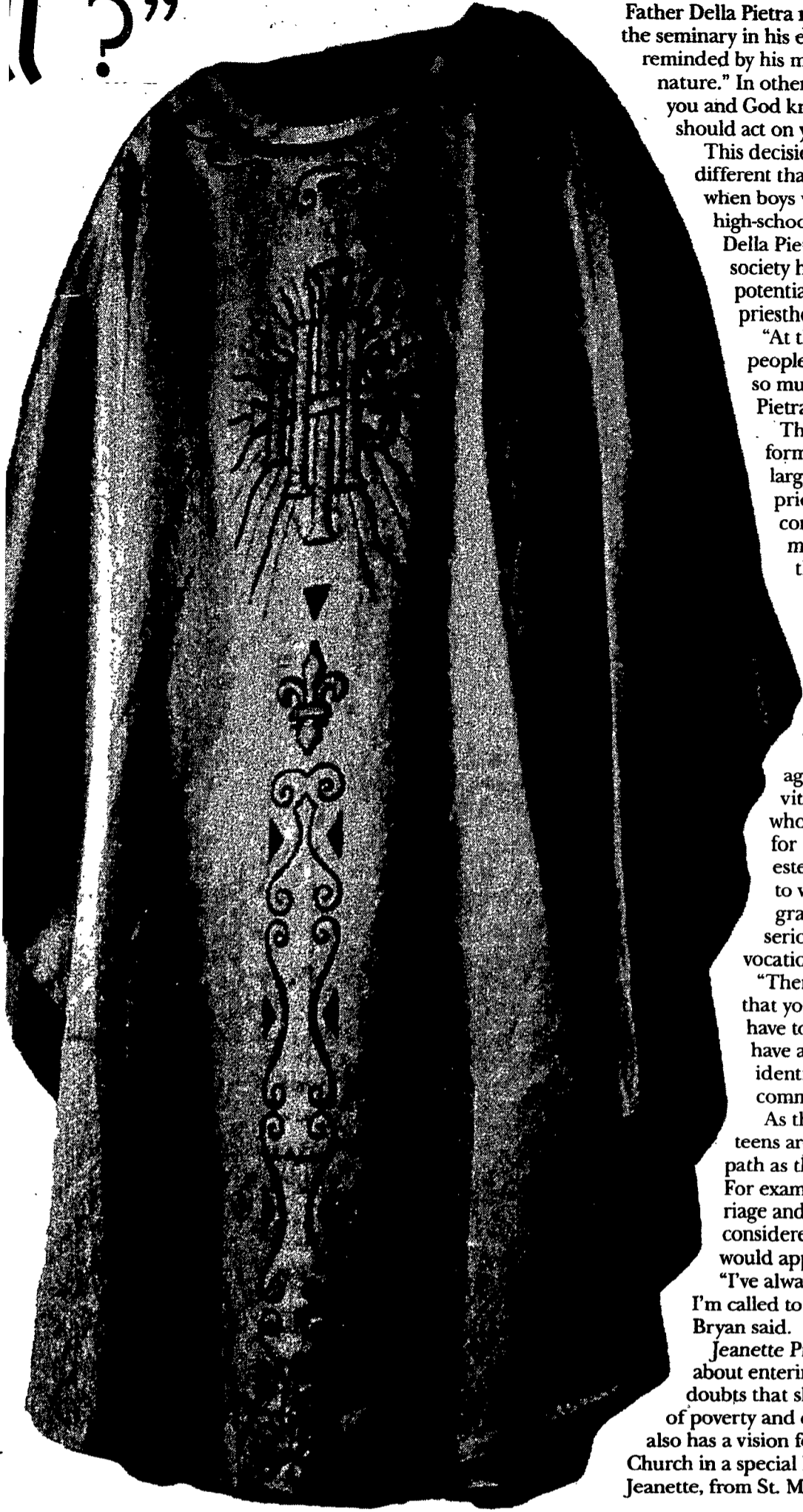


“?”



Father Della Pietra recalled that when he was in the seminary in his early 20s, he was often reminded by his mentors that “grace builds by nature.” In other words, he explained, only you and God know if — and when — you should act on your calling.

This decision-making process is quite different than in previous generations, when boys would enter the seminary as high-school freshmen. However, Father Della Pietra pointed out, a changing society has led to this change in how potential candidates approach the priesthood.

“At this point in our history, people are making commitments so much later in life,” Father Della Pietra said.

The priest conceded that the former approach produced a larger volume of candidates for priesthood. However, he’s not convinced that 14-year-olds are mature enough to be sure they want to become priests.

“I think the whole thing of human experience — sexuality, dating, the whole high-school situation — is by far the most important thing,” Father Della Pietra said.

Sister Connie Derby, RSM, agreed that *readiness* is more vital than *age*. Sister Derby, who serves on the vocation team for the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester, encourages young women to wait until at least high-school graduation before they take serious steps toward a religious vocation.

“There’s too much in the world that you’ve got to figure out. You have to be your own person and have a strong sense of your own identity,” Sister Derby commented.

As this self-awareness grows, teens are apt to take an alternate path as they discover their calling. For example, Bryan pointed out, marriage and parenting should also be considered vocations of which God would approve.

“I’ve always liked kids. I don’t know if I’m called to be a father or a priest,” Bryan said.

Jeanette Proietti said she has thought about entering a religious vocation, but doubts that she would want to take vows of poverty and chastity. However, Jeanette also has a vision for serving the Catholic Church in a special lay ministry. Jeanette, from St. Michael’s Church in Penn

Yan, said she has attended several highly charged teen retreats — yet her peers struggle to gain the same spiritual impact in other church settings.

“They get home and they lose the feeling,” Jeanette, 17, remarked.

Therefore, she said, she’d like to fill that void by eventually opening a year-round retreat center for teens.

Though Bryan and Jeanette freely express their views on vocations, Father Della Pietra pointed out that many teens prefer to keep such powerful thoughts to themselves.

“That might be a difficult area. You’re saying, ‘I don’t want to vocalize this to anybody,’” Father Della Pietra said.

A vocations program at McQuaid Jesuit High School, held Oct. 8, showed that students at the all-boys’ school can be tight-lipped on the issue of religious vocations. When McQuaid campus minister Andrew Hoelperl asked groups of 11th-graders if anyone had considered the religious life, not a single hand went up.

“The silence is deafening,” Hoelperl remarked at two of the seminars.

However, Hoelperl later pointed out, some teens who didn’t reveal such thoughts to their peers were later anxious to discuss vocations one-on-one with him.

Father Della Pietra suggested that anybody who would rather keep the matter confidential could also seek out somebody who serves in a religious vocation. In addition, he said that Becket Hall — a diocesan preparatory center for young men considering the priesthood — offers a discernment program for high-school boys.

Bryan at Aquinas said some teens might be discouraged from a religious life because it’s not considered “cool” by their peers.

“People might be afraid of what their friends might say, so they might do something (for a career) that they know they’re not going to be ridiculed for,” Bryan explained.

Bryan, on the other hand, seems very comfortable with expressing his inner thoughts.

“I’m conscious about (being judged) but I really don’t care,” he stated. “I’m fine with myself and if somebody is not all right with me, there’s nothing I can do about it.”

Bryan pointed out that these negative perceptions would disappear if teens would accept religion, rather than rebel against it.

“People don’t think about religion as much as I do, or as much as they should,” he said. “God has a calling for everybody.”

Jeanette pointed out that open discussion of religion would create a larger movement toward religious vocations.

“If the love of God was brought out and society appreciated God in whatever way, I think it would go up,” she stated. “Unless it’s stressed more and emphasized in a better way, it’s going to go down.”

COMING NEXT WEEK:

Teens’ views on other faiths

us life?

It wasn’t to please people...

“When most people discover I’m considering religious life, they usually are supportive.

Some people are even excited for me, others aren’t so happy. They’re the people who ask me ‘Why?’ a lot.

I’m reminded that not everyone understands and supports a lifestyle like priesthood, but that’s not what matters to me. Considering a vocation to the priesthood involves a lot more of my heart than my head.

I don’t know if I will decide to become a priest — either in a religious order like that of the Franciscans at St. Bonaventure University or in diocesan ministry.

I do know that my study of journalism at Bonaventure will come in handy no matter what I do with the life God has given me.

And I know that no matter what happens, God will be holding me by the hand, guiding me all the way.”



Carolyn Rosica, RSM



Scott VanDerveer

Few are Chosen...

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

If you are thinking of entering a religious vocation or would simply like to explore your potential, give us a call. We’ll put you in touch with someone who can guide you through your decision.

Women considering a religious vocation can contact the Sisters of St. Joseph or Sisters of Mercy. To contact the Sisters of Mercy, call Sister Janet Korn in the New Membership Office at 716-288-2710. For the Sisters of St. Joseph, call Sister Deanna Gears in the Vocations Office at 716-586-1000, ext. 122.

Becket Hall offers a residential pre-theology program as well as discernment programs for men in high school, college or beyond. 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