

## CONTINUED...

## Future

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vitation."

One way parishes can help to encourage vocations, the report indicated, is to involve young people in liturgical roles, and to have active youth ministry programs.

The report also indicated that parental encouragement leads to more "positive attitudes toward religious careers."

The diocese currently has nine men in major seminaries — including Deacons Michael Mayer, Tim Niven and Eric Phillips, who are scheduled for ordination June 6 at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Another nine men are part of the Becket Hall pre-theologate program for men still discerning or completing academic requirements for major seminaries. And 25 men are involved with the various discernment groups that target high school or college students, men who have graduated from college, and men over 30.

In addition, the two women's congregations with Rochester motherhouses have been nurturing potential candidates.

The Rochester regional community of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, for example, has a joint vocations effort with the regional communities in Buffalo, Pittsburgh and Erie, Pa. The interregional program hosted a Palm Sunday weekend retreat in Erie. Of the 13 women who attended, four were from Rochester.

But no Sisters of Mercy in Rochester are scheduled to take vows this year.

Meanwhile, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester plan a June 14 program at the East Avenue motherhouse to explore ways that women can become involved with the congregation.

The congregation currently has three

women in formation, one of whom might take vows this fall.

## Parishes act

Some parishes and individuals besides VanDurme have already begun efforts to encourage and support vocations.

They include St. Ann's Parish, Hornell, which has one man, Mark Brewer, at Becket Hall. The students at St. Ann's School have been writing to him and the other men at Becket Hall.

In addition, noted the pastor, Father John Jaeger, "We pray for him at Mass. We pray for vocations every week at Mass."

To financially support Brewer — who has a degree in accounting — Father Jaeger has hired him to work summers as a business manager at the parish. The priest also plans to take up a second collection to help Brewer with expenses when he begins seminary studies this fall in Belgium.

Brewer, meanwhile, regularly serves at the parish as a lector and eucharistic minister, and writes pieces for the bulletin.

And in March, he took three fellow Becket Hall residents with him to St. Ann's School to thank the students for their letters of support, and to discuss vocations.

"I get a lot of support from my parish. People at the parish, when I'm home, tell me, 'You are in my prayers,'" Brewer said.

Meanwhile, Father Patrick Connor, pastor of the Eastside Catholic Parish, noted that his parish prays the rosary every Thursday for vocations. In addition, a committee sends cards of encouragement to diocesan men in major seminaries.

"I got to thinking about the idea of trying to show support for those who are in formation," he said, "letting them know there are people who are praying for them."

One of the recipients of those cards is

Deacon Mayer, who is completing his studies at Catholic University of America in Washington D.C.

"That's been wonderful," he remarked. "I'm sure that it's been the prayers of so many people that's been instrumental in keeping my focus on what God's calling me to do."

Meanwhile, Jim Davis, a Becket Hall resident from St. Mary's Parish, Corning — and one of the quartet who traveled to St. Ann's School — has been the recipient of support from his home parish.

He specifically cited Father Francis Davis (not related), who lives at St. Mary's and who prays for him every day at Mass.

"Through his prayers, I am discerning," Davis said. "I respect the power of prayer."

Davis said he is unsure yet whether he has a call to be a priest. He entered Becket Hall in January to explore that possibility.

He thinks parishes need to get involved in helping men make the decision to discern a possible vocation in the first place.

"People have to recognize young men in their parish," Davis said. "They have to have the courage to approach them and say, 'Have you ever considered the priesthood?' That's all they have to say."

"In order for a vocation to be explored, it has to be nourished," he added. "In order for it to be nourished, a seed has to be planted. In order for a seed to be planted, an invitation to consider the possibility has to be extended."

Brewer, meanwhile, was encouraged by many people, especially Father Jaeger.

"I started to talk to him about it, talking about some of the things going on inside me," Brewer said. "I had a good job at Mercy Hospital, but I wanted to do more with people and my faith."

He also watched the priest in action.

"After the example that he set, I said this

is what I want to do," he recalled.

Deacon Mayer noted a number of people had supported him over the years.

"I don't know where it came from," he said. "It just kept nagging at me."

He takes a broad view of vocations.

"I think a lot of people don't realize God's calling each one of us to a particular calling that's suited to each of us," he said. "I don't think a lot of married people look at (marriage) as a vocation. I don't think we celebrate our day-to-day vocations."

## Possible options

One charge of the diocesan vocations commission will be to develop a three-year plan, Father DeSocio reported.

If the group is looking for ideas, nearby dioceses can supply some.

Sister Geri Rosinski, RSM, the interregional vocations director for the Rochester, Buffalo, Erie, Pa., and Pittsburgh communities of the Sisters of Mercy, noted that such bodies as the vocations commission already exist in the latter three dioceses.

Sister Rosinski reported, for example, that the Pittsburgh group has been sending panels of men and women religious into schools to discuss vocations. The group also created a booklet containing information about each congregation represented in the diocese, distributing it to individuals who might give information to young men and women considering vocations.

Sister Marilyn Pray, SSJ, co-director of the Sisters of St. Joseph vocations office, noted that her congregation will continue its own vocations efforts, but that she welcomes the diocesan commission.

She hopes the commission, of which she will be a member, will help to create a "broader base of understanding and awareness. We need more efforts and a broader base of support."

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St. Joseph's Church  
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