

Vocations

'Atypical'

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Corriveau, who is in fourth theology; and Frank Fusare, who is in third theology.

Timothy Niven is the lone diocesan student at the Theological College in Washington, D.C., where he is in second theology.

Two diocesan seminarians are currently studying at the North American College in Rome: William McGrath, who is in third theology; and Eric Phillips, who is second theology.

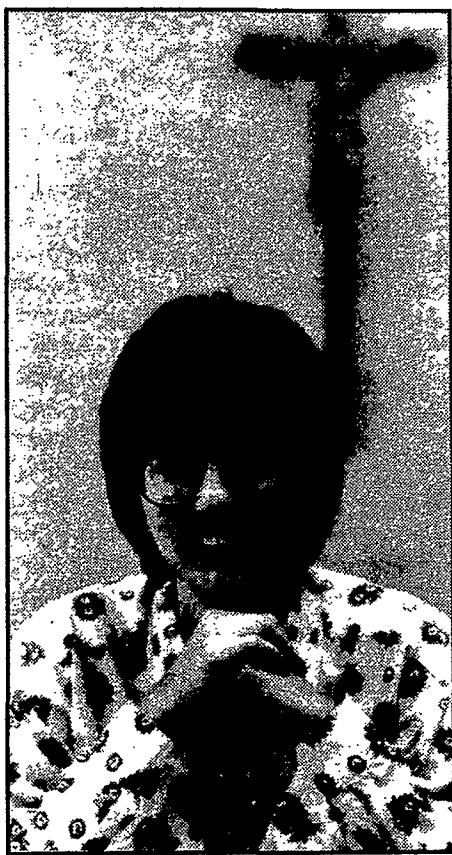
Richard McCorry, meanwhile, is a second theology student at St. Bernard's Institute in Rochester.

DeBellis said the fact that so many seminarians are older is not necessarily an advantage.

"Experience is good, but at the time, you don't have to be a 30-year-old to be mature," DeBellis said.

Meanwhile, the fact that the number of people considering a calling to either the priesthood or life as a woman religious is down may not necessarily be a bad thing, Sister Pray observed.

"We know that religious life is not going to have the numbers we had in the past," Sister Pray said. "But I think we have a different sense of the call."



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
Sister Connie Derby, bookkeeper for the diocesan propagation of the faith office, has taken her first vows as a Sister of Mercy and is now in a process of discernment.

Prelate says social changes create crisis, opportunities

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Rapid changes in church and society have led to a crisis in religious life, but have also generated a period of creativity for consecrated men and women, said Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago.

Addressing the world Synod of Bishops Oct. 3, Cardinal Bernardin appealed for respectful dialogue among religious and between religious and church authorities to discover the action of the Holy Spirit within changing situations.

Premature judgments about new ways of living consecrated life, accusations and deepening division are not signs of following Christ, living the Gospel and upholding the faith of the church, he said.

"Tensions are inevitable in an era like ours when there is rapid change in almost every aspect of societal and ecclesial life," Cardinal Bernardin said.

"For some, these are exciting challenges. For others, they are a bitter trial," he said. "In any case, where the approach is one of seeking the truth together, in mutual respect and charity, there is strong hope for the achievement of deeper communion."

Cardinal Bernardin asked synod members to keep in mind that diverse ways of living the faith have produced tensions in the church since the times of the early Christian community.

Down through the centuries, the development of religious communities within the Catholic Church also led to tension within the orders and between the orders and church authorities.

The cardinal said it is not surprising that the most notable changes and tensions have affected communities of women religious, which may be due to:

— "The significant changes in the way many women perceive themselves, a fruit of a modern society and of tendencies of modern education.

— "The fact that women's apostolic life is something relatively recent and may not yet have found its definitive place in the church.

— "Unlike men, who had three options for an ecclesial vocation (diocesan priesthood, brotherhood, and religious life and priesthood), women have had only religious life as an ecclesial choice with all its structures and strictures."

When trying to determine which forms of consecrated life are authentic, he said, the role of the Holy Spirit, who gives gifts to religious communities and to the bishops, must be kept in mind.

Religious have special spiritual gifts that guide their life and ministry, the cardinal said, and they have an understanding of how those gifts have been influenced by history and culture.

The bishops and other church authorities have been given special gifts to assist them in discerning authentic charisms, approving the way of life of religious communities and building the unity of the whole church.

All forms of consecrated life, he said, must be centered on a relationship with Christ, must be lived within the church, must share in the continuing mission of Christ and his church, must witness to Gospel values and must include identification with a religious community.

But in each of those areas, the cardinal said, "there is a broad scope for legitimate diversity, and the failure to recognize this as legitimate, indeed as a gift from the Spirit, can result in unnecessary tensions, fear and accusations."

Community living is an area of consecrated life that has gone through repeated dramatic changes throughout history, he said, and it is an area of much tension today.

"All the members of a province cannot live under one roof, but they have a loyalty and sense of belonging to the larger institute that is most important," he said.

The Second Vatican Council's emphasis on community as a "communion" has had a deep impact on the way religious in the United States live, he said.

"They rely less upon external structures and physical presence than in the past and concentrate more on the quality of their mutual relationships," Cardinal Bernardin said.

Missionary in Andes finds faith with poor

By Mary Stadnyk
Catholic News Service

WHITING, N.J. — The greatest reward of mission service in the interior Andes of Peru is "getting to know the people and being enriched by their faith and their lives," said Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Eileen Egan.

The poor people of Peru "are living and working against the greatest odds, but they are such beautiful people," she told *The Monitor*, newspaper of the Trenton diocese. She made the comments in an interview while visiting St. Elizabeth Anne Seton Parish in Whiting during a recent trip home to New Jersey.

Sister Egan, 55, has lived and worked in Peruvian communities since 1982. Her current assignment is in Sicuani in the Department of Cuzco in the southern Andes, 12,000 feet above sea level.

In Sicuani, a city of 55,000 where she has been stationed since 1991, Sister Egan lives with two other members of her religious community, one a native of Peru and the other also a North American. The three nuns serve about 30 villages, working in pastoral ministry and education.

Typical of the Peruvian mountain provinces, Sicuani is small and underdeveloped, according to Sister Egan. While the Peruvian government has been able to develop industry along the coast, it has made no such progress in the mountains and jungles. The people live under constant stress where economic conditions are unstable, poverty is great, and day-to-day living can be treacherous, she added.

She noted that Monsignor Alban Quinn, a Carmelite from his order's Chicago province and the apostolic administrator of the Territorial Prelature of Sicuani, often addresses the plight of the people and human rights during his regular Sunday evening Mass, which is broadcast on the radio.

"He is always concerned and prophetic in his stance for social justice and fairness for the marginalized," he said. "If anyone is being mistreated, he doesn't hesitate to remember them in his talks. He is so present to everyone and is very concerned with the needs of the people."

Families are large, but the infant mor-

tality rate is high. Because of poor nutrition and sanitation, lack of medication and parasitic disease, "the people struggle to care for their children," Sister Egan said.

"The children do not have any resistance to ward off diseases," she said. "They say if a child lives to the age of five, it means he's going to make it."

Because there are only two priests in Sicuani and one transitional deacon preparing to be ordained, Sister Egan said she and the other two missionary sisters are involved in liturgical services. They lead Communion services at least once a month, doing the readings, giving homilies and distributing previously consecrated Communion hosts.

If necessary, the sisters also celebrate paraliturgies for the funerals. In the Peruvian interior, the dead are rarely embalmed and must be buried within a day or two, said Sister Egan. The ceremonies are said in Spanish, but one of the other sister's translates it into Quechuan, the local language understood by those people from the countryside who do not speak Spanish.

Catholics of Sicuani might not practice their faith as actively as many people in the United States do by being involved in church functions or by giving donations to the church, but "they are Catholic within their hearts and they are in touch with God," Sister Egan said.

"They live a natural faith in God — a God who provides rain for their planting and harvesting," she continued. "As descendants of the Inca civilization they had a basic natural faith that was there before the Spanish conquest. They believed in God before it was known as the Catholic faith."

Forty lay catechists are actively involved in church ministry and work primarily in sacramental preparation. A family catechesis program on baptism is offered to parents so they can prepare their children for the sacrament, according to Sister Egan. Most children are school age by the time they are baptized.

As for vocations in the region, 24 men are in the seminary preparing for the priesthood. They come from the four dioceses that cover the southern Peruvian Andes, Sister Egan said.



Atlantic Province

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