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# 24 HOURS WITH THE LORD

STORY BY MIKE LATONA

PHOTOS BY STACEY STAUBUS



Father Peter Deckman (right), pastor of Rochester's St. Michael/Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, eats lunch June 22 with participants in the 24 Hours With the Lord program.

At ordination liturgies, the front rows of pews in Sacred Heart Cathedral are reserved for diocesan priests. Yet by the time all the clergy attending Father James Fennessy's June 22 ordination had gotten situated, at least two empty rows remained.

Quickly, a sizable group of young men came forward and filled in the gap. Might they someday occupy these seats as priests themselves?

That's the hope of the 24 Hours With the Lord program.

For the third consecutive year, program participants met overnight for discussion and reflection about the priesthood at Notre Dame Retreat House. The group then journeyed together to Rochester the next morning to attend the ordination. This year's event was facilitated by Father Tim Niven, parochial vicar at Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community in the Finger Lakes, and Father Michael Mayer, pastor of St. Andrew's/St. Philip Neri, Rochester. Other diocesan priests, as well, served as assistants.

Alex DeLucenay, 17, and his pal Peter Lootens, 17, were among several high-school students who attended 24 Hours With the Lord. Parishioners of Holy Cross in Charlotte, both recently completed their junior years at Aquinas Institute and said they found the experience worthwhile.

"I wasn't really sure what to expect. People were really open. It wasn't like, if you said something, you were afraid," Alex commented. "Just knowing there were so many other kids there, I'm not the only one talking about this."

Peter added he learned about "what different ways you could be



Quinn Carnahan of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Greece watches the June 22 ordination ceremony at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

called, seeing what God's will is, and how he reveals his will to us."

Alex also noted that the ordination liturgy — the first one he's ever attended — was equally impressive. "It was cool how they sang everything. You knew this was really important. You tell it was a big step in (Father Fennessy's) life, kind of like a marriage," he said.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark gave public recognition to the 24 Hours With the Lord contingent near the end of Mass. The bishop then joined the group in the Sacred Heart rectory for lunch, followed by a question-and-answer session on such topics as:

- His prayer life: Bishop Clark said he enjoys traveling around the diocese, using the car rides as an opportunity for reflection — "a retreat house on wheels," he said.

- His health: Due to a cardiac disease discovered four years ago, the bishop said he's no longer an avid jogger, but he still exercises regularly and describes his medical condition as "well in control."

- His schedule: One of his key rituals, he said, is to meet "for at least two hours over lunch" each Monday with his vicars general, Fathers Joseph Hart and John Mulligan, to discuss the events of the week.

- His stance on women's ordination: Bishop Clark said he welcomes discussion of the subject, but emphasized that at this time in the Catholic Church, to ordain

women "is not a possibility for me or for any other bishop."

- The workload of a priest: He acknowledged the strong likelihood that priests being ordained in the future will be assigned to at least two parishes, saying it's already happening in the Rochester Diocese.

Bishop Clark concluded the session by stating that despite the challenges involved, "If you're looking for an intriguing, satisfying, life-giving way of life, you'll find it in the priesthood."

Altogether 19 young men — 11 of them high-school age and the rest young adults — attended this year's 24 Hours With the Lord. According to Patricia Finnerty, diocesan director of vocations awareness, the program has averaged more than 25 participants since its inception and has also gained repeat attendees. A few of these have gone on to enter Becket Hall, the diocesan pre-theology program.

"Right now we're starting to see the results," Finnerty said.

The overnight gathering is one of several vocations-awareness initiatives developed by Finnerty and Father John DeSocio, diocesan assistant to the bishop for vocations and priestly formation. Father DeSocio is leaving this summer to become vice-rector of the American College of the Immaculate Conception at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. His current duties will be picked up by two other diocesan priests, Fathers William Donnelly and James Schwartz.

Both Alex and Peter were invited to 24 Hours With the Lord by the pastor of Holy Cross Parish, Father Thomas Wheeland. Whereas Finnerty said Father Wheeland has been a big advocate of vocations awareness, she hopes that lay people also will encourage young men and women in their parishes to pursue religious vocations.

Although the numbers for 24 Hours With the Lord were down slightly this year, Finnerty said she doesn't see a connection to recent national and local news regarding sexual abuse by priests.

"People are going to continue to be called (to the priesthood)," she said.

## Elmira ND's Huddle sets national running record



Molly Huddle, a 2002 graduate of Elmira Notre Dame High School, has outdone herself. Not only did she recently win a national running championship, she set a new record in doing so.

Huddle's historic performance came at the Adidas Outdoor Track and Field Championships on June 14 in Raleigh, N.C. She posted a time of 10 minutes, 1.08 seconds in the two-mile run — nearly 30 seconds ahead of the second-place finisher. Her time eclipsed the previous national girls' high-school mark of 10:03.2 that had stood for 23 years.

One day later, Huddle added a second-place showing in the one-mile run, finishing in 4:47.24. The winner, Megan Kaiterbach of Colorado, finished in 4:43.54.

A week prior to the nationals, Huddle set a new state record in the 3,000-meter run with a time of 9:21.37 at the state championship meet. She won the 1,500 as well, claiming her second consecutive state title in both races. She also captured the state cross-country crown last fall, and will attend the University of Notre Dame this coming school year on a running scholarship.

— Mike Latona