

DIOCESAN NEWS

Diocese welcomes two new priests to its fold

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The memories of ordination "still seem like yesterday" for Father Steve Lape, priest intern at Church of the Good Shepherd in Henrietta.

Father Lape, ordained a year ago, was on hand for the June 24 ordinations of Father William "Mickey" McGrath and Father Patrick Van Durme at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

"I was beaming; it was an emotional rush," Father Lape said. "I almost burst out into tears when I saw (Fathers McGrath and Van Durme) prostrating."

And Father Steve Kraus, pastor of Holy Family Catholic Community in Steuben and Livingston counties, added that "even after 25 years, it brings back memories."

Father Van Durme struggled to put the immensity of the event into perspective.

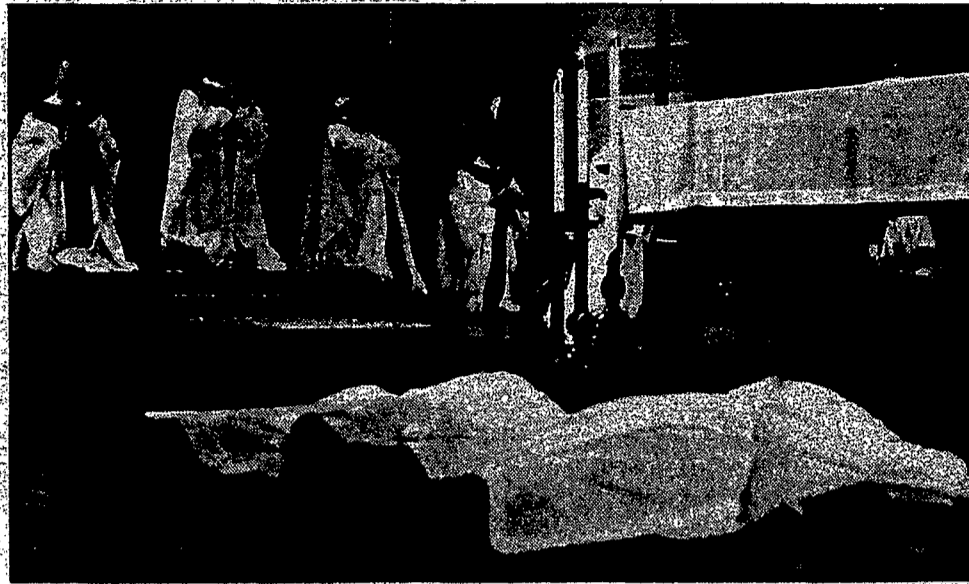
"I am a priest forever. That's pretty powerful and pretty humbling. I'm a part of something that's a lot bigger than we are," Father Van Durme said. He now returns to Belgium for one more year — to complete studies at the American College, Catholic University of Louvain — before beginning priestly duty in the Rochester Diocese.

Meanwhile, Father McGrath said that the packed cathedral was an affirming example of community support.

"It's a beautiful sign of the communion of saints," said Father McGrath, who has been appointed priest intern at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Greece.

Father Van Durme said he "wasn't nervous at all" on ordination day — a sentiment echoed by Father McGrath, who said he "woke up quite excited. Nervous is what comes in the months and weeks before."

Chances are, Father McGrath was not as excited as his mother, Mary Kay, who said



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

From left, Father Joseph Hart, Bishop Matthew H. Clark, Father Thomas Mull and Father David Windsor, rector at the American College in Belgium, kneel during the litany of the saints as Fathers Mickey McGrath and Patrick Van Durme (foreground) prostrate themselves on the altar at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

she had arisen at 3 a.m. Father McGrath, on the other hand, said he'd been able to sleep until 7 a.m. with no problem.

"That's because you're not a mother," Mary Kay McGrath quipped.

Her emotions carried over into the cathedral, where she had trouble keeping her tears in check while observing her son's ordination from the front pew.

"The bishop asked if I was enjoying it, and I said 'Yes, if I could stop crying,'" she said.

Father Van Durme's father, Nicholas, was another parent who wasn't ashamed to express himself. Toward the end of the Mass, visitors responded to Bishop Clark's request that they call out which dioceses they were from. Wilmington; Washington,

D.C.; Detroit; Seattle; St. Petersburg; Rockville Centre; and Santa Rosa were among those mentioned.

Then one voice piped up, "Dansville, New York!" and the congregation exploded into laughter. Bishop Clark responded by saying "I'm not going to ask you who the bishop of Dansville is."

Father Van Durme later acknowledged his relation with the jester.

"That was my father. Yeah, there you go," Father Van Durme remarked with a big grin.

Father Van Durme, a native of Dansville, explained that many people from that community have supported him on his path to the priesthood. He added that parishioners should all rest assured that Dansville has



Father Gary Tyman lays his hands on Father Mickey McGrath, as other priests come forward to do the same, during the Rite of Ordination.

no plans to start its own diocese.

"There's no heretical schism being formed," he laughed.

The ordination had its solemn moments as well: In acknowledging the dozens of fellow priests who had turned out to support the two new priests, Bishop Clark was overcome with emotion for a few seconds.

The bishop also reminded the congregation that Fathers McGrath and Van Durme are committed, as priests, to a "deeply challenging" call to service. And he pointed out that this responsibility to serve extends to the entire congregation.

"As we pray for Patrick and Mickey this morning, we also pray for ourselves, that we will live out the vocation to which we are called," Bishop Clark said.

Trial enabled church to explain its death penalty teaching

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Jose Julian Santiago's recently concluded murder trial in Rochester created what one diocesan official called "an exquisitely teachable moment" about the Catholic Church's stance against the death penalty.

Santiago was convicted June 8 of first- and second-degree murder for the killing of two boys, one age 2, the other 14, and of first-degree attempted murder for the wounding of three of their family members last year in Rochester. Prosecutors sought the death penalty for Santiago, but the jury opted for a sentence of life imprisonment without parole, announced in Monroe County Court June 23.

The gruesome nature of the Santiago murders — both victims were shot and stabbed — called for the ultimate penalty, according to Monroe County District Attorney Howard R. Relin.

"I think the reason for bringing a capital case is limited to the most heinous of all crimes and a defendant who has shown no compassion and no remorse," Relin said.



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Marjorie Sexton, of Rochester, joins a death penalty protest rally outside the Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial in downtown Rochester on June 16 during the trial of Jose Julian Santiago.

But the Catholic Church in recent years has decried capital punishment, which

Pope John Paul II called "cruel and unnecessary" during his January 1999 visit to St. Louis, Mo.

The trial, said Jann Armantrout, diocesan life issues coordinator, gave the Catholic Church an opportunity to explain its stance against capital punishment. She pointed to a statement released on Good Friday 1999, by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. In part, the statement read, "(o)ur witness to respect life shines most brightly when we demand respect for each and every human life, including the lives of those who fail to show that respect for others."

On June 21, during the penalty phase of the Santiago trial, Bishop Matthew H.

Clark briefly spent time listening to courtroom testimony. Outside the courtroom, he responded to several reporters' questions about whether his presence at the trial constituted a form of jury-tampering in that Catholics on the jury might be influenced to vote against the death penalty.

"If my presence reminds them of our position, I think that's OK," the bishop said.

He added that he was at the trial to show support for the victims' family as well. When asked if his presence could be construed as insensitive to the family of the murdered children, the bishop acknowledged that he was concerned that his action could be taken that way.

"It would be presumptuous of me to say I know how they feel," the bishop said of the victims' family members. "My heart aches for the survivors of these children."

But he added that it was important for him to take a stand on the death penalty in

the community.

Relin noted that he had no problem with the bishop attending the trial, and that clergy regularly show up to show support for various parties at trials.

Throughout Santiago's trial, several death penalty protesters participated in vigils outside the courthouse. Many belonged to the coalition, "Reconciliation Network: Don't Kill In My Name," which has the support of religious and secular groups, including the Diocese of Rochester.

Members of the network pointed out that the death penalty may be applied to innocent people, a notion borne out by several recent studies. For example, a Columbia Law School study found that two-thirds of the capital cases in the United States were marked by serious legal mistakes.

"If there's even a possibility of us killing someone who's innocent, I don't think we should have that kind of punishment," said Elizabeth Baltaro, a vigil participant.

Relin said that prosecutors who seek the death penalty for an individual should have no doubts of that person's guilt. He said that he only pursues a capital case if there is overwhelming evidence of the alleged murderer's guilt. No prosecutor who has doubts about a capital case should seek the death penalty, he said.

"If a prosecutor did that, they should either resign or be prosecuted for incompetence."

Suzanne Schnittman, former life issues coordinator for the Diocese of Rochester, has organized several anti-death-penalty vigils with the Reconciliation Network at Blue Cross Arena across the street from the Monroe County Hall of Justice.

As for the life sentence issued on Friday, Schnittman said she feels that the justice system is finally recognizing humanity in murderers, which she feels is "certainly a sign of hope."

Contains additional reporting by Liza R. Mugnolo.

Jubilee fund aids 34 institutions

The diocese has allocated more than \$2 million in jubilee debt forgiveness to 29 parishes and parish communities, and five schools.

The funds contributed to the Jubilee Debt Forgiveness Fund include more than \$1.1 million by parishes and individuals; \$801,300 debt relief by the diocese; \$186,200 debt relief by the Catholic Schools of Monroe County; and \$17,200 debt relief by the *Catholic Courier*.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark sent letters to recipients the week of June 19, announcing the respective grants.

"Debt forgiveness should have a positive impact on the diocese as a whole," he stat-

ed in the letters. "By responding to those in need, we strengthen our local church. Debt forgiveness should restore order, relieve debt burdens that communities can't easily overcome, and position communities to move forward focused on the future instead of being shackled to the past."

The bishop also noted that while initially the diocese intended to apply debt forgiveness only to very old obligations, "such relief is insufficient for some parishes and schools that need assistance with current bills to achieve a firm fiscal foundation."

Totals for each parish and school were not released. The *Courier* will provide a list of recipients in its July 6 issue.