

Conference strives for louder call to vocations

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The push to increase religious vocations in this diocese is everyone's responsibility.

That was the consensus of more than 20 diocesan officials, vocations directors and parish leaders when they met March 11 at St. Bernard's Institute for a conference titled "Vocations: Witness and Invitation."

"It doesn't start with the person who has the job. It's all of our jobs," said Brother Raymond Verccruysse, CFC, president of Bishop Kearney High School and provincial vocations coordinator for the Congregation of Christian Brothers.

Father John DeSocio told the *Catholic Courier* that the conference's intent was to discuss creative ways for parish leaders to generate the good news about religious vo-

cations in their parish communities.

"We're targeting all the ministry people, and then we want them to contact the people in the parish. We're sort of farming it out," Father DeSocio commented.

Father DeSocio serves as diocesan assistant to the bishop for vocations. He is also director of Rochester's Becket Hall, a diocesan program and center for men who are discerning priesthood vocations.

The Rochester Diocese currently has nine seminarians and nine pre-theology students; three seminarians will be ordained as priests this year.

Father DeSocio emphasized that it's not up to just priests or women religious to encourage young Catholics toward vocations.

He noted that in the past year, three people who have joined Becket Hall were originally approached, respectively, by a parent, a deacon and a sister's boyfriend.

Regardless of who's spreading the word, Sister Geri Rosinski, RSM, said that the call to vocations needs to be louder. She said this is especially true in an age where women religious are less visible due to decreasing membership and also because they are no longer required to wear habits.

"Young people do not know we're here, that this is a life option. Believe me, they don't know unless somebody tells it to them," said Sister Rosinski, regional vocations director for the Sisters of Mercy in the Rochester, Buffalo and Erie dioceses.

Conference participants suggested using brochures and computer technology, asking parishioners to anonymously submit names of potential candidates, and making frequent pleas from the pulpit as tactics for increasing vocations.

Other participants discussed what they are already doing to promote vocations, and what they plan to do. For instance, Father Charles Manning noted that he has performed a "shadow ministry" with youths at St. Pius V Church in Cohocton and Sacred Heart Church in Perkinsville, where he serves as pastor. This ministry involves youths who follow him around for an entire weekend so they can see firsthand what the life of a priest is like.

At least two people, Father Manning said, are discerning a religious life as a result of this initiative. He also said he plans to continue these efforts at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Greece, where he will become priest administrator this summer.

Father DeSocio said he is making links with campus ministries by planning a dinner with Father Joseph Catanise, chaplain of the Catholic Campus Parish at Rochester Institute of Technology, and four RIT students. In addition, Sister Margaret Brogden, MSHS, liturgy coordinator at Cornell Campus Community in Ithaca, suggested that campus ministries work more closely with vocations directors by planning "vocations weekends."

Brother Verccruysse noted that the Rochester-area Christian Brothers have increased such efforts in recent years by hosting overnight youth retreats in their resi-

dence, located at Bishop Kearney High.

In addition, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester are planning to host a camp-out for three parish youth groups this summer on the SSJ motherhouse lawn in Pittsford.

Yet Sister Marilyn Pray, SSJ, and Sister Deanna Gears, SSJ, vocations coordinators for the Rochester Sisters of St. Joseph, said that candidates for vocations don't necessarily have to be school-aged children. Sister Pray pointed out that her order has hosted three events in the past year for single adult men and women to discern life choices and potential religious vocations.

People attending the March 11 conference said they hoped that further symposiums on vocations will be held in the diocese. Father DeSocio added that he is looking to form a diocesan vocations team.

In addition, Bill Olsen, diocesan director of human resources, said he plans to ask Bishop Matthew H. Clark — who attended a portion of the March 11 conference — to earmark more funding and staffing for vocations.



Double feast day

Retired Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey presided over the St. Patrick's Day Mass at St. Mary's Church, Rochester, March 14. The day was also the 30th anniversary of his consecration as bishop.

Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Obituaries

Brother Jude Heeks, Divine Word missionary; 91

Brother Jude Heeks, SVD, a Rochester native, died Feb. 14, 1998, at Divine Word Residence in Techny, Ill., following a long illness. He was 91.

The youngest of 12 children, Brother Heeks attended St. Michael's School and

East High School, both in Rochester. He worked for the Eastman Kodak Company as a stock clerk before entering the Society of the Divine Word in 1936. He professed vows in 1938.

Following his profession, Brother Heeks worked in the financial department at his order's administration office in Techny until 1951. During his time in Techny, he also played the organ and served as his community's barber.

Fluent in German, he worked as a chaplain's aide in the Skokie, Camp Pine and Fort Sheridan prison camps for German soldiers during and after World War

II. In 1951, Brother Heeks was transferred to Divine Word Seminary, East Troy, Wis. He worked as an office clerk, organist, sacristan, barber, ham radio operator and gardener at the seminary. Due to failing health, he retired to his order's residence in Techny in 1993.

Brother Heeks is survived by his sister, Emma Gosson, who lives at St. Anne's Home in Rochester.

His funeral Mass was celebrated Feb. 18 at Techny's Chapel of the Holy Spirit. Interment took place at St. Mary's Cemetery in Techny.

Sr. Mary Erdle, RSM; was Rochester native

Sister Mary Gonzaga Erdle, RSM, a native of Rochester, died Feb. 16, 1998, at Our Lady of Mercy Life Center in Guilderland near Albany. She was 101.

Sister Erdle graduated from Rochester's Nazareth Academy in 1913. A longtime high-school teacher, she also taught at Maria College in Albany and the former Mater Christi Seminary. At the age of 65, she earned a doctorate degree in English literature from St. John's University.

Sister Erdle was predeceased by her twin brother, John, and another brother, Lewis. She is survived by several nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews.



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Couples to be honored

The *Catholic Courier* is seeking couples celebrating "Milestone" anniversaries in 1998.

Couples who marked or will be marking 25, 50, 60, 65, 70 or 75 years of marriage in 1998 will be listed in a special Milestones supplement April 23.

The *Courier* would also like to highlight one or more of the longest married couples in the diocese. In 1997 it featured Howard and Helen Finley of Rochester, who married 68 years.

Couples who will be celebrating a milestone anniversary in 1998 and would like to be included in the supplement to be one of the longest married couples in the diocese, please send the following information:

- Full name of husband and wife
- Date of wedding
- Church and city where married
- Home phone number
- Home address

Deadline for inclusion in the list of couples is April 15, 1998.


Send all information to: Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24572, Rochester, NY 14624.

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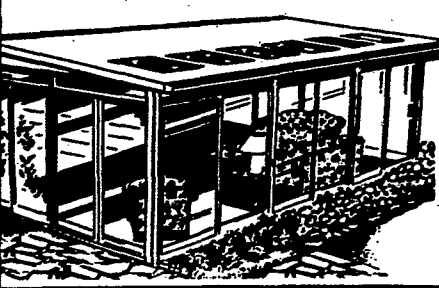


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