

File photo by Brandon A. Evans



About 25,000 Catholics gathered at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on May 3, 2009, to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. About 2,500 teenagers and 300 adults were confirmed during the jubilee Mass. Also honored at the celebration were children who had recently received their first Communion, couples who had been married 50 years or longer, and men and women religious who were celebrating significant anniversaries of entrance into religious life or profession of vows. This year's Religious Vocations Supplement includes stories that afford us an opportunity to remember with gratitude the priests, deacons, and religious brothers and sisters who have been a part of our own lives of faith, writes Father Eric Johnson, director of the archdiocesan Office of Priestly and Religious Vocations.



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Deacon seeks to glorify God through work and family life, page 12.

'Come and See'

By Fr. Eric Johnson

Director of the archdiocesan Office of Priestly and Religious Vocations

After being invited to spend the day with Jesus, the Gospel of John tells us that Andrew immediately ran to his brother, Simon, and announced: "We have found the Messiah" (Jn 1:41). Andrew then brought his brother to Jesus, who looked upon him and named him Peter (Jn 1:37-42).

Similarly, Philip, who had just encountered Jesus in Galilee, found Nathaniel and told him: "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth" (Jn 1:45). When Nathaniel expressed doubt, Philip simply responded, "Come and see" (Jn 1:46). He did, and when he saw he answered: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel" (Jn 1:49).

Both of these encounters mark the beginnings of discipleship. In following Jesus, Peter and Nathaniel will witness his life and ministry, and come to find life through their faith in him. In time, they will be sent, discovering their

own call to sacrificial love and service

What is interesting about these initial encounters, however, is that while they are deeply personal and unique, they are initiated by the action of another disciple. It is Andrew who first brings Peter to Jesus, and it is Philip who invites Nathaniel to "come and see." Through these disciples—through their witness, joy and invitation—Peter and Nathaniel first encounter the person of Christ and are changed.

Our own encounter with Christ is much the same. So much of our experience of faith has been brought to us through the gift of others. Our lives have been filled with people of faith, men and women of the Church, who first spoke to us of Christ, who nurtured our gifts and whose faithful witness awakened within us a deeper longing for God. In their invitation, the Church fulfills her mission to draw others to Christ.

Of course, among those who have brought us this gift are our priests, deacons, and religious brothers and sisters. Through their lives and ministry, in many and varied ways, they remind us of the presence of God and call us to seek his face. In those most significant moments and in the simple routines of our daily lives, their unique presence among us turns us to look toward the person of Christ, who calls us, saves us and heals us.

In pointing to Christ, priests, deacons, and religious brothers and sisters invite us to deeper vocational discernment as well. In their own response to God's call, they witness to the importance of listening. In joyfully and gratefully living a life of sacrificial love, service and ministry, they invite us to "come and see" how we might be called. Their lives can attract us, and can help us to consider our own vocation to love and service.

They, after all, were themselves once invited. They too heard the voice of others that encouraged them to "come and see." Behind the great variety among priests, deacons and religious is the common witness to the person of Christ and the commitment to serve others by pointing to him.

This supplement contains some of their stories. Each is unique and, together, they represent a range of experiences, responses and ministries. They are stories of vocation and of faith, and of generosity and joy. They are stories that afford us an opportunity to remember with gratitude the priests, deacons, and religious brothers and sisters who have been a part of our own lives of faith.

Perhaps in these stories we might also see the beginnings of our own discipleship. Perhaps they might encourage us to consider how God might be calling us to love and service, and how we might encourage others to "come and see." †

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Fr. Eric Johnson

Priest yearns to learn from parishioners and God's creation

By Sean Gallagher

EDINBURGH and FRANKLIN— Although he is 49 and has been out of school for 20 years, Father Thomas Schliessmann is still a student at heart.

He always has something to learn from the members of the two parishes where he serves as pastor—Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburg and St. Rose of Lima Parish in Franklin.

“It’s wonderful to spend time with people who are living out their faith and trying to grow in their relationship with God,” he said.

Ordained in 1989, Father Schliessmann also learns about the glory of God while camping in Indiana and at national parks out west like Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon and Yosemite.

“It’s something glorious,” he said. “You just want to applaud God.”

Through it all, he has learned that he enjoys being a priest. This has led him to share that love of the priesthood with seminarians.

“I’m happy, and I’d like people to share my happiness,” Father Schliessmann said. “I want to share our Catholic faith. And I want people who are excited about Jesus to consider that he might also be calling them to serve in the particular sacramental identity of a priest.”

A vocation nurtured in his youth

Father Schliessmann learned at an early age to love the Church and the priesthood.

Born in South Dakota, his family moved to Indianapolis and became members of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish when he was 11.

“I grew up in a family where being Catholic was simply part of family life,” he said.

Involvement in Scouting as a youth also reinforced his faith.

“It just fed into that whole [perspective] that I was brought up with that God is simply a part of life, faith is a part of life,” Father Schliessmann. “It isn’t an add on. It’s in every thread of existence.”

Because of this, Father Schliessmann said considering the priesthood was a normal part of growing up.

“For me, it was an interest,” he said. “I



Father Thomas Schliessmann prays the eucharistic prayer during a Nov. 18 Mass at St. Rose of Lima Church in Franklin, where he serves as the pastor. He also is the pastor of Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburg.

was a server. I tried to pray. It seemed like just being an astronaut or being a ranger. It stuck with me.”

That led him to attend the Latin School of Indianapolis, the former archdiocesan high school seminary, for three years until it closed in 1978.

After graduating from Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis in 1979, he studied aeronautical engineering for five years at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. During that time, he completed an internship at an Air Force base in Tennessee, where he tested jet engines.

Still, the idea of the priesthood never left him. And so after graduating from Purdue in 1984, he became a seminarian again and enrolled at Saint Meinrad

School of Theology, where he “felt at home.”

The glory of God's creation

Father Schliessmann learned early on from his parents to love the outdoors. As a priest, he has gained a new perspective on life from camping.

“There’s something about the complexity of life and wanting to hang on to things,” he said. “And so [it’s good] to go and say, ‘What do I need just to be out for a day or two?’ and to come back and say, ‘You know? I don’t need that much.’”

“There’s a spirituality of getting back to basics. What’s most important? And not just in terms of survival, but in how I use this gift of time?”

This simple approach to life and the

ability to pare down one’s needs helps him create a good atmosphere for the participants in the Summer Field Study program at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis that he has been a part of for several years.

Each summer, Roncalli president Joseph Hollowell and other staff members guide a group of students for two weeks of hiking and camping at national parks in the western part of the country.

“His naturally positive attitude goes a long way to everyone having a positive experience,” Hollowell said, “regardless of whether you’re in the middle of a rain storm or if you’re lost in the woods overnight or if you’re on the 10th mile of a hike and you have blisters.”

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‘Come and See’ truly stimulates belief at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods

By Dave Cox

Special to The Criterion

ST. MARY-OF-THE-WOODS— Something happens to people who come through the main gate at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, home of the Sisters of Providence and the shrine of St. Theodora Guérin.

There is nothing special about the physical appearance of the black iron gate or the granite marquees identifying the congregation and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

But as soon as visitors move along The Avenue, they are welcomed by waving pin oak, black walnut, sugar maple, Eastern red cedar, pear, red buckeye, white oak and red oak trees along the main drive, and close to 70 other species of trees around the grounds.

Come and see!

Each season has its own beauty. Pastel colors on budding stems and tree branches brighten springtime. Summer offers a pallet of greens and plenty of shade, often accompanied by a soothing breeze. Autumn brings spectacular colors as the more than 70 species of trees display their best colors in anticipation of the coming winter months and holiday season. And during the winter, a brushing of snow across barren limbs accented by occasional red berries and frosted arms on the tall evergreens

create natural snapshots and panoramic views that could hardly be captured on any artist’s canvas.

Come and see!

But it is more than the nearly 1,300 acres of natural beauty. Visitors who arrive at the front gate often feel a sense of peace and spiritual motivation. There is a force at work: God’s force, St. Theodora’s force, the Sisters of Providence force.

Come and see!

“As soon as I went through those gates, I was mesmerized. I was in awe. I couldn’t have been met with more open arms or open hearts,” said Providence Sister Jan Craven as she remembered her first visit to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. “I was enamored with the grounds, the place, its beauty.”

Come and see what Sister Jan saw!

First impressions being what they are, postulant Hanna Corbin, who joined the Sisters of Providence in September, had a similar experience when she arrived here.

“It’s not only beautiful with its natural surroundings, it does have a spirit to it. It draws you inward, it draws you outward. The Spirit invites you to be who you are and to love,” she said. “It says to me the spirit of St. Mother Theodore is still here. And all of the other sisters who have followed her have added to the natural beauty God has put here. The grounds are very inviting, very

welcoming and very peaceful.”

Come and see what she has experienced!

Current sisters and future sisters aren’t the only ones who experience something special when they come to “The Woods.” The specialness is felt by various companions to the congregation: Providence Volunteer Ministers, Providence Associates, those who are part of Providence Volunteer Services, those in discernment, those on pilgrimages and tours, and those who just want some quiet time to themselves to feel the ambiance. Visitors from all 50 states and dozens of foreign nations have found that to be true.

Come and see what they have found!

Providence Sister Jenny Howard, vocation director, said the beauty of the grounds is genuine.

“I love to walk through the woods and feel the persuasive presence of St. Mother Theodore. You really can get into a right relationship with

See WOODS, page 14



Postulant Hannah Corbin knocks on the door at Providence Hall to become a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Knocking on the door is a tradition for women who join the congregation. Inside, they are welcomed by the Sisters of Providence leadership team and other sisters.

‘Caught up in God’

Franciscan sister feels at home as part of Oldenburg community

By John Shaughnessy

She believes she is home now, right where God wants her to be—sharing life with her Franciscan sisters, working with teenagers and living close to the animals that she loves.

As she travels the twisting, hilly roads in southeastern Indiana that lead to Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception, Franciscan Sister Clare Teixeira marvels at the remarkable life journey that has brought her to this part of the world.

For 14 years, she was married to the man she loved deeply—“a wonderful life” in Florida that ended in heartbreak, with her wanting to die.

She has also lived in New Mexico, doing mission work for a Catholic parish that ministered to the Navajo Indians.

And now at 56, she is in Oldenburg, living the life she often dreamed of as a child—“caught up in God,” wanting to be a religious sister who makes a difference in the lives of students.

“My whole journey in life is listening to God with my ears, my eyes and my heart,” Sister Clare says. “I believe God speaks to us, speaks to our heart and allows us to know what’s life-giving and what gives us life.”

After three years in the Franciscan order, she professed her first vows in August. She is scheduled to profess her final vows as a Franciscan sister in 2012.

Named Stephanie Kozlowski at birth, she had wanted to become a religious sister after graduating from high school in Miami, hoping to join the Adrian Dominican Sisters, who taught her in grade school. But the order encouraged young women to first get a college degree and work experience. She eventually taught religion and music at an all-girls academy in Florida, a time when she met Richard Teixeira, a teacher at an all-boys high school.

“Rick and I married in 1984,” she recalls. “We moved to north Florida in the hope of establishing a retreat center. We didn’t have the money, but we did have a certified organic farm with 52 acres and 90-plus animals—goats, turkeys, chickens, rabbits, horses, dogs and cats. I had always dreamed of being in the country. I love working with animals. I feel I have a special God-given gift in working with animals.”

Even with the demands of the farm, the couple kept their focus on their faith.

“Our main focus as a couple was our walk with God,” she says. “Whatever came our way, we accepted with open hands and continued our walk with God. We had a

wonderful life. We had a prayer life together and we were very involved with our parish.”

Still, there came a time in the fall of 1997 when Rick wondered about the depth of their faith.

“He said because everything was so wonderful and smooth, he wondered whether we would still be faithful if we had a tragedy,” she recalls. “He said he was going to pray so God would test us. In January of ’98, he had a lesion on his tongue that was diagnosed as cancer. The doctor said there were really no options. He handed Rick a death sentence.

“Both of us prayed for God’s will. It was a short journey. Rick died on March 20 of ’98. In that time frame, I truly had the most wonderful and awesome life-giving experience from God. There were so many grace-filled moments. Rick had restless nights with the pain. I stayed up with him. I’d think of how Jesus said to his Apostles, ‘Can you not stay up an hour with me?’ We both focused on Jesus. Rick never complained. He never got angry. We truly were walking it together.”

His death devastated her.

“I wanted to die myself,” she says, almost in a whisper.

She kept going because of a conversation she had with Rick shortly before he died.

“I told him again how I felt called to be a sister in my youth. I asked him what he thought about me pursuing a vocation as a sister. He thought it was a wonderful idea. That’s what gave me the strength to go on.”

At 45, she began contacting several religious orders to express her interest, but she was told she was too old. So she decided to follow where God led her and began to travel, including to the Holy Land and Medjugorje. She then moved from Florida to New Mexico in 2004, hoping to find a volunteer opportunity to work with the Navajo Indians.

She became the mission coordinator at

St. Mary’s Mission in the New Mexico community of Tohatchi. During that time, she became close with two Oldenburg Franciscan sisters who also ministered there. She was happy there, but then her younger sister, Gail, died in 2004 on Aug. 11, the feast day of St. Clare.

“I returned to Florida,” she says. “After I was there for about a month, I realized I missed the sisters in New Mexico. I felt very drawn to them. Sister Millie asked me if I felt called to be a sister. I said I did, but I assumed I would be too old. She told me, ‘No,’ and encouraged me to visit the motherhouse in Oldenburg. I came and found the sisters I met were down-to-earth, real, very prayerful and holy women. I was especially drawn to the fact that each sister was encouraged to be fully the woman God was calling her to be.”

She entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg in 2006. She serves as a secretary in the guidance office at

Oldenburg Academy, a private Catholic high school for about 215 students. She appreciates that the Franciscan sisters’ community also includes a farm.

“I’ve always felt called to work with teenagers,” Sister Clare says. “Their energy and passion for life are life-giving. I feel it’s where I’m supposed to be. I love the outdoors, too. I go over to the farm and walk the dog there. There are people in the local community who have horses, dogs and cats, and we’ve found each other.”

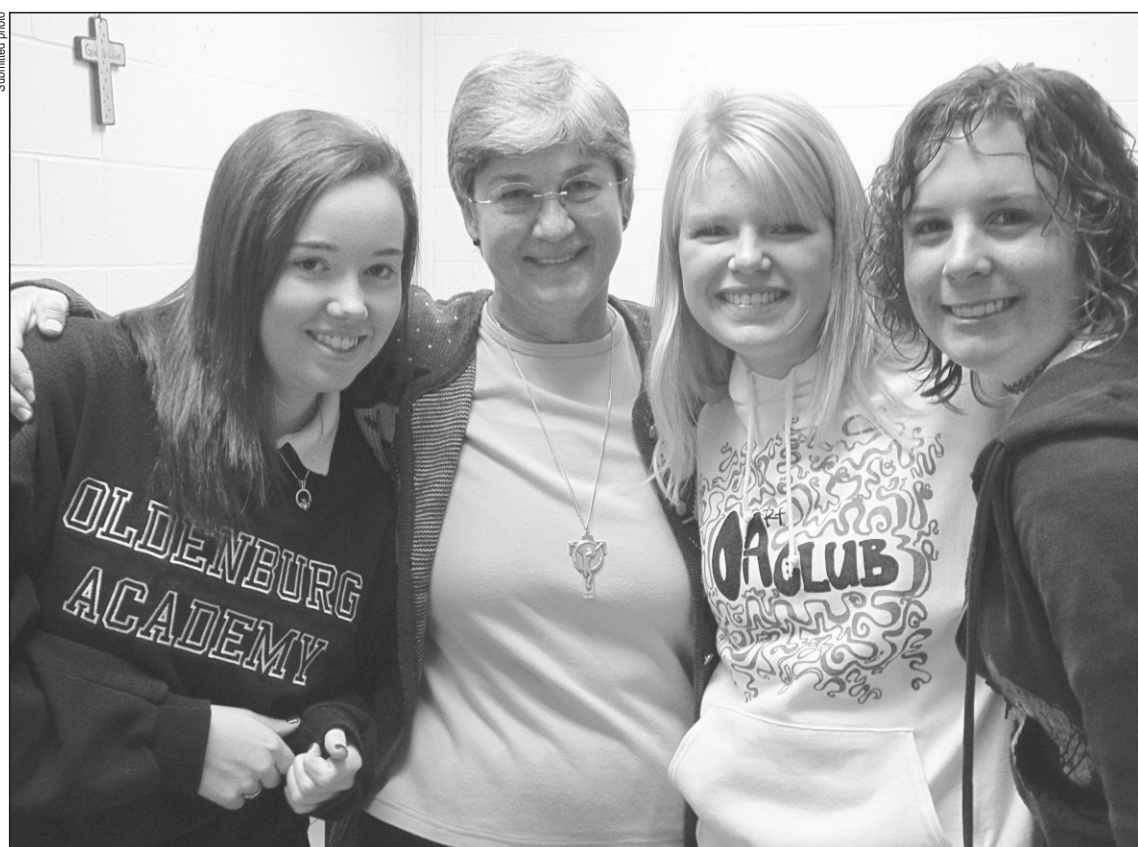
She has also found a home, according to Franciscan Sister Diane Jamison, the formation director for the Oldenburg Franciscan sisters.

“Clare has come to a congregation where she has found her sisters,” Sister Diane says. “She feels that we are sisters to her. It’s a very familial bond.”

Joy is part of Sister Clare’s life again. “I have fallen in love all over again,” Sister Clare says. “I’m caught up with the grace and the gift of having sisters, of being in community. We have a saying in the Oldenburg Franciscan community—‘Where one is, we all are.’

“I have experienced that feeling.”

(For more information about the Oldenburg Franciscans, log on to www.oldenburgfranciscans.org.) †

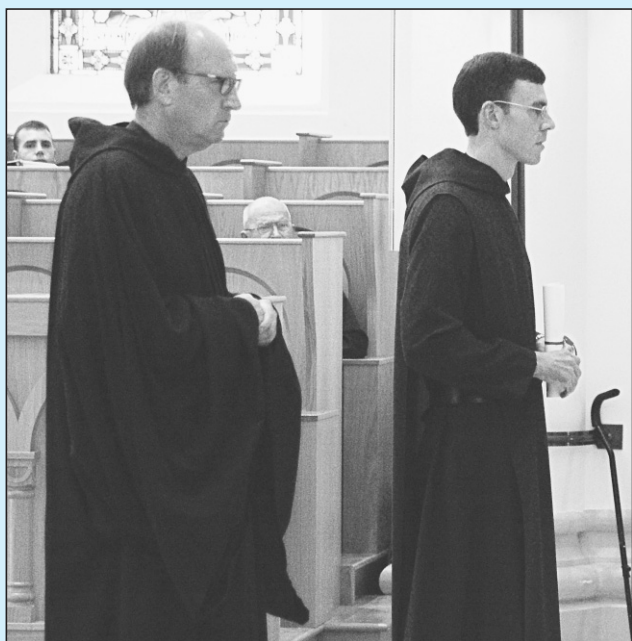


Franciscan Sister Clare Teixeira is a secretary in the guidance office at Oldenburg Academy, a private Catholic high school for about 215 students. She is pictured with some students.

‘I’m caught up with the grace and the gift of having sisters, of being in community. We have a saying in the Oldenburg Franciscan community—“Where one is, we all are.”’

— Franciscan Sister Clare Teixeira

Benedictine brother finds meaning and happiness at Saint Meinrad Archabbey



Benedictine Brother Matthew Mattingly, right, makes his first profession of vows as a Benedictine monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey on Aug. 6, 2007. At left is Benedictine Father Harry Hagan, then novice and junior master.

By John Shaughnessy

Looking back now, he can see when the turning point came for him—when his search for meaning and happiness started during one of the most difficult parts of his young life.

“Right after college, I got a job out west in Seattle, Washington,” said Benedictine Brother Matthew Mattingly, a 1997 graduate of Indiana University in Bloomington.

“When I was out there, my parents got divorced. It shook my world. The next five years, I was trying to figure out what to do with my life. I was also in a relationship that fell apart. And I was in a career that I didn’t feel good about. I was working for a large company in sales and marketing. In college, I wanted to make a lot of money. Then I realized that money and success weren’t the true things for me.”

Brother Matthew paused before continuing. “I had a spiritual emptiness in my life. I started to go back to church in fits and starts. Then I went back every week, joined a parish and started to go to daily Mass. I had the sense that this was the truth. And I felt I needed to get deeper and deeper in my knowledge of my faith. I ended up moving back to Evansville in 2004 to be closer to home. That’s when I got serious about discerning my

life. I thought I might have a vocation. It was silly for me not to check it out.”

As he recently discussed his journey of faith, Brother Matthew mentioned that more than four years have passed since he made a retreat at Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad to view the life of a monk firsthand. He had come there in the fall of 2005 at the suggestion of the pastor of St. Benedict Parish in Evansville in the Evansville Diocese. He acknowledged that he had his doubts about becoming a monk.

“I had an idea in my mind what a monk was—and it was negative,” Brother Matthew recalled. “I pictured a place of silence, not a very joyful place. But when I came to Saint Meinrad, I saw men who had a lot of joy for life. It totally overturned my whole idea, and gave me a new perspective of what monastic life is. I could see myself being a monk.”

He entered the monastery in 2006. Now 34, he expects to make his final vows in August.

“Being around all the other young people in formation, I could see they were normal people like me,” he said. “Most of the monks here have a great sense of humor. Monastic life is very serious and prayer is one of the main things here, but we also have time to play. I’ve made some wonderful friendships here. When people

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Carmelite sister in Terre Haute creates intricate religious icons

By Mary Ann Wyand

Countless hours of love, prayer and meticulous work go into the “writing” of an icon.

Carmelite Sister Mary Grace Melcher, a member of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute, recently completed a large religious icon of Our Lady of Peace holding the Child Jesus as a gift for the new Carmel in Dongducheon, South Korea.

Sister Mary Grace said the prioress of that Carmelite community asked her to write—actually to paint—a Marian icon that would be a visual prayer for the reunification of North and South Korea.

As part of this ancient tradition, icons are “written” in the Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox styles.

The new Carmelite monastery is under construction on a former U.S. Army base just south of the demarcation line between North Korea, a communist country, and South Korea.

“The Carmel community in Seoul, South Korea, is making a foundation to Dongducheon on an old American military base,” Sister Mary Grace said. “When the Army vacated it, the property became available and the sisters bought part of it for their monastery, which is still under construction.”

The two Carmels are located on continents half a world apart, but the sisters have become friends.

A few years ago, the prioress of the Seoul community brought a nun to the Carmel in Terre Haute to learn English.

In 2006, Carmelite Sister Susanna Choi, a native of South Korea, was notified by U.S. immigration officials that there was a problem with her visa so she had to return to her homeland in the midst of her formation.

“The Seoul community took her in for 13 months until she could get that [immigration paperwork] rectified and re-enter our country,” Sister Mary Grace said. “As an act of thanksgiving, our community agreed to write this icon for their foundation in gratitude for their



Carmelite Sister Mary Grace Melcher, a member of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute, displays a large religious icon depicting Our Lady of Peace holding the Christ Child, which she created as a gift for the new Carmel in Dongducheon, South Korea.

kindness in taking Sister Susanna into their community. We have done kindnesses for them, and they have done many kindnesses for us. We feel very close to them because we have two Korean sisters here—Sister Susanna and Sister Marianna [So].”

Sister Mary Grace studied iconography with Deacon Charles Rohrbacher, a master iconographer in Juneau, Alaska, by correspondence and during icon institutes at the Benedictine Mount Angel Abbey in St. Benedict, Ore.

“I had 10 weeks of basic drawing at Marygrove College in Detroit many years ago before I joined Carmel,” she said. “That’s my entire art training, but I have a talent that God gave me. I’m very good at rendering something very precisely in pencil or charcoal or whatever medium we need for our printing at the monastery. I’ve been doing artwork over the years for the community and for novenas.”

Sister Mary Grace said she learned to appreciate icons when she came to the Carmel of Terre Haute 28 years ago.

“Sister Mary Joseph [Triska] of our community, who was interested in icons, introduced me to them and I began to see their beauty,” she said. “I began to dabble with them, but I didn’t really know what I was doing. Before the year 2000, I decided that I wanted to write an icon for the millennium of Our Lady and the Christ Child. She is surrounded by Carmelite saints, and they are all saying, ‘Come, Lord Jesus.’”

That icon has been published by Printery House at the Benedictine Conception Abbey in Conception, Mo.

“I felt that if I had become a published iconographer, I needed to get some training,” Sister Mary Grace said. “I went to the institute a few times, and continued to work with Charles Rohrbacher, who has come to the monastery twice to work with me. . . . When we began to work on this icon of Our Lady of Peace, I sent drawings to him and he sent a corrected drawing. I used his work as a reference to make my final drawing. I wouldn’t have been able to do what I did without his help.”

Writing an icon is a painstaking process, she said, because it is very precise and time-consuming work.

“I started working on the drawing a year before I ever started the icon,” Sister Mary Grace said. “My time is limited, and at best I get a day a week that I can actually work on icons. When there are community demands, I don’t even get that much time so progress is really slow. That’s why it was so important to me when Mother [Anne Brackmann, the prioress] said, ‘I’m going to give you a month to do nothing but work on that icon.’ Otherwise, it would have taken years.”

“Icons are not artistic in the ordinary sense of the word where you can just express yourself,” she said. “They’re made of obedience and carefulness because you’re following a tradition, not only in the subject

not just with others but [with] myself. I’m more comfortable with who I am. I’m more comfortable with forgiving my own weaknesses, and I’m more forgiving of others. You can’t hide things when you live in a community. I’ve learned that people are willing to forgive me [for] my shortcomings. And I’m more willing to take risks in revealing myself to other people.”

The change in Brother Matthew has been noticed by others, too.

“Brother Matthew exemplifies balance of work and prayer, and a bit of play as well,” said Benedictine Brother John Mark Falkenhain, the monastery’s vocation director. “He’s a good example of someone who has been to college, who has worked and who has discovered that his faith is more important to him than he thought. He just realized he had a call to the monastic life, which is like all of us in a way.”

“Another thing that I admire about Brother Matthew is his willingness to try new things and step outside his comfort



Carmelite Sister Mary Grace Melcher carefully works on a religious icon of Our Lady of Peace holding the Christ Child. Another icon of Mary and the infant Jesus that she created for the millennium has been published by Printery House at the Benedictine Conception Abbey in Conception, Mo.

matter of the icon, but in the execution of the icon.

“The paint is handled in a certain way, and it takes a long time because there are many transparent layers in the Russian tradition,” Sister Mary Grace said. “The Greek tradition is more opaque in the way it is painted, but I follow the Russian pattern. The whole process is very precise—the gilding, working with gold leaf, the layering techniques and the inscriptions. When you work with an icon, you put down your dark colors first very transparently and then bring out the lights by highlighting. You’re working in reverse and bringing light out of darkness.”

Writing icons is “very contemplative and deep theologically,” she said, “not only in the subject matter and how it’s done according to the tradition, but also in the artistic process. It’s very prayerful, very symbolic. Symbols point to deeper reality so the iconographer is always working in the symbolic world, which is an open door to the world of pure faith.”

Iconographers begin their extremely detailed work with prayers for the grace to render an icon well, she said, as well as prayers for the people who will venerate it.

“I think many icons are made by monks and nuns and other people who live a deep life of prayer because the work of the icon is under-girded by the life of prayer,” Sister Mary Grace said. “It’s only in an atmosphere of prayer that a person can produce an icon. . . . At least in my own experience, I find myself migrating to a very prayerful but wordless level of concentration on this holy work. I approach my icons with fear and trembling and humility. I have a deep need for God. I know that I need God’s help. . . . I always consider each one of my icons to be a real miracle.”

(For more information about the Carmelite sisters of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute, log on to their Web site at www.heartsawake.org.) †

MATTINGLY

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come to a monastery, guests often think we’re saints. The truth is that all of us are striving for that. But we’re regular people who are just trying to find God. There’s lots of joy and humor in this place.”

Brother Matthew has found a home in the monastery. He has also found meaning and happiness.

The meaning comes from living a life focused on God.

“The longer I’m here, the deeper the appreciation I have for what the monastic life is,” he said. “It’s so rooted in the history of the Church, the way our liturgy is today, and the whole spirituality of the Church in general. The more that becomes revealed to me, the more I want to go further and deeper and learn about it.”

The happiness comes from discovering the changes in his life.

“I’ve grown during this time,” he said. “The biggest thing is I’m more patient—

zone a little—teaching, working with youth, giving retreats. In general, he’s on the quiet, introverted side, but he’s stretched himself. Not only has the community benefited, but he has as well.”

Brother Matthew gives the credit to God.

“I have a real appreciation for what it means when we talk about God’s Providence,” Brother Matthew said.

“At the time, when I was going through those difficult parts of my life, I thought it was the end of the world. Looking back, all of them had a small part in leading me to where I am now, where I should be and where God wants me to be.

“It just amazes me how God works.



Benedictine Brother Matthew Mattingly, left, and Jacob Niemand, a seminarian from the Diocese of New Ulm, Minn., attend class at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology.

Even the things that seem awful have a purpose, a meaning. It gives you a sense of hope.”

(For more information about Saint Meinrad Archabbey, log on to www.saintmeinrad.edu.) †

At home in the monastery

Sisters of St. Benedict seek God and enjoy doing God's work

By Mary Ann Wyand

BEECH GROVE—Prayer becomes a way of life for women who answer God's call to join the Sisters of St. Benedict at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove.

"You find yourself thinking about God," said Benedictine postulant Heather Foltz, who entered the monastic community on Sept. 7 after discerning a religious vocation as a member of the sisters' affiliate program.

"The first thing that attracted me to the Benedictine way of life was the prayer, and how the sisters' ministry flowed from their prayer," she said. "I remember the first time I came to prayer at the monastery chapel. I felt at home. I loved the way that the Psalms were sung, the times of silence, the petitions and the community life."

Since entering the monastic community four months ago, she has had many opportunities to grow in her faith with 70 Benedictine sisters.

"When you're working and processing things, you learn to see God in the people that you encounter in day-to-day life," she said. "You grow in your knowledge of yourself, your relationship with God and your relationship with others."

Benedictine Sister Juliann Babcock, the prioress, oversees the needs of the monastic community as well as the sisters' corporate ministries. They sponsor the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center and St. Paul Hermitage, their ministry to the elderly, adjacent to Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove.

"In light of our Benedictine vocation, our ministry flows out of our community life," Sister Juliann said. "Benedictines are not founded for a particular ministry like many apostolic communities. We have sisters whose ministries are in the fields of education, health care and social work. Other sisters minister in parishes, serve as administrators and are librarians."

Their motto, "Seek God," is displayed over the monastery door and is the focus of their daily life.

"We have a charism of hospitality—seeing Christ in the guest," Sister Juliann said. "We see our ministries as an extension of our hospitality from the monastery. ... We try to base our life as a community on prayer, work and hospitality. Our day hinges on our prayer life. We pray together in the morning, at noon and in the evening."

Before dinner, a common practice of the community is to have a sister read aloud from the *Rule of St. Benedict* to deepen the saint's message in the hearts of the sisters.

"Liturgy is very important to us," the prioress said, "so we work very hard at the quality of our music and our prayer life."

St. Benedict calls the sisters to live in common, and they share daily tasks and activities.

"As sisters, we are listening to one another and discerning together," said Benedictine Sister Jennifer Mechtild Horner, the community's vocation director. "We are committed to working at our life together."

The sisters invite women between the ages of 18 to 45 to contact the monastery about a time to visit the community and learn more about the Benedictine life.

"In the *Rule*, St. Benedict talks about 'good zeal' and says that we should anticipate the needs of one another," Sister Juliann said. "There is a wonderful spirit of generosity in our sisters. As a community, we have a desire to welcome new members and to be of service to the people of God. We're all about seeking God together. That's what God is calling each of us to do."

(For more information about the Sisters of St. Benedict at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, call Benedictine Sister Jennifer Mechtild Horner at the monastery at 317-787-3287, ext. 3032, or contact her by e-mail at jennifermechtild@benedictine.com.) †



Benedictine Sisters Marie Therese Racine, left, and Maureen Therese Cooney pray during evening prayer on Dec. 3 at Our Lady of Grace Monastery Chapel in Beech Grove.



Benedictine sisters wait in line to congratulate Sister Juliann Babcock, their new prioress, during her June 7 installation at Our Lady of Grace Monastery Chapel in Beech Grove.



The Sisters of St. Benedict process from Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove to their chapel entrance on June 7 before the installation of their new prioress, Benedictine Sister Juliann Babcock. Sister Mary Gilbert carries the cross while Sister Kathleen Yeadon, left, and Sister Cindy Marie Freese carry candles.



A statue of Our Lady of Grace is featured inside the circular drive leading to Our Lady of Grace Monastery and Chapel in Beech Grove. St. Paul Hermitage, the sisters' ministry to the elderly, and their Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center are also located on the monastery grounds.



Benedictine Sister Mary Ann Koetter, from left, opens her textbook while Sister Juliann Babcock, the prioress, introduces their discussion topic for postulant Heather Foltz and Sister Julie Sewell.

Deacon seeks to glorify God through work and family life

By Sean Gallagher

GREENWOOD—Almost 20 years ago, David Henn pondered whether God might be calling him to be a priest or a husband and father with a career as a lawyer.

But he was contemplating this question of faith in an unusual setting: the gallery of the House of Representatives prior to the start of a State of the Union address.

At the time, Henn was a student at Indiana University in Bloomington and serving as an intern in Washington, D.C., for then-Representative Andy Jacobs Jr.

As he sat there in the veritable temple of American political power, a priest came and sat next to him. It was Jesuit Father William Byron, then president of The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

"I actually opened up to him and told him exactly what I was going through," Henn said. "I even told him that I had just met this girl, and that I was obviously taken with her."

"And he said, 'A lawyer and a priest are very similar. They are both public people, and they both can do a lot of good in God's name.'"

"It had never occurred to me for a second prior to that moment that being a lawyer didn't necessarily mean not pursuing an active vocation for the glory of God," Henn said. "That just stuck with me. That was probably the moment that I decided that the priesthood was probably not going to be the way for me."

"That was the moment that I probably decided to go to law school. And that was probably the moment that I decided to marry my wife."

Being enlightened about how he could glorify God through work in the secular world eventually led Henn more than a decade later to participate in the first permanent deacon formation program in the history of the archdiocese.

He was ordained a deacon on June 28, 2008, and ministers at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood.

Faith and the law

Today, Deacon Henn lives out that lesson he learned 20 years ago in his law practice in Greenwood. The formation he received in the deacon formation program helps him.

"There is no complete separation between the deacon and the lawyer in any instance," Deacon Henn said. "I'm very clear with my clients that when they want to use me as their lawyer, they get all of me."

This has led him to bypass divorce work because it "was just not consistent with my view and vision of the diaconate," and he did not want "on Saturday to be celebrating someone's wedding and on Monday being in court working to dissolve a marriage."

He also helps Catholic clients who come to him for estate planning to learn about end-of-life issues. When living

wills are discussed, he will offer them a copy of the U.S. bishops' teaching on the topic.

"That affects people," Deacon Henn said.

Finding something that was missing

In 1994, Deacon Henn married his wife, Mary Ellen, whom he had met shortly before that State of the Union address.

Although happily married with two children, Deacon Henn said he "always knew that something was missing."

He discovered that missing piece when the archdiocese launched its first permanent deacon program in 2003.

Mary Ellen became confident that her husband had a possible call to the diaconate when she easily accepted the program's rigorous formation schedule. The deacon candidates had formation sessions one weekend a month for 11 months each year, had homework to complete and were involved in ministry assignments.

"I always felt the sense that it was right," she said. "I never felt like, 'Are you crazy? We don't have time for that. That won't work.' It was always, 'We can make that work.'"

The years of formation were a blessing to the couple.

"They gave us a lot of opportunities to really talk and share on a deeper level," Mary Ellen said. "It helped bring our faith into the forefront."

Growing up with the diaconate

The Henns' two children, Sydney and Collin, have grown up with the diaconate as a part of their lives. They were 5 and 3 when their father began his involvement with the deacon program.

It is not unusual for Collin, a fourth-grade student at Our Lady of the Greenwood School, to be an altar server at a Mass where his father is also assisting.

"It's fun [when] I'm up there with my dad at the altar," Collin said.

The children often come and go from the parish with their dad. "We were probably in and out of the parish probably a half dozen times on [a recent] Saturday," Deacon Henn said.

The children find that their dad is often busier than their friends' fathers.

"At my friends' houses, their dads aren't always busy," Collin said. "When I go to visit, they're there most of the day. My dad isn't always home, but he's home a lot."

Sydney, a sixth-grade student at Our Lady of the Greenwood School, was worried the first time that her father preached at a school Mass.

"That was weird," Sydney said. "I was afraid of what he was going to say."

But Deacon Henn is adamant about not telling stories about his family during his homilies.

"I leave my wife and kids out of the homilies," he said. "I'll preach about myself. But I leave them out of it."

A role model in the parish

Still, Deacon Henn admitted that



Deacon David Henn and Msgr. Mark Svarczkopf, pastor of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood, elevate the chalice and paten at the end of the eucharistic prayer during a Nov. 11 Mass at the parish's church.

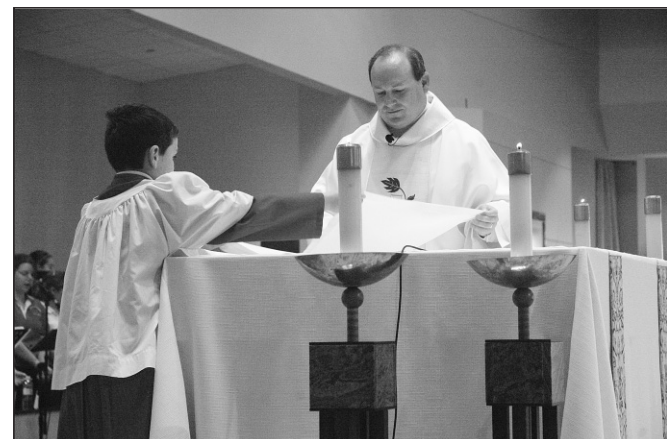
Mary Ellen, whom he called the "spiritual center of our family life," profoundly influences his preaching.

"I pale in comparison to her level of faith," Deacon Henn said. "And by preaching a homily, I am inherently opening not only my own personal spirituality, but I am opening *our* spirituality. I'm giving people a snapshot into our spiritual lives."

Deacon Henn and Mary Ellen know that, through his preaching and their presence in the parish, others see them as role models, a reality they admit is a little scary at times.

"Even the people who are friends of mine see me also as a deacon's wife," Mary Ellen said. "I don't want to say that I act better because of that, but it helps to remind me [to be a good example]."

Deacon Henn hopes that his example will lead his fellow parishioners to delve deeply into their faith.



Deacon David Henn and his son, Collin, prepare the altar during a Nov. 11 Mass at Our Lady of the Greenwood Church in Greenwood. Deacon Henn ministers at the Indianapolis South Deanery parish.

"I'm hoping that somewhere in the recesses of their minds is the thought that it's OK for a husband and a dad to not only have that level of spirituality and ponder these things," he said, "but also to share them openly, to talk to your kids, to your wife, to your friends about these things."

(To learn more about the permanent diaconate in the archdiocese, log on to www.archindy.org/deacon.) †



Deacon David Henn listens to voice mail messages at his law office in Greenwood on Nov. 11. A plaque on the wall next to his desk reads "Be still and know that I am God." Deacon Henn seeks to glorify God in his work as an attorney.

Benedictine Experience Weekend
Sisters of St. Benedict
Our Lady of Grace Monastery
February 19-21, 2010

Come and See ... Experience the rhythm of monastic life by participating in the meals, prayers and leisure times of the community + Learn more about the monastic way of life + Pause to listen, to find God in the quiet.

It is an opportunity for you to experience the Benedictine way of life for a weekend. This retreat is for single, Catholic women between the ages of 18-42.

There is no cost for this retreat.

For more information contact:
 Sr. Jennifer Mechtild Horner, OSB
 1402 Southern Ave
 Beech Grove, IN 46107
 317-787-3287 ext. 3032
jennifermechtild@benedictine.com
www.benedictine.com
 facebook: SrJennifer Horner
 Sisters of St. Benedict - Our Lady of Grace Monastery

Seminarian's journey is an affirmation of the gift of life

By Sean Gallagher

OSGOOD—In his relatively short 28 years, seminarian Jerry Byrd has had an adventurous journey of faith.

Raised in the Southern Baptist tradition in southeastern Indiana, he recalls telling his fellow grade-school students who were Catholic that they would go to hell because they worshipped Mary.

"I repeated what I heard," he said.

In his high school years, Byrd developed his musical talents and put them to the service of his Baptist congregation.

But before the end of his junior year, he became convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith and was received into the full communion of the Church.

During his college years, he majored in music and was involved in music and youth ministry at two parishes in the Cincinnati archdiocese.

After graduating from Mount St. Joseph College in Cincinnati in 2003, Byrd served as a youth minister for a year at St. John the Baptist Parish in Dover and at St. Louis Parish in Batesville for two years.

For the past three years, he has been an archdiocesan seminarian at Saint Meinrad School of Theology in St. Meinrad while continuing to serve in parishes during the summer and on breaks from his studies.

Now Byrd is looking forward to the day when, God willing, he will be ordained a priest.

Such a journey of faith would have been stopped before it even started, however, if it weren't for a crucial decision that his mother, Rose, made while he was still a baby in her womb.

The gift of life

While pregnant with Jerry, Rose's doctors told her that he had Down syndrome and tried to persuade her to have an abortion.

"I'm dead set against abortion for any reason," Rose said. "They tried to be [forceful]. They had me watch a film and showed me all of this stuff about Down syndrome babies. But it didn't change my mind, and I told them it wouldn't."

As the pregnancy progressed, the doctors told Rose that her child was losing weight and experiencing other physical problems.

After a difficult labor, Jerry was finally delivered by Caesarean section.

"I saw them deliver him," Rose said. "And here's this big, fat, healthy, red, screaming, loud-mouthed baby. And in my mind, I'm hearing all the things the doctors said, that he was sick, that he was going to be a little tiny, sick baby."

"And from that point on, it just reinforced everything that I knew that the Lord had a purpose for him. I just always knew that he would serve the Lord in some way. But I just always felt like it would be in the Baptist Church."

"She chose to say 'yes' to life," Jerry said. "She chose to say 'yes' to whatever God had in store for her and for me. And it was in that moment that her 'yes' enabled me to say 'yes' [to God's call]."

An encounter with Jesus

It would take a while for Byrd to finally discern what he believes is God's vocation for him.

Throughout his childhood and early teenage years, he held the Catholic faith in contempt.

But one night in 1997 as a high school junior, he went to a Mass with a friend who was seeking to become Catholic.

"I had no idea when I was walking into that church that night that my life was going to change," Byrd said.

Up until then, he thought the Mass was just an empty ritual. But that night, something happened.

"When [the priest] elevated the host, I knew that that was Jesus," Byrd said. "I didn't know how. I didn't know why. I couldn't figure that out. There was just something inside me that said, 'Jerry, this is Christ.'"

"And from that moment, I had a strong desire to receive the Eucharist. I wanted to receive Jesus. I wanted to have that encounter with him."

Despite the misgivings of his mother, Byrd entered into the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) at St. John the Baptist Parish in Harrison, Ohio, in the Cincinnati archdiocese. He was received into the full communion of the Church in 1998.

Hints and affirmations of a vocation

While still in RCIA, Byrd heard his pastor preach a homily in which he challenged the young men in the congregation to consider the priesthood.

"It was like I couldn't shake the thought," Byrd said of the powerful homily. "I couldn't get rid of it."

It took eight more years and a few periods where he felt that God was calling him to marriage before Byrd was ready to discern a possible call to the priesthood in a seminary.

Since he has been at Saint Meinrad School of Theology, Byrd has continued to develop his musical talents,

See JOURNEY, page 14

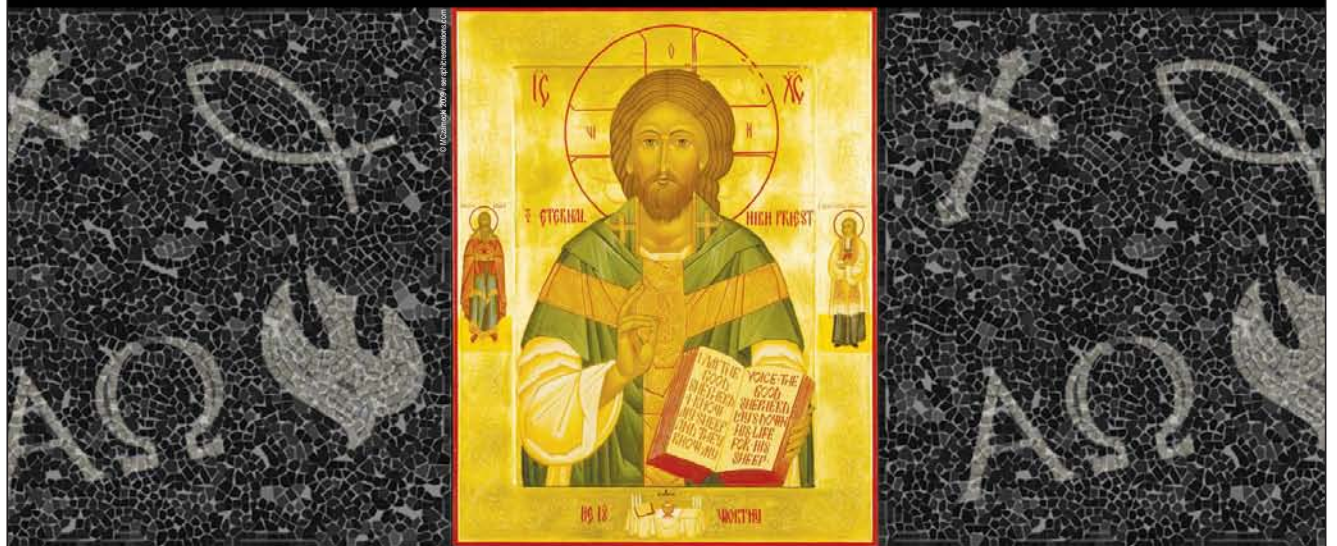


Seminarian Jerry Byrd directs the choir of St. John the Baptist Parish in Osgood during a Nov. 22 Mass at the parish's church.

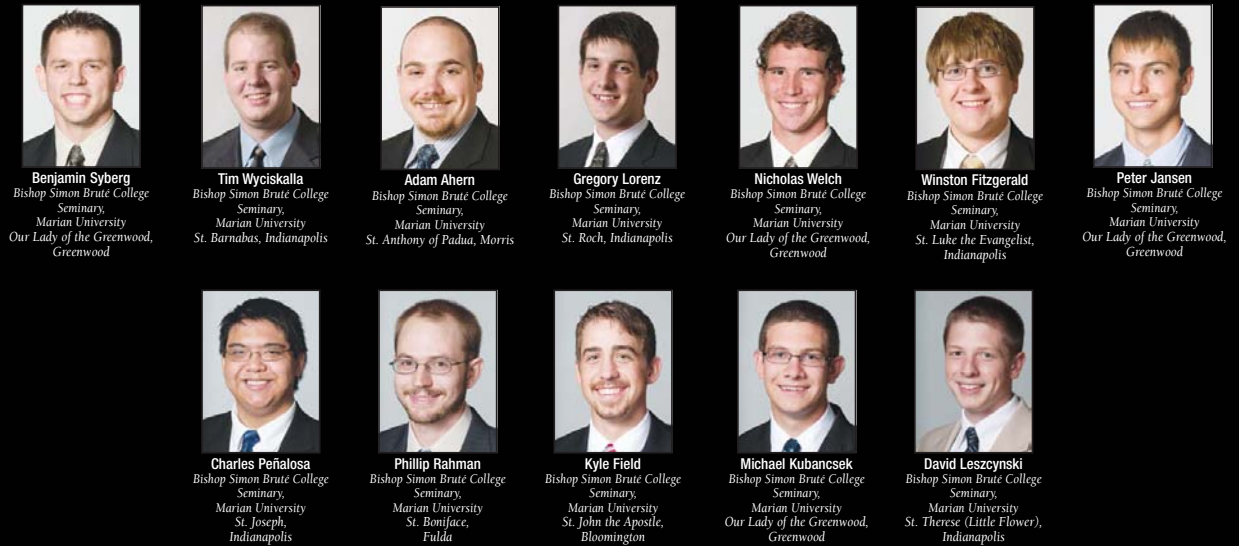
ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS SEMINARIANS



CONSIDER A PRIESTLY VOCATION



YEAR FOR PRIESTS



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SCHLISSMANN

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Always learning

Father Schliessmann said his parishioners “always, always” draw him closer to Christ.

This happens for him in a special way when he meets them in a privileged and confidential place: the confessional.

“I’m seeing people at their best there,” Father Schliessmann said. “They’re courageous, humble, vulnerable, being honest and being open.”

“He’s a very thoughtful and careful and attentive confessor,” said Barbara Pierse, a member of Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburg.

Pierse also sees her pastor’s attentiveness when she works with him in the parish’s Hispanic ministry outreach.

“He does not presume that he knows everything,” she said. “And so he wants to hear what other people have to say about issues that are going on.”

“He listens to what you have to say, even if he disagrees with you,” said Jean Martin, a pastoral associate at Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburg and St. Rose of Lima Parish in Franklin. “He’s open to new things. He’s a very thoughtful person.”

This positive impression that Father Schliessmann has made on the people he serves might be rubbing off on the next generation of priests.

Seminarian Michael Kubancsek, a freshman at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary and at Marian University, both in Indianapolis, has gotten to know Father Schliessmann because the priest works closely with his father, Gary, who is the co-chair

of the Catholic Scouting Committee in the archdiocese. Father Schliessmann is the committee’s chaplain.

“Father Tom is an excellent priestly example,” Kubancsek said. “He’s a good pastoral role model. He’s one good example of a priest who has a very human side.”

Kubancsek also simply appreciates how Father Schliessmann likes to spend time with him and his fellow seminarians.

“It’s good to know that priests are genuinely concerned about the seminarians and about their formation,” Kubancsek said. “And it comes from the fact that he cares so much about the priesthood itself.”

(For more information on priests and vocations to the priesthood in the archdiocese, log on to www.HearGodsCall.com.) †



Father Thomas Schliessmann prepares to celebrate Mass on June 27 in Breckenridge, Colo., during the Summer Field Study program conducted by Roncalli High School in Indianapolis. Roncalli students and staff members hike and camp at national parks in the western part of the United States.



Jean Martin, pastoral associate of Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburg and St. Rose of Lima Parish in Franklin, talks on Nov. 18 with Father Thomas Schliessmann, the pastor of both parishes, outside Holy Trinity Church.

JOURNEY

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composing liturgical music that has been sung at St. John the Baptist Church in Osgood. He often stays at the parish rectory when on breaks from his classes.

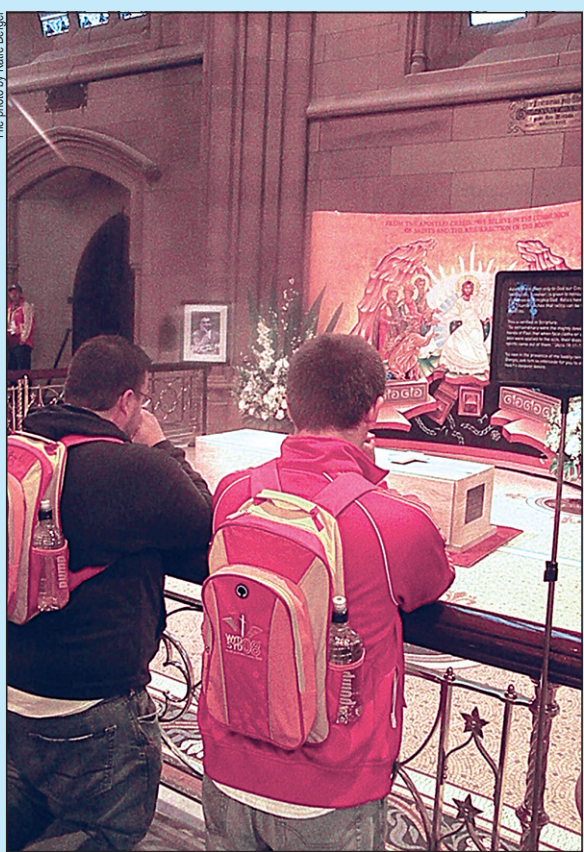
Rebecca Oelker, a homeschooled eighth grader, is a member of the parish and sings in the choir that Byrd directs from time to time.

“He’s a lot of fun to be around,” she said. “He brings out the best in our voices somehow. Something about him just makes us want to try our best. And so we always end up sounding good.”

“He’ll be a great priest,” said Jesse Weidner, a member of the parish choir and a freshman at Marian University in Indianapolis. “He loves the Mass. He loves Jesus. He loves God.”

Father Shaun Whittington, the pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish, values Byrd’s musical talents and his love of Catholic culture. But he also sees other attributes in Byrd that will serve him well in priestly ministry.

“He understands what it means to be in relationship with other people and to speak the truth in charity,” Father Whittington said. “I see it from [his] openness and honesty in working with youth to the compassion and concern given to those who have lost loved ones. It’s all across the board.”



Seminarians Jerry Byrd, left, and Benjamin Syberg kneel in prayer before the remains of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, a patron saint of young adults, on July 15, 2008, at St. Mary Cathedral in Sydney, Australia, during the World Youth Day pilgrimage.

Although still a young man, Byrd looks back in wonder at the various twists and turns in his vocational journey.

“Every time that I’ve come to a crossroads, it’s just been a constant affirmation that God is calling me to the priesthood,” he said. “This is where I’m supposed to be.”

(For more information about vocations to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, log on to www.HearGodsCall.com.) †

WOODS

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God, with each other, and with creation here. This place has a sense of sacredness about it. There is a true sense of being at home,” she said.

Come and see what Sister Jenny describes!

Sister Jenny said there may be a perception of everything being in the past. Certainly, a strong heritage and legacy create a forceful foundation for those who seek an opportunity to follow God’s call, “but there is a strong energy here now in the way we live out our understanding of being in right relationship with God. There is energy among us to serve God’s people through works of love, mercy and justice. We do that through our many ministries in 19 states, the District of Columbia, Taiwan and China.

“We are grateful for and blessed by the many people who are so generous to support our mission. Our faith calls us to action, and it all ties in with our mission as an apostolic community.”

The Sisters of Providence will host their annual “Come and See” weekend for women who are in discernment about religious life on



Autumn’s beauty frames the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, where St. Theodora Guérin’s remains are entombed at a shrine.

March 26-28 at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Discussion will include how the Sisters of Providence live out, promote and bring about Catholic social teaching.

(For more information, contact Sister Jenny Howard at 812-535-2897 or by e-mail at jhoward@spsmw.org. More information can be found on the congregation’s Web site at www.SistersofProvidence.org.) †