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## Vocation

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That view was seconded by Sister Mary Jo Kirt, OSF, vocation director for the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and member of the board of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors. She likened the situation in the Third World to what she experienced when she entered the convent in the United States in 1954.

"For many people, it was upward mobility," Sister Kirt said of some of the women who were in formation with her.

Conditions in the United States have changed since, but situations similar to those that existed here previous to the 1950s now exist in Third World nations.

"Many of the candidates (in the Third World) enter because they want an education," Sister Kirt said.

Although some U.S. dioceses have recruited priests from these regions, Sister Kirt said, they have discovered problems due to cultural and language differences. Indeed, her bishop, Bishop Robert Banks, is a member of the papal Commission on the Universal Distribution of Priests, and his assessment of the situation, she said, is that "It's not a solution."

Moreover, Father DeSocio observed, "The bishops of Africa have publicly stated they want the candidates for Africa to stay so that they can minister to the people in Africa. They do want the candidates to come over for further education, but they want them to come back."

Father DeSocio pointed out the people who look at just the growing number of priests and religious in Third World nations are overlooking the reality faced by the church in those lands.

"We forget the needs are so big there," he said. "Just because they have a lot doesn't mean they have a surplus."

The possibility of recruiting priests from one U.S. diocese to serve in another also would pose problems.

As of Jan. 1, 1996, for example, Lincoln had 149 priests: 137 diocesan and 12 religious. But of that total, 26 were retired, sick or absent. And since 1992, when Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz became the bishop of Lincoln, the overall number of priest had increased by just one. Meanwhile, the diocese has 134 parishes.

In Peoria, the number of diocesan priests from 1992 to 1996 did increase from 229 to 242, but the overall number of priests decreased from 302 to 299.

Father David Kipfer, vocation director for the Diocese of Peoria, told the *Catholic Courier* that although the number of diocesan priests in the diocese is going up, the diocese does not have many to spare.

"With retirements, deaths, we're basically holding our own," Father Kipfer said. "We have over 200 parishes and institutions."

And Father Gould pointed out that Arlington has been able to lend priests to other ministries and dioceses. But that number available is small — currently five priests. He said the number of priests to be ordained in the future will vary, and will probably only keep up with current needs in light of retirements, deaths and the departure of religious order priests. Indeed, the total number of priests there has risen only from 205 to 209 since 1992.

Thus the possibility of these dioceses having many priests to give to other dioceses seems remote for the time being.

Even if these dioceses had enough priests to send to other dioceses on a large scale, vocation leaders are skeptical that some of them would fit in elsewhere.

Lincoln and Peoria in particular are attracting recruits from outside their boundaries because of their reputations for traditionalism. Lincoln, for example, does not permit altar girls — as is also the case in Arlington — and only recently began allowing female lectors. And Father Kipfer noted that in Peoria Bishop John J. Myers has "set a clear agenda" that includes "defense of the male celibate priesthood, support of the Holy Father and magisterium, devotion to Our Lady."

Thus, part of the success of Lincoln and Peoria is their ability to draw from other dioceses seminarians who are traditional in their orientation.

Indeed, in an interview in the fall issue of *Sursum Corda* magazine, a new magazine published by the Foundation for Catholic Reform, Lincoln's chancellor, Msgr. Timothy Thorburn said, "A young man with a liberal bent wouldn't be happy here. No one would try to make him unhappy, but he would quickly realize that he could never fit in."

Many of these candidates, Sister Kirt noted, "go diocese hopping, trying to find a bishop with the same philosophy as theirs."

Father Kipfer acknowledged that Peoria does accept men from other dioceses who feel uncomfortable with what he described as the "agendas" in those other dioceses.

"Several of our guys were confronted (in their home dioceses) on their devotion to

Mary and support for the pope," Father Kipfer claimed. "Some had been asked about lay ministry."

Because of discomfort about such questions, the seminarians turned to Peoria.

"Most of the guys are looking for a solid program where the vision of the diocese is clear," Father Kipfer said. That program, he noted, has resulted in 59 ordinations since 1990.

But the growth in Peoria has apparently not come without some friction.

Sister Kirt, for example, pointed out that she has friends in Peoria "and they really struggle with the priests there" because of theological differences. And Father Kuse said some of the new priests had personal problems and had not adapted well to parish ministry.

"Are there some people in the diocese unhappy with the kind of men we've ordained? Sure," Father Kipfer said.

He contended, however, that some of the problems encountered by the new priests were simply due to inexperience.

On the whole, he added, "my feedback has been positive."

But if anyone had questions about the quality of the new priests, he quickly offered a challenge: "Get to know our guys."

The fact that some of these priests were rejected or discouraged in other dioceses, however, suggests that they would not necessarily fit in in other sees even if they were available — and that other dioceses would have a hard time following the recruiting methods used by Peoria and Lincoln.

Indeed, Father DeSocio pointed out that the current trend for vocation officials is to look for candidates from their own dioceses — and to refer potential candidates who only recently moved into a diocese back to their original dioceses.

But that does not mean that Rochester and other dioceses are simply accepting continued small numbers of vocations to the priesthood or religious life.

On Jan. 1 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops launched "Future Full of Hope: A National Strategy for Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life in the Diocese and Archdioceses of the United States."

Scheduled to run until Dec. 31, 1998, the strategy includes a call for prayers for vocations and such programs as "Called by Name," through which groups of potential candidates are gathered, and "Operation Andrew," which involves small groups of priests inviting individuals for dinner, discussions and support. The plan also rec-

ommends that vocation officials work closely with such groups as the Knights of Columbus, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and campus ministry to encourage vocations.

The strategy also emphasizes the roles families, schools and parishes can play in identifying and supporting potential vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Father Gould credits some of his success in Arlington to many of these same techniques.

The Arlington priest pointed out that after he became vocation director in 1985, he began visiting each parish in the diocese, spending a weekend in each, hearing confessions, celebrating Masses, and getting to know the people and, in particular, the parish priests. This personal contact helps to encourage parish priests to be active recruiters, he observed. And just by their example, they attract candidates.

"I think you need guys who are happy in the priesthood: That's the magnet," Father Gould said.

In that, he echoes the national strategy.

"We affirm that the best vocation program is the priest himself — a priest who is committed, faithful, joyful and prayerful in the exercise of his priestly ministry," the bishops wrote.

After identifying potential candidates, Father Gould visits with the candidate's family to explain what the candidate will go through in the coming years — and to encourage family support. He also gives the family his home phone number so they can reach him with any concerns.

Father Gould offers "Called by Name" and "Project Andrew," but not every year because, he contended, they would lose their effectiveness. Instead, he travels about the diocese taking part in gatherings involving young people — from altar boy picnics to Boy Scout Masses.

"Build on what's available," he said. "Plug into the programs that are already there."

Father Gould's success in employing these techniques suggests that the national strategy may prove successful. Indeed, vocation leaders are upbeat about the potential of the national strategy — and the future growth of vocations in the church in terms of not only priests and religious, but also the laity.

"I really do think this is the finger of God renewing the priesthood and renewing the laity," Sister Kirt observed of the current vocations situation. "It's helping to look at what it really means to be a priest."

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