

# Vocations

## Candidate professes oath Foresees 'good life'

By Kathleen Schwar  
Staff writer

The Book of Revelation is enough of a challenge to take on, without attempting to discuss it in another language.

Yet that has been one of John Cichello's wide-ranging experiences as a candidate for the priesthood. The 30-year-old Weedsport native made his temporary oath in May with the rural-oriented Glenmary Home Missioners.

While studying at the Washington Theological Union in Washington, D.C., he also volunteers as a tutor at a Spanish-speaking parish and works there with a new young adult group.

He recalled discussing the Bible with one youth.

"I knew he was quoting Revelation, and he seemed to be taking a very literalist approach," Cichello recalled. "I was forever five sentences behind him. It was really hard to pick up the nuances.

"I suspect," he added, "that will be reality for a long time."

The Glenmary Home Missioners are a society of priests and brothers known for living a farmer's lifestyle and recruiting volunteers for constructing buildings and visiting the elderly in rural areas, Cichello noted.

But there's so much more to the society, Cichello said. It sent him to San Antonio for full immersion in Spanish, at the Mexican-American Cultural Center for four months about two years ago.

The Glenmary Missioners, founded in 1939, have 62 priests and 20 brothers dedicated to establishing a church presence in areas where less than 1 percent of the total population is Catholic. Cichello said if there are any Spanish-speaking people in those areas, chances are they are Catholic.

"So we are their church," he said. "We have to be prepared to meet that need.

"Ten years ago if you had said to our society, the Hispanic presence would be as strong as it is, people would have told you you're nuts," he said. Such a presence especially wasn't ex-



John Cichello

pected to be so prevalent in southern Georgia, Kentucky and the hills of North Carolina, he said, "where for the most part, people whose ancestors settled 250 years ago are still there."

Since the missioners maintain what often is the sole Catholic church in a county, their parishes may be quite a multi-racial, multi-cultural mix. The one Catholic church in Emanuel County, Georgia, for example, has white, Hispanic-American, and African-American parishioners, Cichello said.

Even retirees from the North help create the interesting mix, he added.

"There is a big difference between having grown up in the Ukrainian ghetto of Cleveland where everybody is Catholic and everybody speaks Ukrainian, and having grown up in Twin City, Ga., with a (smaller) population where everybody is Baptist," Cichello said. "It is amazing how people can come together."

How to keep such people together as one community, he said, "will surely be a challenge for a long time to come."

Cichello didn't immerse himself in Glenmary until 1993, and expects to be ordained in the year 2000. While a student majoring in English at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, he volunteered with the missioners. After graduating in 1988, he returned to spend a year with the missioners on their farm in Vanceburg, Ky. He coordinated the volunteers who came primarily to help with construction in the community.

Then he spent four years in Auburn as district executive for

the Cayuga County Council of the Boy Scouts.

His decision to pursue a priestly vocation, he said, is due to a "gradual discernment process, of thinking about the possibility of religious life. And then not thinking about it. And then thinking about it again."

Yet the Glenmary Missioners were an obvious choice, he said.

"I'm very much a product of Weedsport," Cichello said. "It was no accident after four years of college in Philadelphia, I was looking for something in the woods and hills of eastern Kentucky."

Cichello, son of Sam and Eileen Cichello, grew up in St. Joseph's Parish in Weedsport, which he noted is "huge by Glenmary standards but small by diocesan standards."

Priests who served there "made the option real" of going into the priesthood, he said. "They were people who were people, and I got to know them." They included Father George Wiant, the current pastor Father William Leone and Father Bill Moorby, "who was a pinochle partner of mine."

Cichello, who has three brothers and three sisters, said he's never experienced one outstanding incident that led him toward the priesthood.

"I would think if someone were to consider a vocation, just to pursue it," he said he would advise others. "And take a chance. And I think from my limited experiences and talking to people, it's a livable life and a good life."

## Women

Continued from page 1A

and I love its history and its spirituality. I feel I want to be a part of it. I want to work within the system."

Sister Leonard expressed similar sentiments.

"I know that there's always going to be tension with the church around women's issues, but that didn't prohibit me from entering religious life," she said. "I'm just willing to work within the church, rather than outside it, as a woman religious."

Sister Derby added that women religious have often occupied influential positions in the church as leaders of such institutions as Catholic schools and hospitals. She also said that women's orders have been self-governing and fairly independent institutions within the church.

"I think we have a lot of of-

fer in terms of leadership," she said.

Both women concluded that by becoming women religious, they had answered a call from God that resonated with their own spirits.

For example, Sister Derby said working at the missions office connects her to the church's larger mission throughout the world.

"It's a way of supporting the poor in the world," she said. "That gives meaning to my job here."

Sister Leonard, a volunteer at Isaiah House, a home for the dying operated by Corpus Christi Parish in Rochester, said she plans to become a public health nurse or a hospice worker when she obtains her nursing degree.

"Just being with people and helping them to be all they were created to be has always been important to me," she said. "It's not just a job, it's a ministry."

## Ministers to assist with 'new life'

KENNER, La. (CNS) — Vocation ministers are the "midwives of the future" for their congregations, according to Sister Doris Gottemoeller, president of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

Sister Gottemoeller addressed more than 450 vocation ministers during the fifth biennial convocation of the National Religious Vocation Conference Sept. 5-9 in suburban New Orleans.

Sister Gottemoeller said vocation ministers are those who "welcome and assist" life rather than create it. They need "patience in awaiting the time, skill in assisting the process, and reverence for the

form in which the new life emerges."

Religious communities are not overwhelmed with new members because the commitment of religious vows "will never be a common choice," she said. But she suggested that if God called to religious life just one-tenth of 1 percent of U.S. Catholics, there would be 20,000 women and men under 30 choosing consecrated life.

Religious life should be formed by choices that are "neither lightly made nor lightly surrendered," she said. It should be "radically Christocentric, oriented toward the person and mission of Jesus."

### Come follow the Redeemer!

Redemptorists —  
Priests and Brothers  
invite you to join  
them in serving  
the people of God.



Redemptorist Vocation Office

22-04 Parsons Blvd.  
Whitestone, NY 11357  
(718) 321-1394

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



LEARN ABOUT VOCATIONS THROUGH OUR ONGOING  
VOCATION PROGRAM FOR 1996-1997

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

