

Brother Porto works toward priesthood



Greg Francia/Staff photographer

Warner checks the blood pressure of Sister Michaela Tennity Dec. 18 at the Sisters of St. Joseph motherhouse.

Lay associates

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near Piffard, Livingston County, offer two levels of lay associate involvement. The Genesee Lay Contemplatives gather monthly at the Abbey of the Genesee, whereas the Genesee Lay Contemplative Associates meet once a year for retreat.

These lay groups began at the Livingston County monastery in 1992. Father Steger, who serves as program director, estimated that about 20 people are lay contemplatives and 40 more are lay contemplative associates.

Lay contemplatives are required to devote extensive time toward prayer, meditation and reading in the tradition of the Trappist monks. Father Steger said that program requirements are made stringent

By Kathleen Schwarz
Staff writer

Jim Porto, formerly of Seneca Falls, goes by the name "Brother Cuthbert" in his religious community these days.

On his namesake saint's feast day, March 20, he noted, he and his fellow monks at St. Anselm's Abbey in Washington, D.C., will celebrate with cake and ice cream.

Being a monk is fulfilling — and fun — he wants others to know.

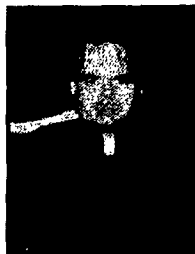
Brother Porto, who will turn 36 on March 20, made his simple vows in October 1996, plans to make his solemn vows in 1999; and he plans to become a priest.

He is the son of George and Eileen Porto of Seneca Falls, who attend St. Mary's Parish in Waterloo. Formerly of Neptune, N.J., Brother Porto attended St. Patrick's School in Seneca Falls. He graduated in 1980 from Mynderse Academy, Seneca Falls.

In 1995 he entered St. Anselm's, a Benedictine community of about 25 members. While studying, he's also teaching church history at St. Anselm's Abbey School for boys.

He chose to major in television at Tomp-

kins-Cortland Community College. While there, he was working in the college TV studio watching monitors when Pope John Paul II was shot in May 1981.



"I remember Dan Rather took time out on national TV to ask people to take a minute of silence to pray for the pope," he said. Recalling that he'd long had an interest in becoming a priest, he added, "Gee, the medium I was majoring in was talking to me."

He soon took a year off from studies to consider a possible vocation to the priesthood, but, he said, "I really didn't know who to talk to about it. If I talked to priests, I thought they'd immediately sign me up because of the lack of vocations."

He turned to books, particularly on the life of Christ.

In 1982 he enrolled at St. Leo College in Saint Leo, Fla., started by Benedictine monks of St. Leo. He graduated cum laude in 1985, with a bachelor's degree in religious studies. While discerning his next

ther Steger said. These out-of-staters found out about the associate programs, he noted, through past visits to the abbey as well as the Lay Contemplatives' web site.

Although the mission of many religious communities and their lay associate groups are identical, Father Steger stressed that it's important to maintain distinctions between laity and those with religious orders.

"We (Trappist monks) wanted to make sure we didn't lose our monastic and contemplative orientation," Father Steger said.

The same clarifications are upheld in Agreges, Warner said.

"There are religious women, and then

move, he was encouraged by Msgr. Gerard Krieg of Geneva to look into religious orders, partly because of a desire to teach. His spiritual director, the late Father David Mura, also encouraged him, he said.

He has a slight disability affecting his gait, but the order has welcomed him, he said.

His parents, too, were instrumental, he said, teaching and reading to him.

In church one day when he was a child, he recalled, he asked his father why a lot of people put their hands over their face before receiving Communion.

"He said they were praying and could see Jesus in their hands," he remembered, adding, "He gave me my first lesson in mystical, contemplative prayer."

Though "semi-cloistered" at St. Anselm's, Brother Porto has not left behind his interest in theater. Last year he and the school's theater teacher performed his parody of Shakespeare entitled "So That's How You Like It." The Seneca Community Players later performed it.

Another sign that his sense of humor hasn't been diminished: He likes to point out to kids, "Benedictines get to dress like Darth Vader, and I find that very cool."

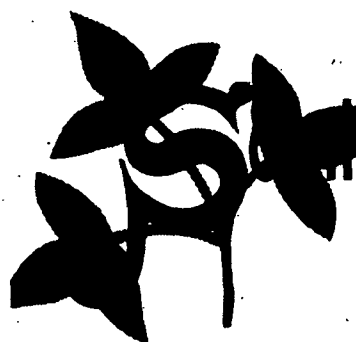
there are women religious," she remarked. Nevertheless, Father Steger said that lay associates benefit greatly from their close exposure to the religious life.

"They find a great satisfaction in their desire to grow into deeper prayer," he said.

Meanwhile, Judy Clark refers to her ministry with the Mercy Associates as a "sort of sub-vocation, if you want to call it that."

Lay associate programs bring many positives to the religious communities as well, Sister Synnott remarked.

"Associating with lay men and women has allowed us to extend our mercy charism further," Sister Synnott noted.



St. Bernard's Institute presents

Semester Long Graduate Courses

- A318 **Passion and Resurrection Narrative:** (Falcone) Mon. 6:30-9:15 pm.
- A324 **Jeremiah:** (Premnath) Mon. 2:15-5:00 p.m.
- A338 **The Apocalyptic Tradition:** (Falcone) Tues. 6:00 - 9:15 p.m.
- B/C326 **Twentieth Century Theology:** (Hart) Wed. 7:00 - 9:45
- C/D204 **Classics of Christian Spirituality:** (Hart) Tues. 6:00-9:15pm
- C331 **Bio-Medical Ethics** (Mich) Wed. 3:15-6:00pm.
- C342 **Penance and Reconciliation** (Kennedy) Thurs. 3:15-6:00pm.
- D200 **Introduction to Pastoral Care and Counseling** Rochester (Karaban) Mon. 6:30-9:15pm, Horseheads (Karaban) Tues. 6:30-9:15pm, Syracuse (O'Brien) 6:30-9:15pm.
- D344 **Servant Leadership for Pastoral Professionals** (Schwab) Thurs. 6:30-9:15pm.

Graduate Classes begin January 29, 1998.

Call for course fees and descriptions.

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Check individual course listings for class times.

For all programs please call Dr. Stephen Graff at (716) 271-3657x299 for more information.

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- A25 **Acts of the Apostles:** (Serenka) 1/31, 2/21, 3/14, 4/25; Sat 9-11:30am
- A27 **Later Pastoral Letters:** (Carnahan) 2/7, 28, 3/28, 4/18; Sat 9-11:30am
- B22 **Sacramental Guidelines:** (Fox) 2/23, 3/2, 9, 23 Mon; 6:30-9:00pm
- B23 **Alternative Models for Parish Catechists:** (Britton) 3/24, 31, 4/21, 28 Tues. 6:15-9:15pm
- C10 (DEL) **Introduction to Theology:** (Graff) 2/14, 4/25 Sat; 9:30-12:00pm
- C12 **Sacraments of Initiations:** (DeRycke) 2/7, 28, 3/28, 4/18 Sat; 9-11:30am
- C16 **Social Justice tradition - USA:** (O'Brien) 1/31, 2/21, 3/14, 4/4 Sat; 9-11:30am.
- C17(ST) **Ecclesiology:** (Curtin) 4/14, 21, 28 Tues; 6-8:30pm
- C25(SP) **Consistent Life Ethic:** (Flores) (Spanish) 1/31, 2/21 Sat; 9-12:00pm 1-3:00pm
- C26(SP) **Special Topics in Morality:** (Flores)(Spanish) 3/14, 4/4 Sat; 9-12noon, 1-3:00pm.
- D14 **Wholeness in Spirituality & Ministry:** (Elphick) 2/7, 28, 3/28, 4/25 Sat; 2-4:30pm.
- E14 **Managing Differences/Conflict Transformation:** (Curtin) 1/31, 2/21, 3/14, 4/4 Sat; 1:15-3:45pm.
- E24(SP) **Introduction to Pastoral Care:** (Baars) (Spanish) 2/3, 10, 17, 24, 3/3; 10, 24, Tue; 6:15-9:45pm.
- E25(ST) **Parish Processes:** (TBA) 3/4, 11, 25, location TBA Wed; 6-8:30pm.
- E27(SP) **Homiletics:** (Ruberte) (Spanish) 3/23, 30, 4/6, 13, 20, 27 Mon; 6:30-9:15pm.
- E35 **Social Advocacy:** (Carosio) 2/7, 28, 3/28, 4/18, Sat; 2-4:30pm.
- E43 **Foundations of Christian Leadership:** (Bagley) 2/14, 15 Sat-Sun; 9am-6pm & 9am-4pm.
- E44 **Skills for Christian Leadership:** (Mahaney) 4/25, 26 Sat-Sun; 9am-6pm & 9am-4pm.
- E50 **Special Topics in Liturgy:** (Workmaster) 1/27, 2/10, 2/24, 3/10 Tues; 6:15-9:15pm.
- E81 **Human Resource Administration:** (Olsen) 1/22, 29, 2/5, 12 Thurs; 1-3:30pm
- F12(DEL) **Introduction to Ministry:** (Graff) 2/14, 4/25 Sat; 1-3:30pm
- F13 **Introduction to Theological Reflection:** (Carnahan) (No charge for these sharing sessions) 2/7, 28, 3/28, 4/18 Sat; 12:30-1:45pm
- F14 **Cultural Diversity & Ministry:** (Staff) 1/31, 2/21, 3/14, 4/4, Sat; 1:15-3:45pm