

Weekend renews confidence about vocations

"What can we do to promote vocations to the priesthood?"

I hear that question, which I take seriously, quite often as I travel around our diocese. I find it a thoughtful and helpful question for several reasons. It conveys a respect for the ministry of the ordained priest in the community. It manifests a sense that we are experiencing some challenges in this regard. It recognizes that, while a vocation to the ministerial priesthood is ultimately a gift from God, that gift is closely related to the free choice of those who receive it and the serious commitment of the community to stand in support of the gift.

The events of this weekend offered me special opportunities to reflect on some of those elements. Saturday's ordination of Doug Della Pietra and Frank Fusare was one such opportunity.

I remembered and was touched once again by the ways in which both of these fine men prepared for their ordination. They did so with honesty and generosity. When challenged along the way, they took the challenges seriously and responded to them with good heart. They were open to instruction and responsive to suggestions. Because of those dispositions, they learned a great deal and grew in solid ways through their years of preparation. If they keep alive their freedom to be open to the wisdom and care of others, as I am sure they will, they will be happy, effective priests for years to come.

People filled Sacred Heart Cathedral for the ordination on Saturday. The Della Pietra and Fusare families were there. No one present could miss their joy nor the sense they had contributed mightily to what we celebrated that

along the way



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day. Also attending were lively delegations from St. John of Rochester, Doug's home parish; and from St. Anthony, Elmira, Frank's.

The people from St. John's were joyful about this first vocation to diocesan priesthood from their parish. Our friends from St. Anthony were proud that Frank joins Fathers John De Socio and Mike Volino as diocesan priests from their community.

Also present and exemplifying the necessity of community support for vocations to priesthood were delegations from the parishes in which our new priests served for their pastoral year. For Frank it was St. Anne, Rochester; for Doug, the Corning-Painted Post Catholic Community. Also present in good number were representatives from St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, where Frank studied, and St. Augustine's in Toronto, where Doug prepared.

Present in great number at the ordination were priests ordained for the service of our diocese and members of religious orders who enrich our presbyterate by their gifts and generosity. They have been and will continue to be strong supporters of our newest colleagues.

I want to mention two other weekend events that invited me to further thought about this vocation theme. The first was the celebration

of the 100th anniversary of Rochester Council 178 of the Knights of Columbus. I had the pleasure of joining them for the Eucharistic Liturgy and banquet in observance of that significant milestone.

All through the evening I was mindful of the very strong commitment my brother knights make to vocation awareness, to the support of our seminarians and to the encouragement of our priests. Through these endeavors they offer a reminder and encouragement that all of us in our own ways can stand strongly in support of vocations to the ministerial priesthood.

The second event I want to mention is that assembly of incredibly gifted, curious, honest, playful, bright and committed young people who gathered at the State University of New York College at Geneseo for our Diocesan Junior High School Youth Rally yesterday. I found in them a reminder that God never stops replenishing our life and our hope. Their interest in God, faith, church, vocation and one another leave me confident that we'll find good and healthy ways to meet our changing vocation needs.

I don't know exactly how all of that will happen, but I am sure it will. It will because we have many gifted, generous potential candidates in our midst. We have a remarkable presbyterate whose example is so encouraging. And we have a growing number of individuals and groups in our diocese who realize more deeply than ever that the work of fostering vocations is the responsibility not of a few persons but of all of us.

Please pray for our priests and for all who are considering the possibility of preparing for the ordained ministry. Thank you.

Peace to all.

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