

CLASS of '95

Ministry has lifelong meaning for some of this year's graduates

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Kevin Morriss recently became aware that athletes are not the only people recognized for their natural ability.

While attending last month's youth retreat at the Rotary Sunshine Camp in Rush, Kevin was approached by Father Gennaro J. Ventura, a retired diocesan priest who now serves as weekend assistant at St. Joseph's Church in Wayland.

"Father Gennaro said, 'You want to be a priest, don't you?'" Kevin recalled. "I said, 'How did you know?' He said, 'I could just see it in you.' Later that weekend, Jeannie Raisbeck (diocesan secretary for youth ministry) said the same thing."

These intuitions may well prove prophetic someday. Following his graduation from McQuaid Jesuit High School this Sunday, June 11, Kevin will attend Loyola University in Chicago beginning in the fall. He plans to major in political science and theology.

With only one priest being ordained in the Rochester diocese in 1995 — Father Kip Francis Corriveau last Saturday — Kevin would be a welcome addition to this vocation.

"Ever since my sophomore year I've really strongly considered the priesthood," said Kevin, 18, a parishioner at Spencerport's St. John the Evangelist Church.

Yet Kevin added that it could still be years before he makes a final decision about his vocation in life. In the meantime his parents are taking a hands-off approach, as is Father John A. DeSocio, assistant to the bishop for vocations and rector of Becket Hall.

"(Father DeSocio) said, 'You don't have to worry about it now,'" Kevin acknowledged. "You kind of develop it, and if it's something I enjoy, I can decide later."

Father DeSocio told the *Catholic Courier* that it's important for somebody who's considering the priesthood "not to feel pressure from anyone."

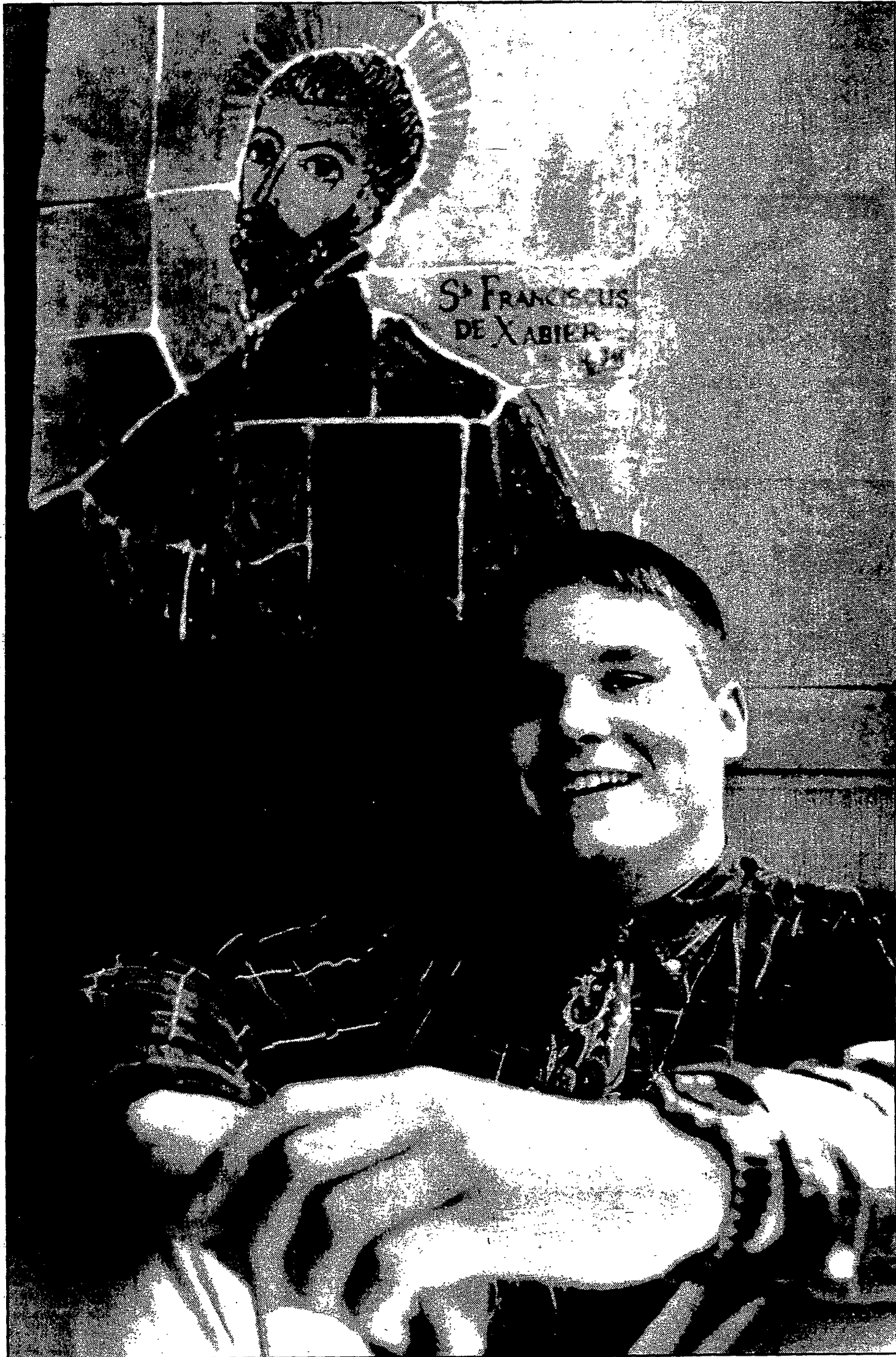
"This is something you freely choose from the Lord's calling," Father DeSocio explained. "Never pressure a person by saying, 'You should be a priest.' Instead, say, 'Have you ever thought of the priesthood or church vocations?'"

Delaying a decision about a religious vocation may be a sensible move for young women as well, said Sister Deanna Gears, SSJ, co-director of vocations for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester.

Sister Gears acknowledged that the great majority of women who enter religious life has already graduated from college and/or established careers in the secular world.

"I know it's certainly different than when I entered (in 1955)," said Sister Gears. "Women today have their education, they have their own houses. I just think it takes a lot longer now for young people, they have so many choices."

Even for those who don't choose full-time religious vocations, many graduating seniors are opting for careers that would still fall under the heading of "ministry."



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Kevin Morriss, a parishioner of Spencerport's St. John the Evangelist Church and a member of the Diocesan Youth Committee, will graduate June 11 from McQuaid Jesuit High School before attending Loyola University in Chicago this fall. Morriss may follow in the footsteps of St. Francis Xavier (pictured in background) by serving in some sort of ministerial capacity, possibly as a priest.

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