

Two Kitchener Resurrection grads prepare to enter Roman Catholic priesthood

BY LIZ MONTEIRO, RECORD STAFF

KITCHENER —In less than a year, Brad Markus and Paul Hrynczyszyn will be priests with the Roman Catholic Church.

The Kitchener men, both graduates of Resurrection Catholic Secondary School, were ordained as deacons last month and are now serving in area parishes before heading back to St. Augustine's Seminary in Toronto in the fall.

"God has called us at this moment. We are young and we have many things to learn but we have many things to offer," said Hrynczyszyn, 26.

Seminaries have long struggled with encouraging young men to enter the priesthood. Markus and Hrynczyszyn said there are about 18 men in their class.

At St. Mary's High School, where Thomas Slabon recently graduated, there are two other students contemplating the priesthood, said religion teacher Kishanie Jayasundera. Slabon wants to be a Jesuit priest.

Rev. Bob Liddy, a retired priest who leads noon-hour masses at St. Jerome's University for students and faculty, said there is always concern in the church that not enough men are entering the priesthood.

Liddy, who was ordained 46 years ago, said priests were more visible when they taught in elementary and high schools and young men saw the vocation as an option. Also, when families were bigger, parents were not as hesitant as they are today to have their son enter the priesthood, he said.

Markus entered the seminary after high school but left after a month and took the rest of the year off. He delivered pizza, worked in a drugstore and spent the summer working on a construction crew.

He spent three months at Madonna House, a Catholic community of men and women in Combermere near Barry's Bay, reflecting on whether he wanted to devote his life to God.

Markus credits his mother for showing him sacrifice after she was left widowed when Markus was just a year old. His father died of Lou Gehrig's disease.

His mother took care of his father and then stayed home with her children, then five, three and one.

"That sacrifice is love. It's the reason I seek to give my life for the service of others," said Markus, 25.

On the day he was ordained a deacon, Markus said his mother was joyful but along the way, "she thought I was going crazy or this was a phase I was going through."

Hrynczyszyn said being a priest is a decision he is now comfortable with, but it's taken much reflection to get here.

"At one point in my life I thought there are two options: keep going or leave, find a girlfriend and get married. The more I reflected on marriage, the more I wanted to be a priest," he said.

"It's a desire in my heart. Anything else doesn't make sense," said Markus of his decision to enter the priesthood.

Hrynczyszyn and Markus said they are lucky to have each other's friendship and rely on one another for support.

"When you live a celibate life, friendships are important," said Hrynczyszyn.

"We can be brutally honest with each other," said Markus.

Both men say their greatest challenge will be convincing Catholics that the church is not about rules and regulations and that the Gospel is not archaic.

"We know the difficulties of life. We are compassionate and empathetic and understand the complexity of life," said Hrynczyszyn.

"We don't sit here and pass judgment," said Markus.

"We are here to help people live the truth of the Gospel," Hrynczyszyn said.



Record staff
Local men Paul Hrynczyszyn (left) and Brad Markus will soon be ordained as Catholic priests.