

Reflections



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

A Newsletter from the Vocation Office

April 2003

Vocation News and Announcements

Ordination: Robert Love, of Kitchener-Waterloo, will be ordained as a priest for our Diocese on Saturday, May 3, 2003. Please keep him in your prayers as he begins his priestly ministry within our Diocese.

Seminarians: The 17 men from the Diocese of Hamilton currently in seminary will be involved in a variety of activities during the summer months. Those in their pastoral year of study will continue in their assigned parishes before returning to the seminary this fall to continue their theology studies. Others will be living in assigned parishes during the summer to experience parish life and ministry, and some will get jobs in the community during the summer. Please keep all of our seminarians in your prayers.

New Candidates: Several new candidates have started the registration process to enter the seminary in September, while others are continuing to discern their call. A number of other people from our Diocese are starting or continuing their formation process for various religious communities. Please pray for all of these candidates and for all those who are discerning a vocation to the priesthood or religious life.

Diocesan Vocation Mass: Last year's first Diocesan Vocation Mass was such a success that it will now be an annual event. The next Vocation Mass, sponsored by the Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus and Serra Clubs of the Diocese, will be celebrated on Sunday, September 21, at 3 p.m. at the Church of Our Lady in Guelph. Everyone is encouraged to come and join in this Diocesan event.

Message from the Vocation Director: *Celebrating the World Day of Prayer for Vocations*

This year marks the 40th World Day of Prayer for Vocations – an annual celebration created as a visible sign of the Church throughout the world in response to the command of Jesus, "... ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:37)

This command leads the Christian community into trusting prayer to the God who calls and sends. But it's also a time to evaluate our own role in creating a culture of vocation awareness and support within our Diocese.

The recently released Pastoral Document from last year's North American Vocation Congress is a sign of encouragement for vocation ministry. This document serves as a guide for the entire Church community, prompting personal thought and decision making as to how each can be more fully involved in supporting vocations.

In the coming year, the Pastoral Document will be used in a variety of ways within our own Diocese, helping us to continue to develop a vibrant vocation ministry in which all Catholics recognize their vocation in the Church. In particular, we pray that those called to ordained ministry or religious life may have an environment in which such a vocation will be nurtured so that they can be open to respond with courage and love.

This issue of Reflections is dedicated to the World Day of Prayer for Vocations on Sunday, May 11, 2003.

Father Mark Gatto, Vocation Director, Diocese of Hamilton

*Want to know more
about vocations?*

Check out our web site at
www.vocationinfo.ca

What is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations?

Each year, the World Day of Prayer for Vocations is held on the Fourth Sunday of Easter. It's a day when Christians are invited to reflect on the meaning of God's call and to pray for vocations.

Did You Know?

The Diocesan Prayer Calendar is used by many individuals and groups within the Diocese as a guide in praying for those who serve our parishes, for religious communities and through other callings. The calendars are distributed to the parishes at the beginning of each year. You can obtain a copy of the Prayer Calendar from the vocation web site at www.vocationinfo.ca, or by contacting Fr. Mark Gatto at (905) 528-7988.

What can each of us do to support vocations?

Here are some ideas and suggestions from people within our Catholic community:

1 Catholic Schools

Our Catholic schools have an important role to play in vocation ministry. For a comprehensive list of vocation resources for teachers, please see our web site at www.vocationinfo.ca. Teachers with good ideas or classroom activities that they have used successfully are invited to share these by contacting Fr. Mark Gatto at (905) 528-7988 or frmark@vocationinfo.ca.

"Adopt and Prayer" Program a Hit With Students

"These days we have a lot of students who rarely see a priest," says Teresa Hartnett, a grade 8 teacher at St. Francis Xavier School in Stoney Creek. "When I was a kid, priests were in and out of the school regularly. Now that doesn't happen, due to the shortage of priests. And many students don't attend Mass regularly, if at all.

"If they never see or talk about priests, they'll never think about being one. As educators, we can help to break down the barriers – we can talk about vocations, we can introduce them to priests and awaken them to the possibility."

Teresa put her beliefs to work in her own grade 7 and 8 classroom by launching the "Adopt and Prayer" program at her previous school, St. Columba. Her students each picked out a priest's name from the Diocese book and the class prayed for those priests by name during the liturgy every Friday.

"Each student wrote a letter to the priest they had chosen to tell him about this program, and to our surprise we received many beautiful letters back," Teresa says. "The kids were very intrigued and it grew from there. They sent Christmas and Easter cards, and at the end of the year they wanted to meet 'their' priest so we had a tea and invited the 'adopted' priests. It was a very nice event and the kids loved it."

Teresa initially launched the Adopt and Prayer program as a Jubilee Year activity, but its popularity extended the program for another two years. "I don't do it the same way every year because I want to keep it fresh. It has to be a special thing, and not a 'by rote' exercise."



As educators, we need to plant seeds and hopefully they'll grow.

Gerry Graham



Secondary School Educator Promotes 'Broader' Message of Vocations


After 25 years of teaching experience, both in elementary and secondary schools, Gerry Graham believes promoting the 'broader' message of vocations is the one most likely to resonate with high school students.

"At the elementary-school level, young people are very open to the idea of having a special job, like a firefighter or a police officer – people who dedicate their lives to helping others – and many see a priest's role in the same vein. In the teen years they become more questioning, and at the same time more self-centred – they're not as curious about other people at that stage."

Having said that, Gerry maintains there are always certain students who are more spiritually-inclined, and an educator's role is to be sensitive to that inclination, and to help support their spiritual growth.

"At the high-school level we try to get across the message that young people should consider their vocation in the broader sense – God has created us for a purpose, and when we help people in need, we're fulfilling our vocation as human beings, to look after all of creation.

"As educators, we need to plant seeds and hopefully they'll grow."



When asked why he became a priest, the late Cardinal Basil Hume, the former Archbishop of Westminster, said, "One thing all the priests who influenced me had in common was a profound love of their priesthood."

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Parish Priests

Indeed, when seminarians are asked to identify the significant influences that led them to discern their

calling, two of the most frequently mentioned are the enthusiasm shown by a specific priest for his calling, and the encouragement of a particular priest.

Personal Contacts and Family Support Key to Vocations

When it comes to vocations, "things have changed an awful lot," admits retired priest Father Steve Stinson of Hamilton.

"When I was ordained in 1955, there was no recruitment – people just showed up," Fr. Steve recalls. "For my part, I think one of the things that got me thinking about it was that my pastor encouraged me."

Fr. Steve says personal contact from priests is key in supporting vocations. "If you know of a young person who shows some sign of having a vocation, make yourself really approachable. I think you have to put yourself in contact with young people – go to their youth groups and let them get to know you on a personal basis."

The other emphasis should be with families, he believes. "I did quite a bit of work with families. If you can get families practicing and living their faith, then the vocations will come."

If you know of a young person who shows some sign of having a vocation, make yourself really approachable.

Fr. Steve Stinson

Every Catholic parish is called to be a community of faith in which all baptized people are supported in their various vocations, and in turn pray for and encourage those who are considering service as a sister, brother or priest. Establishing a designated committee is a good way to focus efforts in support of vocations to ordained ministry or religious life.

A parish vocation resource manual is available from the Vocation Office of the Diocese of Hamilton, and includes some valuable ideas and activities for parishioners interested in vocation ministry.

Waterloo Group Holds "Holy Hour of Prayer"

The power of prayer was the impetus for a vocations committee from St. Michael's Parish in Waterloo.

A group ranging in age from students to seniors meets once each month to conduct a "Holy Hour of Prayer for Vocations."

Launched by five Serra Club members, the prayer hour generates about a dozen participants each week. "We felt it was important to raise awareness of the need to pray for vocations. We're all called to do it, and our group helps to remind the parish of that," says Noreen Hishon, chair of the vocations committee and president-elect of the Kitchener-Waterloo Serra Club.

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Families

The Christian family was described in Vatican II as "a kind of school of deeper humanity." The important call of Christian marriage and family is vital to our society and church. Parents with positive attitudes towards Christ, the Church, concern for others, prayerfulness and sacrifice are great witnesses to their children as they discern their own vocation in life.

"Don't Push, But be Encouraging," says Priest's Mother

The parents of Fr. Peter Hundt, pastor at Holy Cross Parish in Georgetown, were aware of their son's interest in the priesthood from his earliest years, and did their best to nurture it.

Joan Hundt fondly remembers her little boy standing on a kitchen chair to deliver pretend sermons. "It was something he thought of himself, and we just took it in," she says. "We thought it would be really something to have a priest in the family."

The Hundt family, dairy farmers in the Hanover area, had always enjoyed a close relationship with their parish priest, often having him as a guest for dinner. They participated in parish activities and Peter, the oldest of their six children, became an altar server as soon as he was old enough.

So it was no surprise when Peter decided in his last year of high school that the priesthood was his vocation. "We were elated," Joan says simply. "We felt very blessed."

Joan has straightforward advice for parents: "The best thing you can do is pray for them. If that's what they want to do, get behind them. Don't push, but be encouraging and do what you can to help."

A Prayer from Pope John Paul II

“Mary, humble servant of God Most High, the Son to whom you gave birth has made you the servant of humanity.

Your life was a humble and generous service.

You were servant of the Word when the angel announced to you the divine plan of salvation.

You were servant of the Son, giving him life and remaining open to his mystery.

You were servant of Redemption, standing courageously at the foot of the Cross, close to the Suffering Servant and Lamb who was sacrificing himself for love of us.

You were servant of the Church on the day of Pentecost and with your intercession you continue to generate her in every believer, even in these our difficult and troubled times.

Let the young people of the third millennium look to you, young daughter of Israel, who have known the agitation of a young heart when faced with the plan of the Eternal God.

Make them able to accept the invitation of your Son to give their lives wholly for the glory of God.

Make them understand that to serve God satisfies the heart, and that only in the service of God and of his kingdom do we realize ourselves in accordance with the divine plan, and life becomes a hymn of glory to the Most Holy Trinity.

Amen.”

From the Vatican, October 16, 2002. For the full Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the 40th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, please go to the Vatican web site: www.vatican.va

Beatitudes for Nurturing Church Vocations

Blessed are the children of parents who...

1. Witness love for their spouse, their children, their neighbour and the world.
2. Talk freely about the presence of God in the joys and sorrows of their lives.
3. Remind their children that they are loved by God and have been given gifts to serve others.
4. Lead their family in prayer.
5. Speak positively about priests, sisters, brothers, ministers.
6. Participate in the lay ministries and activities of their parish and community.
7. Invite a deacon, brother, sister or priest to their home.
8. Encourage their children to see the importance of the priesthood and religious life as well as presenting a positive vision of Christian marriage and family life.

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The vocations committee also distributes the Diocesan Prayer Calendar and makes sure vocation-related material is regularly posted.

"We encourage all parishioners or Serrans to consider starting their own hour of prayer and we'll even provide materials on how to go about it," Noreen says. To contact either Noreen or her husband Lee (vice-president, Ontario for the Canada Council of Serra International), please call (519) 885-1982, or lhishon@kw.its.net

Serra Club Welcomes New Members

The Serra Club is an international Catholic organization of lay people. Its role is to:

- foster and promote vocations within the Catholic Church
- develop appreciation for the ministerial priesthood and all religious vocations in the Church
- deepen the Catholic faith of its members in fulfilling their own vocations to service

Contact Us

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We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Visit our web site:
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The Diocese of Hamilton has two Serra Clubs. For more information or to become a member, please call:

- Hamilton Club:
Paul Wendling, president, (905) 637-6205, or Father Ian Duffy, St. Gabriel Parish, Burlington, (905) 336-7144.
- Kitchener-Waterloo Club:
Noreen Hishon, president-elect (519) 885-1982, or Father Phil Sherratt, St. Mary's Parish, Elora, (519) 846-5093.