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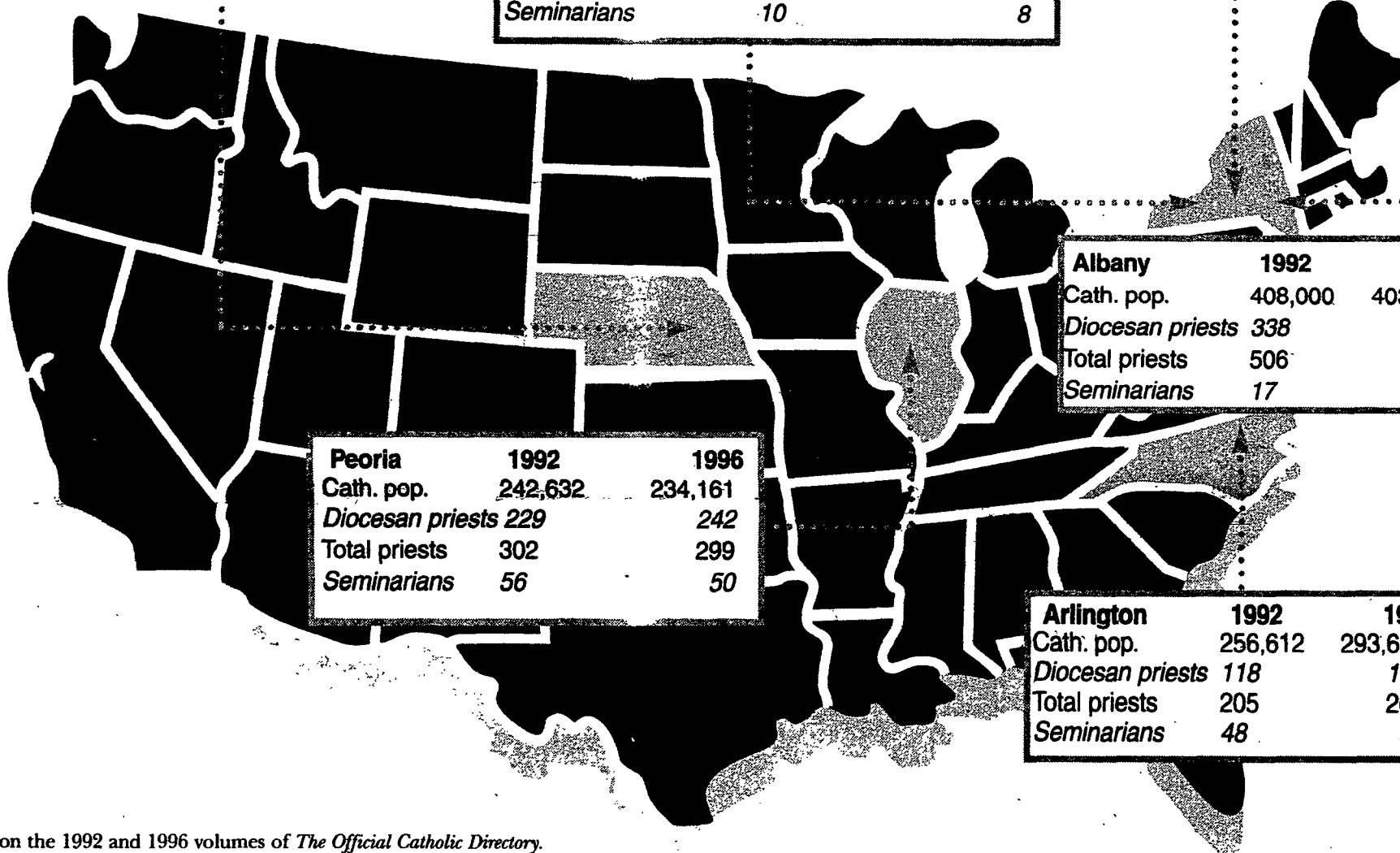
Catholic Courier

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Lincoln	1992	1996
Cath. pop.	80,776	84,918
Diocesan priests	136	137
Total priests	148	149
Seminarians	35	39

Rochester	1992	1996
Cath. pop.	361,384	349,623
Diocesan priests	305	293
Total priests	389	376
Seminarians	10	8

Syracuse	1992	1996
Cath. pop.	372,759	372,665
Diocesan priests	344	306
Total priests	419	350
Seminarians	14	13



Kim Parks & Amy Sundstrom/Catholic Courier

Based on the 1992 and 1996 volumes of *The Official Catholic Directory*.

Vocation leaders weigh 'quality vs. numbers'

Father James Gould talks with the eagerness of a dedicated — and successful — salesman.

"I've got a bishop who is supportive," Father Gould declared. "I've got enthusiastic priests who are sending guys. I've got good sisters who are inspiring vocations. It all comes together."

The result: Since 1985, Father Gould, vocation director of the Diocese of Arlington, Va., has seen 60 men ordained priests in his diocese — including 13 last May 18.

Arlington is one of the dioceses around the country frequently listed by traditional Catholics as places where vocations to the priesthood appear to be flourishing — often in conjunction with criticisms of dioceses they view as less "orthodox."

Indeed, Father Mike Kuse, vocation director for the Diocese of Springfield, Ill., and president of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors, readily acknowledged that when the issue of vocations in the United States comes up, three dioceses are repeatedly cited among traditional circles as drawing larger than average numbers of seminarians: Arlington; Lincoln, Neb.; and Peoria, Ill.

According to the 1996 edition of *The Official*

Catholic Directory, as of Jan. 1, 1996, Arlington had 35 diocesan seminarians; Lincoln, 39; Peoria, 50. The Diocese of Rochester, meanwhile, had eight.

But, Father Kuse cautioned, "Are we going for numbers, or are we going for quality? The bottom line is we are looking for good pastoral leadership in the next millennium."

As evidenced by a new national vocations strategy — and by ongoing efforts in dioceses across the country — finding "good pastoral leadership in the next millennium" is of concern in the United States in light of decreasing numbers of priests. According to the 1996 *Catholic Directory*, there were 49,009 priests in the United States. Just 11 years earlier, that figure had been 57,317.

Ironically, this decrease comes at a time when the number of men preparing for the priesthood is up worldwide. According to the 1996 edition of the *Statistical Yearbook of the Church*, as of Dec. 31, 1994, some 105,000 men across the world were in the final stages of preparation for the priesthood — a 44 percent increase since 1970. Between 1970 and 1994, seminary enrollment rose 394 percent in Africa; 253 percent in South America; 165 percent

in Central America. At the same time, however, enrollment was down 13 percent in Europe, and 60 percent in North America.

In light of those numbers, some lay people have questioned why some regions seem to be enjoying success, while others, particularly in the United States, are not. And they raise the possibility of recruiting priests for U.S. dioceses from Third World nations, or even from the dioceses in this country that appear to have an abundance of vocations.

But local and national vocation leaders point to factors for growth in some areas — factors that are not found in most U.S. dioceses — and reasons why recruiting priests from these places will not necessarily work.

Father John DeSocio, assistant to the bishop for vocations for the Diocese of Rochester, noted that in many of the Third World nations where vocations to the priesthood and religious life are up, such factors as upward mobility and educational opportunities come into play.

"It's an economic climb for many of them," Father DeSocio observed.

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