

# Answering God's Call

## Club seeks to support vocations

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

Like the patron of his organization, Joseph Testa has a mission to serve the church.

Whereas Father Junipero Serra devoted his life to promoting Franciscan missions in 18th century California, Testa has devoted the last six years to promoting vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.



"There isn't any doubt that we're in a vocations crisis," Testa commented during a phone interview with the *Catholic Courier* from his Buffalo home. "I don't know of one diocese that's over-rich in vocations."

Currently, Testa is trying to alleviate that problem in the Buffalo diocese through his work as regional representative of the Serra Club, an international organization of variety of Catholics who sponsor and promote vocations.

Testa is exploring the possibility of setting up a club in the dioceses of Rochester, Syracuse and Ogdensburg, and is working with Father John DiSocio, Rochester's diocesan vocations director on plans to attract lay Catholics to the Serrans.

Formed in Seattle, Wash., in 1935, the Serra Club has 20,000 members in 624 clubs in more than 30 countries. Serrans meet twice monthly for Mass, a shared meal and a speech about a timely subject.

To promote and support vocations, the Buffalo club's 39 members sponsor such events as an altar servers picnic each July and a speakers' bureau that sends members to speak at

parishes on behalf of the diocesan seminary program.

The Serrans also encourage members to join the "31 Club," whose participants pledge to attend Mass once a month and offer it for vocations.

Throughout the year, the club also presents various awards to seminarians, newly ordained priests and veteran clergy, as well as deacons and religious to show its support for those who commit their lives to the church's ministry.

It was the Serra Club that originated the now-famous "Called by Name" program in which parishes offer names of potential candidates for ordained ministry to a diocese, which subsequently attempts to recruit the men named to the ordained life.

Father DiSocio noted that the diocese once boasted a Serra Club in the 1960s and '70s, but that no such group exists currently in the diocese. He and Testa pointed out that while such groups as the Knights of Columbus include vocations support among their activities, only the lay Catholics in the Serra Club make such work their primary mission.

That high level of support is especially meaningful to seminarians who need to have their vocation buttressed by the wider church, Father DiSocio said.

"I think the example of outstanding men and women in the diocese that are really concerned about the seminarians and their studies (shows) it's not just our family and friends who support us," he said.

Testa echoed Father DiSocio's comments.

"If you think that a man or a woman is to dedicate their life to service, it's very important to let them know that you appreciate that service," he said.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Membership in the Serra Club is open to men and women. For information, call Father DiSocio at 716/461-2890, or Joe Testa at 688-8357, or write Testa at 100 Sundown Trail, Williamsville, N.Y. 14221.

### The Permanent Diaconate

Serving those in need in the Twelve Counties of the Rochester Catholic Diocese

Informational Meeting Nov. 19, 9 a.m. at St. Bernard's Institute

For more information or to register for the meeting, call Stephen Graff, Director of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program, (716) 271-3657.



## WHY DID WE CHOOSE THE SEMINARY?



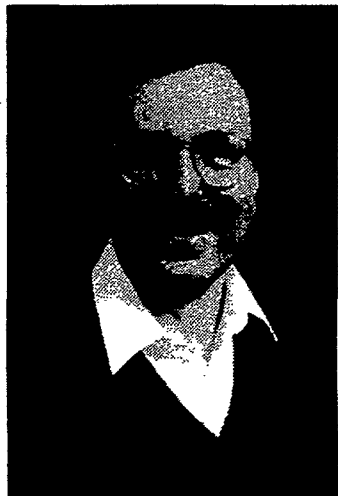
Eric Phillips  
Pastoral-Year Seminarian

**IT WASN'T TO "FIT IN"**

"When I tell people that I'm studying for the priesthood, I often get a mixed reaction. On the one hand, they know that there is a shortage, so they are pleased. On the other hand, they are puzzled as to why someone would choose such a lifestyle. It just doesn't make sense to them.

I can honestly say, however, that my life has never made more sense to me than it does now. Obviously, I do still have difficult questions, times of doubt and questioning, but these are overshadowed by a sense of peace and fulfillment that comes from following the Lord.

If you think God might be calling you, don't ignore it. Talk to someone you trust. Pray about it. Look into our discernment programs. You'll never regret just giving it a try. Four years ago, I never would have thought I'd be where I am now, but I thank God that I am!"



Richard McCorry  
Third-Year Seminarian

**BECAUSE GOD TOUCHED ME**

"When I first felt God calling me to the priesthood at 35 years of age, it didn't seem possible. I already had a career — I was a police officer. I had a seven-year old son and I was not a saint. Even so, God's invitation was gentle yet persistent.

What has motivated and sustained me since starting down this path is gratitude. You see, God has comforted me in times of pain, God has delighted in my joy and God has touched my brokenness to let me know that I am deeply loved. God did this through the hands of priests. I can imagine no better way of repaying, than to do this for someone else. I have given up nothing when compared to the richness and blessings added to my life! There is no greater calling than to serve God.

If God's been calling you and you've thought it's not possible, explore it further."



Timothy Niven  
Pastoral-Year Seminarian

**NOT BECAUSE I WANTED TO**

"I didn't grow up wanting to be a priest; it is something that developed. I pursued a career and lived through failures, challenges, successes and losses. I learned about myself, my gifts and talents. Slowly, my image of myself and the priesthood came together. I realized that, as a priest, I could do everything I wanted to do. Everything that God had been preparing me to say 'yes' to his invitation.


I have found the most important part of any life decision is our desire to actively respond to God's gift of love and salvation. This can be done in many ways. If you think the best way for you to live out your faith might be as a priest, look into it. If you discover it's not for you, at least you'll know that part of discovering God's will is finding out what he doesn't want us to do. You will be closer to finding out what you are being called to do."

**Is God Calling You...**  
to serve Him in the Marketplace?

*Caritas Christi is a secular institute in which women living in the world strive for perfection.*

Contact: Rev. John C. Murray • Caritas Christi  
3497 East Avenue • Rochester • New York • 14618

**HOW DO THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH LIVE IN TODAY'S WORLD?**



**LEARN ABOUT VOCATIONS THROUGH OUR ONGOING VOCATION PROGRAM FOR 1995-1996**

For more information or a schedule of events, please call Sister Deanna Gears or Sister Barbara Lum at (716) 586-1000, ext. 122.

*Sisters of Saint Joseph of Rochester*

## Few are Chosen...

The Call to Priesthood is a wonderful experience and offers a rich, rewarding life to those who answer it.

Becket Hall offers a residential pre-theology program as well as discern-

ment programs for those in high school, college or beyond.

If you are thinking of entering the priesthood or would simply like to explore your potential, give us a call.

For more information, call Father John DeSocio at (716) 461-2890

or write Becket Hall 314 Gregory St. Rochester, NY 14620.



## Becket Hall

A Center for Vocations to the Priesthood for the Diocese of Rochester for over 30 years