

# Pastor's vocation prompted by God

I don't know how it came to be, but I've been blessed with the gift of faith. I've always just sort of known that God was there. My parents were a big part of bringing me the faith; several dear friends and mentors strengthened it by sharing theirs. So any story about my vocation to the priesthood has to begin there — I believe in God, a God who loves me and watches over me. I believe God sort of put this inside me from the beginning.

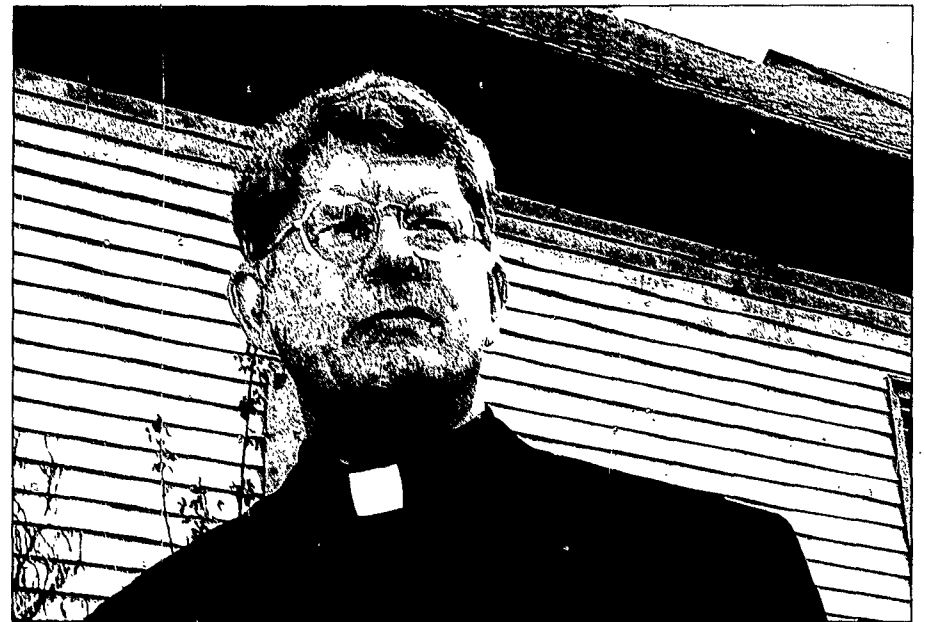
Some might think that this would make the choice of priesthood easy and clear from the beginning. That's not how it happened. You see, God wasn't the only one in my life. There were many people and things that called out to me. There was my girlfriend Maureen, Woodstock (yes, I'm a child of the '60s!) Vietnam, college, protesting, beer — let's just say God had some trouble getting my attention.

It was through a series of events and experiences that I came to feel that my path would be somewhat "different" from the paths of my friends. There are too many experi-

ences to mention here, but one of the most significant was a yearlong battle I had with a fixation about death. Some would call it depression. I don't think it was. I just couldn't get over the sudden realization (I was 21 at the time) that I was going to die, that, in the end, we're all going to die. In fact, I still can't get over that. And it forced me to ask the question, "What should I do while I'm here?"

Up until this time, I'd thought of God as sort of a glorified high-school guidance counselor. "Let's see, Tim, you could go into teaching or sales (God gave me a big mouth). How about journalism? Maybe a counselor or adviser?" "That's it!" I thought. My life would be about giving people my opinions about things. What a great job.

Of course, no one was looking to hire an "opinion giver." In short, I ended up in a lumber yard loading trucks. It was then I decided to ask God what he thought I should do with my life. I said, "Lord, if you are really there and if you have a plan for my life, you're going to have to start showing me. And please, Lord, help



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

Father Timothy Horan is pastor of Irondequoit's St. Margaret Mary Church and diocesan director of priestly vocation awareness.



me to hear you."

God answered that prayer. Basically, God amazed me. God sent me "moments" that were really beautiful or poignant or hugely funny. These moments sometimes made me cry because it was so clear that it wasn't me who was doing them. There was a truth out there that was revealing itself to me. This truth was staggeringly beautiful. I realized this truth was a person, and this person was talking to me! God was letting me fall in love with him. I would talk to God like my dearest friend.

But this is not the stuff of which just priests are made. God wants everybody to fall in love with him. The ideas of priesthood (begun but ignored in grade school) started in a brand-new way when God started sending people to get in my face.

"Tim, you'd make a good priest. Did you ever think about it?" or "When are you going to stop fooling around and think about going to the seminary?" or (most annoyingly) "Tim, it's time to grow up. This is not a game, this is your life. Do something. Make a difference."

I'd hear these good and honest people, my friends, say these things, and I had the feeling they were saying this stuff because God was trying to speak to me. (After all, I did ask the Lord to make it something I could hear!)

Well, guess what? It was! It was the Lord! That was 30 years ago, and this May I'm celebrating 25 years of priestly service to the Diocese of Rochester. Of all the happy, fulfilled lives I've had the privilege of meeting and serving in these years (six parishes), I have no doubt that this priestly life is the one that was meant for me by God. This brings me great joy.

So to all of you young people — go find God! Where? Wherever your heart gets stirred by beauty. Wherever you get pulled-out of yourself to meet something bigger and better than you. Whenever your heart swells up and you start to cry because you can't stand how wonderful it all is. Did I say "go find God"? Actually, God is looking for you, just watch for the Lord's gentle promptings.

And should you be a guy and it just so happens that you're in church one day and you see a priest doing his thing and you say to yourself, "I could do better than that," give me a call at 585/461-2890. We need you.

Father Timothy Horan, who celebrates his 25th anniversary of ordination this year, is pastor of St. Margaret Mary Church in Irondequoit as well as diocesan director of priestly vocation awareness.

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