

MOVE on the

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An enlightening look at the priesthood

Though they aren't certain about becoming priests, Dan DeBoover and Brian Rowe do feel that the possibility of a priestly vocation merits further exploration.

They covered considerable ground by taking part in the second-annual "24 Hours With the Lord" retreat June 29-30. The diocesan-sponsored event gave Dan, Brian and 22 other teens and young-adult men an up-close view of the priesthood.

They all gathered at Canandaigua's Notre Dame Retreat House, where they stayed overnight. The evening was filled with small-group discussions and presentations by a staff of priests. The next morning, the group traveled to Rochester and attended Father Joseph Marcoux's ordination to the priesthood at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Finally, the young men gathered in Sacred Heart's rectory to share lunch and a question-and-answer session with Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

Dan said he was enlightened by the retreat, remarking that he learned quite a bit about the daily life of a priest. He found, for instance, that priests get opportunities for leisure time.

"A lot of (participants) were scared of the life they would lead, that they couldn't go out and have fun. But you can," Dan said.

Yet there are stresses related to the vocation as well, Brian discovered. "It's not just like they say Mass and go home at the end of the day," he said. "They've got to keep everything running (at a parish)."

Dan, 15, and Brian, 16, are youth-group members at Finger Lakes parishes St. Theresa's Church, Stanley and St. Mary's, Rushville. Although they were among the retreat's younger participants, they said they felt a common bond as they discussed the priesthood with others.

"We could sit at the same table and not care about age," Dan said.

"It wasn't just you thinking about it. Other people were going through it too," Brian said. "It's good to know you're not alone."

Numerous diocesan priests, led by co-facilitators Father Peter Deckman and Father Brian Cool, were on hand throughout the retreat. Also present were members of Becket Hall, the diocesan pre-theology program. Dan said he enjoyed the way these people related their own discernment processes.

"They did it to show they were in the same boat we are," Dan said.

The night before his ordination, Father Marcoux even journeyed to Canandaigua



Brian Rowe, 16, prays after Communion at Sacred Heart Cathedral during the June 30 ordination of Father Joseph Marcoux. Brian was one of 24 young men who attended the ordination as part of the "24 Hours with the Lord" retreat.

to spend time with retreatants. The newly ordained priest said he made a special effort to ensure that young people felt included during his ordination weekend. "It's the one thing I was absolutely adamant about," Father Marcoux remarked July 1.

Dan and Brian said that Father Marcoux's ordination was the first they had ever attended. "That was a great experience, just beautiful. There were so

many priests there," Dan said.

They also enjoyed the ensuing discussion session with Bishop Clark. "It was really cool. You learn a lot about how he thinks, and why he became a priest in the first place. We learned he was a really nice guy," Brian said. "Most bishops, you think, wouldn't make time for you. Bishop Clark is very youth-oriented."

Dan recalled Bishop Clark's response when asked if he had regretted becoming a priest instead of getting married. "He said it was like a marriage to God," Dan said.

The retreat followed the same format as the first "24 Hours With the Lord," which was held in June 2000. Father John DeSocio, assistant to the bishop for vocations and priestly formation, said the inaugural retreat has spurred an increase in his correspondence with young men in the diocese: "There's a higher number asking more questions about the priesthood," Father DeSocio said.

Whether or not they end up becoming priests, Father DeSocio is glad that retreatants are taking the time to give the priesthood serious consideration.

"We had guys who were really sincere about finding what God is saying in their lives," Father DeSocio said.

Dan said he doesn't know what God is telling him at this time, but he's leaving the door open.

"I'm not planning on being a priest now, but you never know. I know I'll get a calling if I'm meant for the priesthood. So I'll wait it out," Dan said.



Retreat participant Daniel DeBoover, 16, receives Communion from Bishop Matthew H. Clark at the cathedral June 30.