

Sister promotes  
care for earth  
- Page 3



Honoring priests,  
religious couples  
- After Page 6



Parish 'revives'  
members' faith  
- Page 12



# Catholic Courier

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK ■ VOL. 109 NO. 31 ■ THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1998 ■ 75¢ ■ 24 PAGES



Jim Davis, center, and Mark Brewer, both Becket Hall residents, share a light moment with Sara Lydon, an RCIA candidate, at St. Boniface Church, Rochester, April 8. Davis and Brewer helped to prepare the candidates.

## Nurturing future 'milestones'

Anne VanDurme and her husband visited their son, Patrick, a Rochester seminarian at the North American College at the University of Louvain, Belgium, in the fall of 1996.

"We spent about a week living with (fellow Rochester seminarian) Joe Marcuse and Patrick, and we talked to seminarians from all over the country," recalled VanDurme, a parishioner at St. Mary's Church, Dansville. "Some of them had the feeling that nobody knew what they were doing."

So VanDurme developed the idea of recruiting people in the diocese to help provide support for seminarians. She wrote a letter to the editor that was published in the Jan. 23, 1997, edition of the *Catholic Courier*.

The seminarians, she wrote, "are in need of prayers during Mass, cards and letters from home, cookies, their parish newsletter and anything else that will let them know that they are not out of mind just because they are out of sight."

Some 25 people wrote to her. She supplied them with names and addresses of seminarians. Some of the people began to contact seminarians themselves. Some got their groups, religious education classes and students to write as well.

VanDurme has heard positive feedback from seminarians, and would like to see even more people and parishes involved.

"I think it's an important ministry," VanDurme said. "I think it's important that they know people are interested in them."

### Vocations efforts

Initiatives like VanDurme's are just what Father John DeSocio would like to see increase, to help ensure more future "milestone" anniversaries of priests and religious to celebrate in the Diocese of Rochester.

The assistant to the bishop for vocations, Father DeSocio noted that studies indicate the way to increase vocations — to the priesthood, religious life, the diaconate and lay ministry — is through inviting people to think about how they can serve the church, and to provide ongoing encouragement and support.

"Each of us is responsible not to tell a person they should be this or that, but have they ever thought of being a priest, religious, deacon or brother? Have they ever thought of being a lay minister?" he observed.

Those efforts must begin in families, parishes and schools, he said. But, he added, "They need a sense of direction in the things that they can do."

To help offer direction, Father DeSocio joined with vocations officials from the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy, to hold a vocations workshop March 11 at St. Bernard's Institute. The focus was on ways parishes and schools can encourage vocations.

In addition, he and the congregations' vocations officials are forming a Diocesan Vocations Awareness Commission. The commission, which he said should be in operation by June, will also include youth ministers, campus ministers and representatives of other groups.

Father DeSocio reported that the diocese also hopes to hire a full-time vocations awareness person by August. That person's job will be "to implement the commission's goals of awareness and promotion, and also to bring to parishes and schools things that work across the nation."

Those efforts could include retreats; regular prayers in the parishes for vocations and for individuals preparing for ministry; and a call for individuals to identify potential candidates, who would then be invited to vocations programs.

In addition, Father DeSocio has issued to parishes and schools a packet for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, Sunday, May 3. It includes prayers, liturgy suggestions and bulletin announcements.

In pointing to potential directions for overall vocations efforts in the diocese, he cited the Georgetown University-based Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate's 1997 study, "Priestly and Religious Vocations: Survey of Youth and Parents."

According to that report's executive summary, "the best way to effectively spread the seed of vocations is by personal example and in-

Continued on page 10

STORY BY LEE STRONG • PHOTOS BY GREG FRANCIS