ordination was about 26. About 30 percent of current seminarians are second-career vocations, he estimated.

Due to the number of older men considering priesthood, the Diocese of Rochester has added an "over-30" discernment group, noted Father Thomas Valenti, assistant to the bishop for vocations.

"We felt because of the number of men who look at priesthood as a second career, we had to create a special group to meet their needs and to take into account their experience," Father Valenti told the *Courier*.

The same trend holds true of women religious, noted Sister Barbara Lum, co-vocations director of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester.

"It's a trend nationwide, and it certainly has been a trend for us," Sister Lum told the *Courier*. She pointed out that religious congregations have always experienced a few women entering as second-career vocations, but that the majority of those joining congregations in past years entered immediately after high school.

Today, Sister Lum observed, most women coming to the SSJs are older. In fact, she added, all of the women now undergoing formation with the congregation are second-career vocations.

Sister Fran Wegman, RSM, told the *Courier* that the vocations program she directs for the Mercy congregation is tailored to meet the needs of individuals — which permits flexibility when dealing with older women exploring a vocation.

"When somebody comes when they are older, there's a certain maturity level; their spirituality may be more developed," Sister Wegman observed. She also pointed out that most of the women currently involved with her congregation's discernment program are second-career vocations.

The Second Vatican Council is in part

responsible for this trend, Sister Kanick acknowledged. The council opened avenues for church ministry by lay people, religious and permanent deacons alike — both as careers and through voluntary activities.

"I think the changes have afforded all of us the opportunity to step outside what was very rigid, very predictable," Sister Kanick remarked. "It was no longer, 'This is the way it was, this is the way it will be.'"

For some, the decision to pursue a second-career vocation comes in response to a calling that either grew over the years or resurfaced, Father Theroux pointed out.

Father Farrell, for example, told the *Courier* he had considered the priesthood while a grammar-school student. But then he went to Edison Technical High School, where he studied printing.

During his high school years, "the idea of the priesthood pretty much receded into the background," recounted Father Farrell, now a chaplain at Elmira's St. Joseph's Hospital, 555 E. Market Street. "It pretty much didn't appeal to me any more."

After graduating from high school in 1970, Father Farrell found work in the printing field. He was doing well, earning good money and enjoying his life, he said. He was also involved in the church.

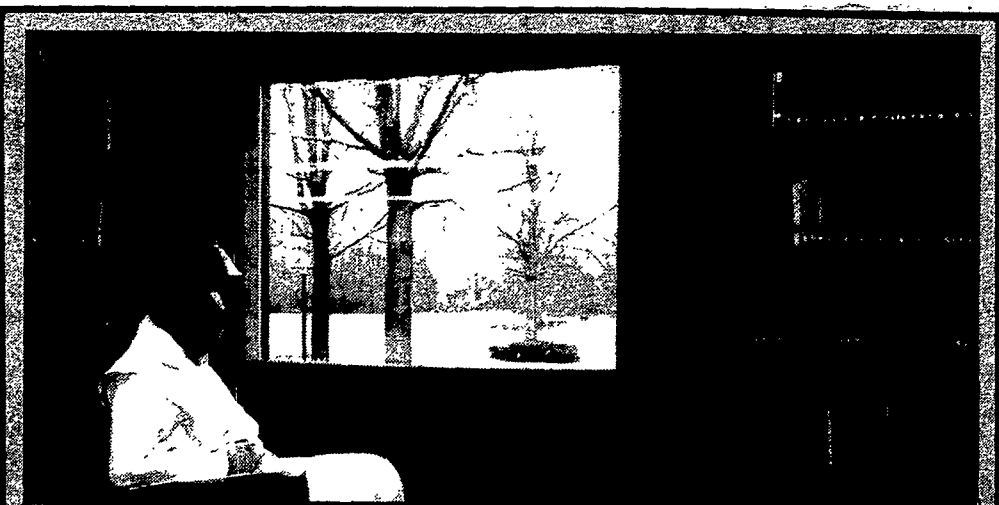
But as time passed, the old desire re-emerged, Father Farrell said, noting, "Something inside just kept gnawing at me, coming to the surface. I wanted more. Not just more money — I wanted to do something more meaningful."

In 1975, he enrolled at Becket Hall, which was then a college seminary program at St. John Fisher College, and began down the road to his 1984 ordination.

Jewell following a similar path. "It was a lot of soul-searching — the feeling of being called to a simpler life, reprioritizing our lives," Jewell told the *Courier*.

He and his wife Kim began to simplify their lives and to become more active in the church on a voluntary basis, Jewell said. Eventually, it became clear that they both wanted to work for the church in a more direct way.

The break came after a retreat in 1989. Jewell quit his job and started publishing a newsletter about Christian music. The following year, he was hired to work at one parish in music and youth ministry. Last year, he



Brother David Wilson, a novice, spends his time in quiet contemplation.

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I had no intention of becoming a monk in the latter half of the 20th century," the 42-year-old monk recalled. "I told God I was willing to take a split-level ranch in the suburbs, a semi-obedient wife, two cars and a dog," he added with a laugh.

Throughout the 1970s, Brother Augustine eagerly pursued a career in child care, even taking graduate studies in child development at the Merrill-Palmer Institute in Michigan. He also spent two years on the road, backpacking around the North American continent, working on an extended graduate essay in human development.

During a stint in social work, Brother Augustine felt he could no longer ignore what he felt was the Lord's desire for him to enter the monastic life.

The death of several people close to him preceded a mystical experience during which he claims an "angelic being" told him to pursue a vocation at the abbey. In November, 1978, he entered the abbey as a novice.

Brother Augustine admitted that most of his brethren did not enjoy a visit from a heavenly ambassador who led them to a monastery. He emphasized, however, that there were far more earthly aspects to his calling: hours spent reading works on monasticism; the encouragement of his father and an Alaskan priest; the joyous spirit imparted to him by the Franciscan religious and priests who served his Detroit neighborhood.

And in the end, someone becomes a monk because, somehow or other, God wants them to, Brother Augustine said.

"They have to chart a course that's fully their own," he said. "They're not going to end up in religious life unless they receive the graces for that."

EDITORS' NOTE — For information on the abbey, write Abbey of the Genesee, 3258 Kiner Road, Piffard, N.Y. 14533, or call 716/243-0660.

joined the staff at St. Helen's.

Deacon Hankey, on the other hand, had to decide to leave the business world sooner than he expected.

Corning Glass had asked Deacon Hankey to consider relocating from the Corning area to work at a plant in New Jersey. But he already was involved in the Diocese of Rochester's permanent diaconate program, and did not want to leave it.

"I had pretty much made the decision that that was the way God wanted me to go," the deacon observed.

Fortunately, a job opened for a business manager at the Ithaca parish, Deacon Hankey said. This enabled him to use his business skills for the church while continuing his studies for the diaconate.

Deacon Hankey said the decision has given him a "chance to extend myself into different parts of life than I would have in industry. If I ever had to relive my life, I'd do it the same way."

But not all the second-career vocations came as a result of a lingering desire.

"I recall when I graduated from high school in Buffalo after being taught by Sisters of Mercy for 12 years, I didn't care if I saw a Sister of Mercy again," Sister Kanick observed with a laugh.

But in 1989 — at age 52 — she took her final vows with the congregation.

In the intervening years, Sister Kanick pursued a successful 27-year career as a dental hygienist, fell in love, and had battled a drinking problem.

By the late 1970s, however, "there was an inner piece of me that had not been filled," Sister Kanick acknowledged.

Shortly after coming to that realization, she attended a Christmas party at which she told a friend, "You know, if it weren't for my age, I'd consider religious life."

The friend invited her to a faith-sharing group run by the Sisters of

Mercy. "When I started going to that, I was very impressed with the happiness of the sisters, their work and their commitment to people and their love for God," Sister Kanick remarked. "That was a different picture from what I had had when I was in high school."

The experience helped convince Sister Kanick that — even at her age — she could switch vocations. She quit her job as a dental hygienist and, with congregational support, became trained as a chemical-dependency counselor.

Her life prior to entering the congregation helped prepare her for this new ministry — both as a religious and as a counselor.

"It helps me in having a better understanding through my own experiences what other people are going through," Sister Kanick said.

Father Farrell likewise observed that having lived in the world helps him in his ministry.

"I have a sense of identification with people who do go out and punch a clock and have to balance a check book," Father Farrell remarked. "The basic things that people do every day that sometimes gets lost while living in a rectory — like shopping and laundry — I've done all those things."

Further, Fathers Theroux and Valenti, and Sisters Lum and Wegman, all observed that people who choose second-career vocations often come with a greater awareness of what they are choosing — and what they might be giving up. This, they noted, helps those choosing second-career vocations bring a sense of conviction to their decisions.

"By weighing so many other possibilities in their lives," Father Valenti concluded, "they have determined that this is what God is calling them to do."

Obituary

Father Michael Kavanagh, SJ, 82

Father Michael Kavanagh, SJ, a Rochester native known as the "Father Damien of India" for his work with lepers, died of complications from cancer and congestive heart failure at St. Joseph's University Jesuit Community in Philadelphia, Pa., on Thursday, April 1, 1993. He was 82.

Born in Rochester on June 20, 1910, Father Kavanagh graduated from the former St. Augustine School in 1924. He attended St. Andrew Seminary four years before joining the Society of Jesus in 1928. He was ordained in 1941 at Woodstock College in Maryland.

After a period teaching at Gonzaga High School in Washington, D.C., Father Kavanagh spent a decade working with poor families in southern Maryland. He founded a project enabling poor families to buy land and build homes.

In 1955, Father Kavanagh traveled as

a missionary to northern India, where he became known as another Father Damien, the famed 19th-century priest who worked with lepers in Hawaii. In India, Father organized leper colonies and started rehabilitation programs and schools for the patients' children.

Father Kavanagh left India in 1970 for the United States and served as pastor of St. Aloysius in Washington. He also did pastoral work at St. Thomas Manor in southern Maryland. When he retired to the Jesuit center, he began painting, and many of his works decorate the order's novitiate.

Father Kavanagh was pre-deceased by his brother, Father Ambrose Kavanagh. In addition to his sister, Mary, Father Kavanagh is survived by another sister, Sister Immaculata Kavanagh, a missionary in Bolivia, and by several nieces and nephews.