

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Calling led nun, 25, to monastic life

By Mike Latona  
Staff Writer

Myra Hill had sensed for many years that she had a calling. But looking back, she now realizes that God doesn't lay out all calls to religious life in black and white.

"That was one of the things I was a little frustrated with. I wanted a straight answer," she said. "I was wondering, do I have a vocation? I guess it's a matter of continuing to listen, looking for answers within and without."

The answers she found have led the Spencerport native to become Sister Myra Hill, OSB. Sister Hill, 25, professed her first vows in the Order of St. Benedict on Sept. 29, 1999. She currently resides at the Mother of Mercy and Peace Monastery in Pecos, N.M.

Sister Hill's first contact with the Benedictine community had been in 1996, when she spent the summer there after graduating with a geology degree from Williams College in Williamstown, Mass.

"I had always been involved in church life and was holding that up, saying this is still a big part of me," she recalled.

Sister Hill returned to Massachusetts later in 1996 and worked three jobs for about a year — at her campus Newman Community, at St. Patrick/St. Raphael Parish in Williamstown, and at a bakery.

"Toward the spring I realized I couldn't live in Williamstown forever," she said.

Sister Hill entered Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey in 1997 as a volunteer observer. She became a postulant, or candidate, in April 1998 and entered the novitiate four months later.

Sister Hill's growing interest in the Benedictines, she recalled, was sparked back in 1992. Just after graduating from Spencerport High School, she attended the diocesan Family Camp program with friends from her home parish, St. John the Evangelist in Spencerport. A large part of the camp was modeled on Benedictine spirituality, she said.

"The atmosphere of the people I was with, it was very much a sense of community," she said. "I want to learn more about the Benedictines."

Now Sister Hill is learning first-hand in a Benedictine community thousands of miles from her childhood home. Benedictine spirituality, she explained, places a

large emphasis on "how to live together in community and, first and foremost, see God in that community."

Sister Hill lives in a community of 12 women religious. The nuns work in conjunction with 15 to 17 monks who reside at nearby Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey. "We live in separate communities but work together," she said.

Though the community is not strictly cloistered, Sister Hill said she usually goes into town only out of necessity. The Benedictine nuns perform daily chores at the monastery, make crafts, and help operate the retreat house, bookstore and gift shop. Because Sister Hill is in the novitiate program, much of her time is spent in classes and studying. A crucial ritual for all the nuns, she noted, is their five-times-per-day gatherings for prayer.

Sister Hill said that she will remain a novice for a three-year period, with the option of either professing her final vows or renewing her status for up to two addi-



tional three-year terms. In all likelihood, she said, she will make her final vows in 2003.

"So far, so good. I do feel confident that I'm in the right place at the right time," she said. "(But) it's a challenge and a struggle to continue to listen for God's will — letting go of everything I want to do for myself, and taking up what God wants to do for me and through me."

She said that young women and men who may be considering religious life should take their time.

"The more I listen to people in charge of vocations, they don't want somebody who's fresh out of high school," she said. "They want you to have some kind of idea of who you are. I wanted to give myself time to get an apartment, get a job, pay bills. Otherwise, after college I might have always been wondering. For me a year is enough; for others it may not be enough."

"Listen to what's in your heart," Sister Hill advised. "That's where God speaks."



Mike Mergen/Photo Intern

### Holy mime

The eighth-grade graduating class of Siena Catholic Academy performed "The Passion Mime" April 21 at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Brighton. The play tells the Easter story with the help of a narrator. Above, mimes look through the glass in the crying room before entering the church. Rosemary Regan, who was in the 1993 play, directed the production.

## Bishop to ordain two men to priesthood June 24

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will ordain Deacons Patrick J. Van Durme and William F. "Mickey" McGrath priests of the Diocese of Rochester on Saturday, June 24, at 10:30 a.m. in Sacred Heart Cathedral, Rochester.

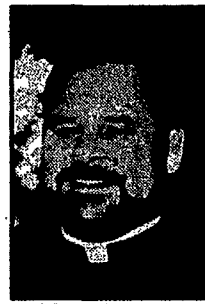
Deacon Van Durme, 35, is a native of Dansville, the son of Anne and Nicholas Van Durme, members of St. Mary's Parish. A U.S. Army veteran, former chef and whitewater rafting guide, Van Durme is currently studying at American College of the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. He plans to return to Belgium after ordination and continue his theological studies until graduation in June 2001.

Deacon McGrath, 36, is a native of Rochester who attended Our Lady of Good Counsel Church before moving to the Palmyra-Macedon area at age 10 where he attended St. Anne's Church. The son of Bill and Mary McGrath, and a graduate of St. John Fisher College, Rochester, Deacon McGrath is finishing studies at North American College in Rome. He has not been informed where he will be assigned in the diocese after ordination.

During their priestly formation, both men have served diocesan parishes; Deacon McGrath at Holy Ghost Parish, Gates,



McGrath



Van Durme

and Deacon Van Durme at Church of the Epiphany, Sodus, and at the Roman Catholic Community of the 19th Ward, composed of Our Lady of Good Counsel, St. Augustine and St. Monica's parishes in Rochester. Deacon Van Durme has also worked pastorally at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester.

Following ordination, Deacon Van Durme will preside at a Mass of thanksgiving on Sunday, June 25, at St. Mary's in Dansville.

Deacon McGrath will preside at a Mass of thanksgiving at St. Michael's in Newark the same day at 1:30 p.m.

Both men expressed great enthusiasm for their upcoming ordination, but, interestingly, both pointed out that they had at one time left the priestly formation process for a while to figure out if they really wanted to be ordained.

"I left because I wanted adventure," Van Durme said. "I returned because I realized that the priesthood could be the wildest adventure in the world."

During his time away from priestly formation, Deacon McGrath said working as a religious education director at an Alabama parish made him realize he wanted to be able to minister to people through

the sacraments.

"One thing I am looking forward to in priestly service is to bring people to understand and experience, especially through preaching in the sacrament of reconciliation, of the infinite and merciful love of Jesus that I have experienced in my life."

—Rob Cullivan

### Appointments

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following priest appointments, effective June 27:

Father Al Delmonte, to pastor, Holy Ghost Parish, Gates, from sacramental minister at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Rochester. He succeeds Father Alexander Bradshaw, who was named pastor of Our Mother of Sorrows, Greece.

Father Walter Wainwright, to pastor, St. Anthony/St. Patrick Cluster in Elmira, from pastor of St. Mary's Parish, Canandaigua. He succeeds Father Joseph McCaffrey.

### Priesthood candidate installed as a reader

Talking several years ago with a disabled client at the Rochester human-services agency where he worked, William Coffas said how much he enjoyed helping people.

The client replied, "You can help people by painting houses, but on what level do you want to help people?" Coffas recalled.

Realizing that he wanted to help people on a spiritual level, Coffas is now studying for the priesthood at Theological College, Washington, D.C. "I felt called all along," he said, but didn't realize exactly where.

In ceremonies at the college Feb. 7, he was installed to the ministry of reader.

"It's kind of a little-known fact that before you are ordained there are several little milestones you cross," Coffas explained. Next year he will be installed as an acolyte. After that he will receive his candidacy, and later be ordained a transitional deacon, all leading up to his ordination as a priest for the Diocese of Rochester.

Coffas, 29, son of Caroline Coffas and the late William P. Coffas, is from St. Ambrose Parish, Rochester.

He is the first of seven diocesan seminarians to be installed as an acolyte. Six others are in training: Joe Marcoux of St. James Parish, Rochester; Jim Fennessy of St. Alphonsus Parish, Auburn; Mark Brewer of St. Ann's Parish, Hornell; John Londe of St. John of Rochester Parish; Ammanuel Malik Wolde of Eritrea, Africa; and Kenneth Shelton of St. Pius X Parish, Van Etten.

The diocese has about 30 men in various stages of discernment, according to Father John DeSocio, assistant to the bishop for vocations and priestly formation.

—Kathleen Schwarz

**MONROE**  
SINCE 1976  
**TRANSMISSIONS**

#### "Don't Get Stuck"

- ALL FOREIGN & DOMESTIC
- MOST EXTENDED WARRANTIES
- ASK ABOUT FREE TOWING
- CLUTCHES & STANDARD TRANSMISSIONS

**2 CONVENIENT LOCATIONS**  
1583 BRIGHTON HENRIETTA TL RD. • 424-1710  
1672 RIDGE RD. EAST IRONDEQUOIT • 342-6180

Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580) Vol. 111 No. 29, April 27, 2000  
Published weekly except the last Thursday in December.  
Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.