

on the MOVE



Father Peter Enyan-Boadu, pastor of Brockport's Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, greets Daniel Riordan, left, Patrick Oberst, middle, and Justin Smith, right, after the ordination Mass on June 24 at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester. Daniel, Patrick and Justin, all from St. Andrew's Church in Rochester, were among nearly 40 young men from the Rochester Diocese who attended a vocations awareness retreat that weekend. The overnight retreat gave them all a chance to learn about the priesthood by spending time with other priests.

Outside Rochester's Sacred Heart Cathedral, Fathers Mickey McGrath and Patrick Van Durme were busy doing media interviews and greeting well-wishers. Less than an hour earlier, they had been ordained by Bishop Matthew H. Clark as the newest priests of our diocese.

Meanwhile, Bishop Clark was next door, already working toward the possibility that other young men will follow a similar path as Fathers McGrath and Van Durme.

Bishop Clark met with nearly 40 young men in a two-hour lunch and discussion. The session served as the final part of a vocations awareness retreat — the first of a kind the Diocese of Rochester has sponsored.

The retreat took place June 23-24, beginning Friday night at Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua. The next morning, participants journeyed to Sacred Heart Cathedral, and together witnessed the ordinations of Fathers McGrath and Van Durme. Then they had lunch with the bishop.

According to Patricia Finnerty, diocesan director of vocations awareness, the 38 retreatants ranged from 16 to 35 years old — about half of them under the age of 20. They were joined by several diocesan priests as well as young men from Becket Hall, the diocesan pre-theology program that is based in Rochester.

Finnerty said that the young men were made aware of the retreat through recommendations and invitations from parish priests in all parts of the diocese. The response, she said, was "fabulous, considering this was the first time out of the box."

Michael Copenhagen, 17, said he appreciated being among peers who shared some of his thoughts about their potential futures.

"This created an openness I'd never experienced before," said Michael, 17, from St. Mary's Church in Honeoye.

Phil Ortolani, 17, remarked that the retreat allowed him a more close-up view of the priesthood.

"It made priests more real, less mythological," said Phil, from St. Charles Borromeo Church in Greece.

Added Finnerty: "We wanted them to see the other side of priesthood. Maybe they only see the parish priest on the altar."

The retreat began with candid Friday-night discussions about

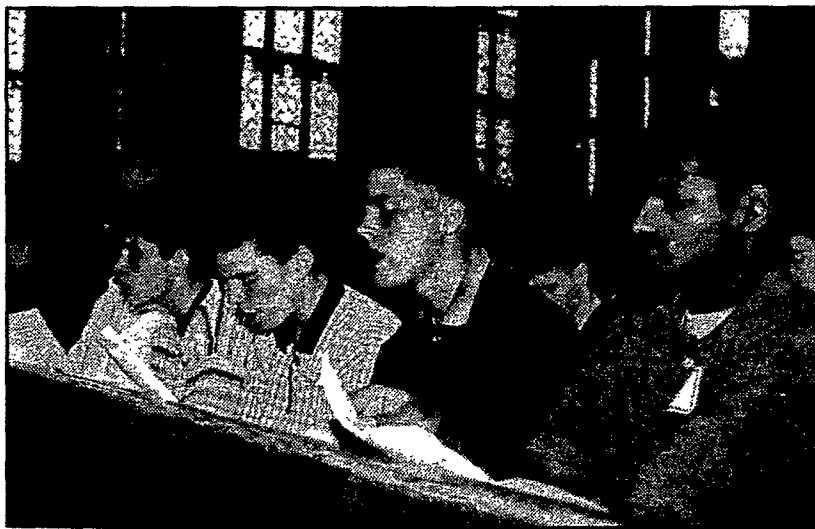
such challenging issues as knowing if God is calling you to the priesthood, and grappling with the vow of celibacy to which priests are bound.

Michael noted that even ordained priests took opposing views on whether celibacy for priests should remain mandatory. And Phil said the debate reminded him that celibacy remains a challenge long after young men decide to enter the seminary.

"It doesn't disappear. It's a real issue," Phil said.

Bishop Clark even touched upon celibacy in his June 24 group discussion, recalling "the love of my life" from his high-school days.

"It took me a long time to forget her, although I've never forgotten her," Bishop Clark said. "The hardest decision I ever made was to go into the seminary."



From right, Nick Joseph, Patrick Oberst and Daniel Riordan practice singing the opening hymn for the June 24 ordination Mass of Fathers Mickey McGrath and Patrick Van Durme.

Yet the bishop also emphasized to participants that he doesn't regret his decision to enter the priesthood.

"It's a deeply rewarding, gratifying, life-giving vocation," Bishop Clark stated.

Vocations, he remarked, are the leading topic when — as is required in his role as bishop — he meets with Pope John Paul II every five years.

"The pope will ask me typically, 'How is the state of vocations?'" Bishop Clark said.

The bishop, along with retreat coordinators, emphasized to the young men that entering the

priesthood requires long, careful thought. In turn, several participants said they'd like to know more about Becket Hall, a program that allows them to continue discerning the priesthood without making a binding commitment.

Nick Joseph, 20, from St. Andrew's Parish in Rochester, remarked that any lifelong obligation deserves a high level of reflection.

"I wonder how many less divorces there would be if couples took the same time to discern," Nick said.

Father Timothy Horan, pastor of St. Andrew's Parish, noted in a parish bulletin in early June that a group from St. Andrew's would be attending the retreat — and that's good news whether these young parishioners decide on a priestly vocation or not.

"If this fire is built — we'll have wonderful priests in the fu-