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Come & See

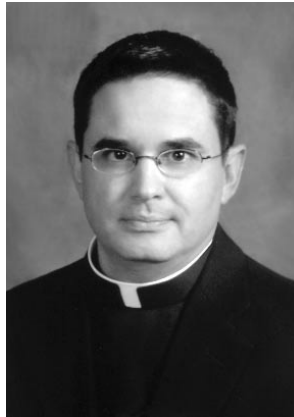
Newsletter for those pondering the priesthood

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Introducing Milwaukee's New Priests

Rafael Rodríguez: Focus on Service

Rafael Rodríguez strives to answer God's call in his life. While recognizing that the Church is imperfect because people are imperfect, the newly ordained priest faced the challenges of discernment of the call to priesthood through some difficult times.



Although quiet and reserved, Rafael maintains a sense of humor that takes people by surprise. Rafael, who is from Venezuela, felt drawn to a life of service before he thought specifically of priesthood. "I was always interested in working for the community. In high school, I participated in the Social Christian Party, which was one of two main political parties at the time and was mostly Catholic," Rafael said.

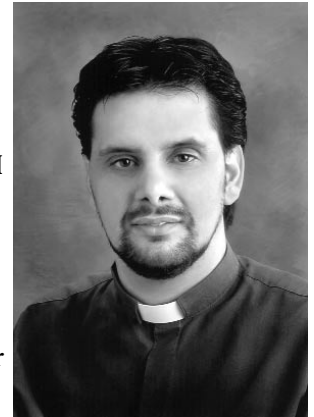
He earned a law degree in his native Venezuela and later returned to school for specialization in maritime law. "My hometown is a commercial and fishing port," Rafael said. "My father owned a marine hardware store. Maritime law was a new field with few lawyers. I saw my hometown as a target for my services."

Rafael found himself wanting to do something more than his law career offered. "There was something inside of me that wanted to do community work—to somehow contribute," he said. He contacted a friend, a city attorney, and together they established a private foundation with the goal of preserving the historical heritage of his hometown. Most of the landmark buildings in Cumaná are connected to the Church.

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Stephen Forrest: Meeting Mentors Along the Way

"When I give a talk, I pick out a few people who look friendly in the audience," said Stephen Forrest, who was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee on May



21. The tip received during seminary training for preaching didn't spare him from nervousness when he gave a presentation at the annual spring priests' assembly in May. "I was very nervous," he admitted.

Born in London, England, Stephen traces his journey toward becoming a priest to the involvement of a deacon at his parish in England. The deacon introduced Stephen to the Missionary Community of St. Paul the Apostle (MCSPA) back in 1993.

The MCSPA invited Stephen to assist in the community's missionary work in Kenya, and that three-month experience in Africa was instrumental in Stephen's decision to join the MCSPA the following year.

The MCSPA has houses in seven countries, including one in Racine, Wisconsin. Stephen moved to Racine in 1995 and enrolled at UW-Parkside. He graduated with an undergraduate degree in philosophy.

The missionary community encompasses both laypeople and clergy. Interactions with community members were a pivotal part of Stephen's discernment. Two priests in the MCSPA specifically asked Stephen if he felt called to be a priest. "They brought it up," Stephen said, "and those two priests were the first ones I told that I wanted to become a priest."

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Rafael Rodríguez (continued from page 1)

Rafael also took on fund-raising for Seminario San José (St. Joseph Seminary), located across the street from the grade school he attended as a child. Gradually, he devoted more and more time to the seminary, even teaching a law course to the philosophy students.

Over the next three years or so, Rafael attended vocations retreats and events, and kept in contact with the vocations director.

Rafael waited until the last minute to tell his parents that he wanted to be a priest. "My dad said, 'If you think that's where you'll find happiness, I'll be happy.' That was a very emotional moment. I think they would rather see me have a family, but they respected my decision," Rafael said. When he told his girlfriend that he wanted to apply to the seminary, she wasn't completely surprised because of his increasing involvement at church.

He applied and was admitted to the seminary in Caracas for second-career vocations. Following a year and a half of pre-theology studies, Rafael wanted to explore missionary life. Three of Rafael's sisters and one brother live in Florida. One of his sisters there met Father Paco Andreu, founder of the Missionary Community of Saint Paul the Apostle, and talked to him about her brother. On his next trip to Venezuela, Fr. Andreu called Rafael.

"He wanted me to go the next day to Africa. I said, 'Wait a minute.' Then he invited me to Wisconsin," Rafael said. Rafael made a couple of trips back to Wisconsin before beginning graduate-level theological studies at Saint Francis Seminary in 1999.

Events have a way of making God's call audible. When Rafael was in his early twenties, Pope John Paul II visited Venezuela. "That event was very important to me—to see the charisma of the Pope and the mobilization of the people to get ready for his visit. All the schools closed. I went to the Mass with my mom. About half a million people were there." That was in 1985.

Twelve years later, Rafael was tying up loose ends at his office before leaving for the seminary in Caracas. His cousin, who worked with Rafael at the law office, still didn't believe Rafael was really leaving law to study for priesthood.

Just then, an earthquake hit, collapsing the building. "We lost one of our workers. He was trapped up to his neck. We saw him

dying," Rafael said somberly. Looking back at the experience of being trapped in the rubble, Rafael said, "I think the faith of my mom saved me. She went to the building, called my name, and prayed the psalm, 'The Lord is my shepherd; what shall I want?'"

While an earthquake isn't a voice from the sky, the experience drew Rafael closer to priesthood. "My cousin found a new site for the office and is happily working," Rafael added.

Rafael has experienced people unable to understand his wanting to become a priest. "For my closest friends, it wasn't a surprise, but one of my brothers doesn't like the idea," he said. There is room for mixed reactions, which Rafael puts in the context of Catholics from all walks of life gathering around the Eucharistic table. "The Eucharist is surrounded by the life situations of many people," Rafael said.

Rafael celebrated his first Mass after ordination with the congregations of Saint Clement and Holy Name of Jesus Parishes, in Sheboygan. His connection with the Sheboygan parishes goes back to his parish internship at St. Clement's.

Rafael's parents, four sisters, and two of his four brothers, as well as other relatives attended his ordination. Rafael plans to travel to Venezuela in spring of 2005 to celebrate a Mass of thanksgiving at Santa Ines (St. Agnes Church), in Cumaná. He will become associate pastor at St. Frances Cabrini Parish-West Bend in June.

Stephen Forrest (continued from page 1)

Back in England, Stephen had followed a retail career track, working in sales at a record store, a hardware store, and then a clothier. In high school, his goal was to work on the retail end of the music industry.

His father passed away just as Stephen was approaching adulthood. When Stephen later told his mother and four siblings about his call and desire to become a priest, they supported him. "They were happy. They said as long as I was doing what I really wanted to do, they were happy," Stephen recalled.

"Friends and family really didn't influence my discernment," Stephen continued. He did find inspiration in Fr. Pere Cane, one of the founding members of the MCSPA. "He inspired me by his example—the way he

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"There was something inside of me that wanted to somehow contribute."

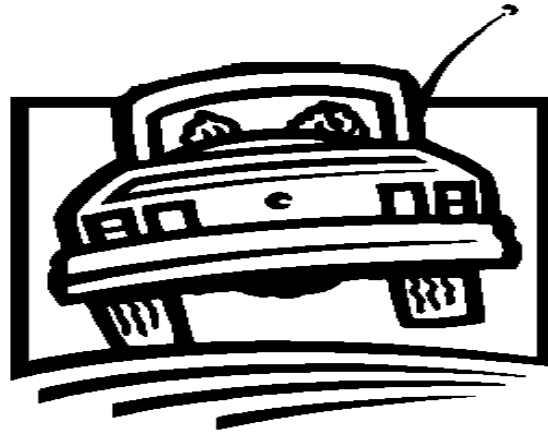
— Rafael Rodríguez

New Vocations Director

Taking the archbishop to the airport is a very dangerous thing to do! I work out in a club near the airport at 5:30 most mornings, so when the archbishop has an early morning flight he sometimes calls to hitch a ride to the airport with me.

He did so about a month ago and started talking about the need to better coordinate Hispanic ministry that was reported over and over again during the pastoral planning process throughout the archdiocese. He talked about the assignment of priests to Hispanic ministry, and the better use of material and financial resources. He said it was so important that he wanted to appoint a vicar of Hispanic ministry to make this happen. I agreed with him. Then he said he wanted me to be the vicar. I almost jumped the curb I was so surprised! He takes his life into his own hands when he does something like that....

My appointment takes effect on July 1, 2004. As many of you know, Hispanic ministry is something close to my heart. For over 18 years now, I have been concerned about providing better and more consistent pastoral service to the Spanish-speaking community throughout the archdiocese. There are very few parishes that don't have Hispanic families in their neighborhoods. I am excited about making this happen and in fact have already begun this work by advising the director of clergy personnel in the spring assignments of priests to Hispanic ministry. I will also be pastor of a Milwaukee near-southside Hispanic parish.



Fr. Jerry Herda will take over as vocations director. He is presently the personal priest-secretary of the archbishop. He will retain a few of his responsibilities as priest-secretary, and thus will bring to vocations ministry a close connection with the archbishop that this archdiocese has never had before. Fr. Jerry has been a campus minister at the high school level for years, and will bring these skills to vocations work, too.

For the past seven years I have been energized and excited about vocations ministry. It has been an extraordinary privilege. Helping men and women discern their call has been a deeply spiritual experience for me. The opportunity to visit most of our over 220 parishes to talk about vocations has been humbling and insightful. Channeling the concern and enthusiasm of so many people throughout the archdiocese into meaningful support for vocations has been thrilling. I will miss this ministry. I am excited about this next adventure in my own priesthood and I know you are in good hands with Fr. Jerry Herda! May God bless you all.

Stephen Forrest (continued from page 2)

lives his priesthood. He's very approachable, honest, and kind. He's very pastoral."

For relaxation, Stephen enjoys cooking, albeit not in gourmet style and, actually, not in use-a-recipe style. "I like to experiment with different combinations of food, putting different things together," he says. "I can't use cookbooks." Members of the missionary community could attest to his creative cooking skills.

Stephen's mother, three brothers, sisters, and an aunt came to Milwaukee for ordination. Their week-long stay was the first visit to the United States for everyone except his mother, who came for Stephen's

ordination to the diaconate last September. The MCSPA has about 120 members worldwide, and about 50 attended ordination as well.

For anyone discerning a call to priesthood, Stephen advises, "Allow God to speak in your life, and listen to your heart."

Stephen was the celebrant at Mass for the first time at Prince of Peace Parish the day after ordination. He returned to England to celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving at his parish, Ealing Abbey, on June 6. Upon his return to the U.S., Stephen will begin serving as associate pastor at Prince of Peace/ Principe de Paz Parish, in Milwaukee.

*"Allow God
to speak in
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and listen to
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– Stephen Forrest



Ordination

“Holy orders” is the name of the sacrament, and “ordination” is the rite. Ordination sacramentally enables a man to serve as a bishop, priest, or deacon. The rite is rich in symbolism to help us understand how a person is changed through the sacrament. He becomes a priest 24/7, heart, hands, mind, and soul.

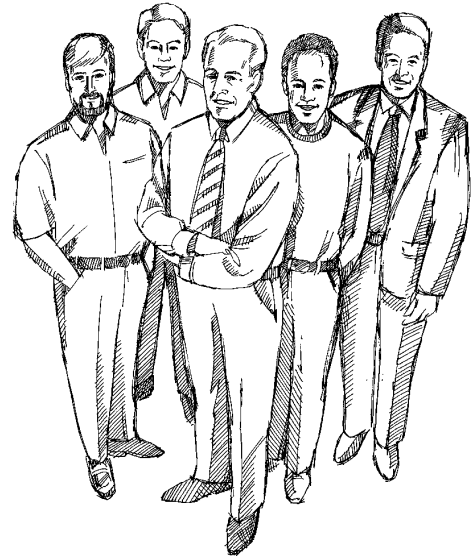
Ordination occurs in the context of a Mass. After the Gospel, the seminary rector presents the candidates for ordination to the archbishop and affirms their spiritual, human, educational, and pastoral readiness to serve as priests. The people gathered assent to the ordinations, recognizing that the call to priesthood is from God and is discerned by the individual and by the Church community.

Following the homily, which talks about the duties of a priest, the archbishop asks the candidates for ordination a series of questions. By their answers, the candidates publicly state their intention to exercise the ministry of priesthood and promise obedience to the archbishop and his successors. During the Litany of Saints, the candidates lie on the floor as a symbol of their dependence upon God and the prayers of the faith community.

The archbishop lays his hands on the head of each man being ordained and prays that he will receive the necessary graces for priestly ministry. All of the priests who are present participate in laying on hands, this time as a symbol of acceptance of the new priests into the presbyterate.

In the Prayer of Consecration, the archbishop asks God to grant the ordinands the dignity and grace of priesthood. A new priest is vested in a stole and chasuble. The stole symbolizes the authority and responsibility to serve in imitation of Jesus, and the chasuble is the garment of priests celebrating the Eucharist. The ritual of anointing the hands of the new priests with Chrism oil dates back to Old Testament times and acknowledges that the priest is set apart for sacred duties.

When the archbishop receives and hands over the gifts of bread, wine, and water, he tells the newly ordained priests to model their lives on the mystery celebrated at the Eucharistic table.



Seminary Enrollments Nationwide

Saint Francis Seminary’s enrollments in the Priestly Formation Program (pre-theology and graduate-level) increased six-fold from the 2002-03 academic year to 2003-04. That increase bucks nationwide figures showing a 4% enrollment decline in the same time period, as reported by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University. For the coming academic year, an anticipated 9-12 new seminarians will enter the Priestly Formation Program (including students in English as a Second Language, college, pre-theology, and graduate-level theological studies).

From the Inside

By Peter Berger, Seminarian

Greetings as we continue to celebrate Christ's resurrection. It is in that spirit of hope and joy which flows from the Paschal Mystery that I write this latest "From the Inside" column.

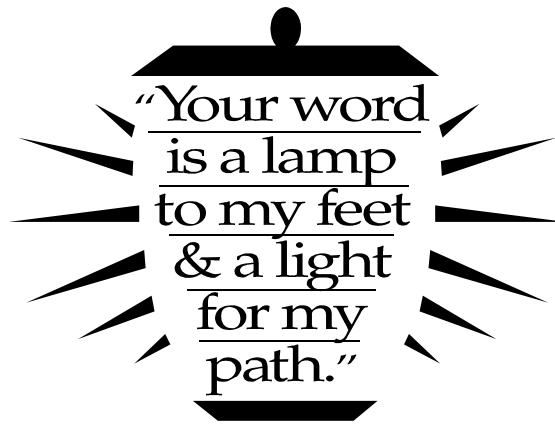
It can be easy, as we think about vocations and priesthood, to focus in on what the priest gives up. It seems that our society wants to focus in on those sacrifices that a vocation to the priesthood entails. Yes, there are sacrifices that must be made, but I would contend that they are no more or less than the average married person with a family makes.

A couple of years ago, a man was walking by the seminary with his newborn daughter. He stopped and we started to chat. He asked if I was a student here and if I was studying to be a priest. When I said yes, he told me "that must be a huge commitment to make."

I looked at his daughter and said, "Actually, I think you've made just as large a commitment by being a father." You could see in his face that something resonated with him, that he understood better, that what each of us was doing was not so far from what the other was doing. In light of that, I think it would be nice to reflect for a bit on the joys of priesthood! I am not a priest yet, but I was able to spend nine months on a parish internship and experienced some of the things that a priest does, and they are very deep joys.

As a diocesan priest you:

- *Experience the mundane and the deeply spiritual:* One of things that excites me about priesthood is the diversity of experiences that a diocesan priest has. I can remember preparing for the Easter Vigil at my intern parish. We had a large baptismal pool that was set up for the Easter season, and about an hour and a half before the vigil was scheduled to begin, we discovered that the heating pump had a hole and had



Psalm 119:105

pumped a fourth of the pool onto the floor. Needless to say, it was not what we needed! So, I spent time mopping up the floor as fast as I could before we needed to begin. Only a few hours later we baptized two people in that same refilled pool. One was a 22-year-old college senior and the other a 61-year-old grandmother. To go from cleaning up a mess to experiencing the entry of two people into the Church was a huge swing and brought with it a deep sense of joy.

- *Live your life in community:* That may seem something odd to say about a diocesan priest, since they don't generally live in community with other priests. What I learned on internship was that you live in a community just the same: the parish community. You are truly a part of the life of a community of various people, all united around a central faith in Jesus Christ and commitment to His Church. I was not alone like I feared I would be. The People of God sustained me in my vocation, and I hope and pray that I helped to sustain them in theirs. That type of community excites me in a way that religious life community does not. I love the diversity of the parish community, where you get to live your life and share yourself with people who work hard, have fun, and long to experience God in their lives. By the same token, they share themselves with you and accept you as part of the "family."
- *Serve everyone:* Religious orders have particular ministries. For instance,

GOD NEEDS! YOU!

Jesuits tend to serve in educational institutions and missions. Franciscans tend to serve the poor and the cause of justice. What excites me about the diocesan priesthood is that we serve everyone. We don't have a "special assignment" to a certain group of people; we serve anyone and everyone who walks through the parish door, or who lives in the parish neighborhood. They are all entrusted to our care, young and old, rich and poor, black and white, the weak in faith and the strong in faith, families and single persons, the newly born and the dying, the healthy and the sick. We are called to serve ALL of them. No one is left outside the care of the parish priest. That breadth of people whom I can serve is something that very few if any other ways of life offer.

- *Are allowed into the depths of a person's soul:* When I had been on internship about three weeks or so, I went to the first meeting of the RCIA for the year. I had never met these people before in my life, but as I was walking back to the rectory that night, one of the sponsors, a younger man, stopped me because he needed to talk. He had lost his job and was struggling to support his family. He himself had just come back to the Church about a year before and was wondering where God was and whether God cared for him. I had never met him before in my life! He knew I was a seminarian though, and felt comfortable sharing his faith struggle with me. It was an honor to be allowed into the depths of his soul like that. We talked and it seemed to bring him some relief. A week later, after Sunday Mass, he stopped me. He had found a job after months of searching! God had answered his prayers. I experienced the depths of his concern and also the joy of a new opportunity. The priesthood allows one to quickly enter another's life and share in the pains and joys of that life.
- *Preach regularly:* One of the central missions of the priest is to preach, to

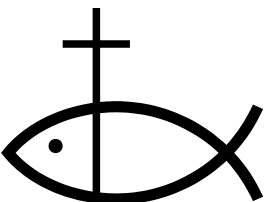
share the Good News with the community. The ability to take the fruits of your own prayer and God's actions in your life, to share where you see God acting in the community and the world, and to share that with hundreds of people every week is an incredible joy and gift. It is a sacred trust and a central aspect of the care of souls. It makes God's actions and words new and relevant in people's lives.

- *Celebrate the Sacred Mysteries of our redemption:* A priest is one who celebrates the sacraments. I was, of course, not allowed to do that on internship! The longing to celebrate them, though, was deep. The sacraments are Christ's gift to His Church, the very pledge of His love and His presence with the Church for all time. When someone asks where God is in their lives, one of the easiest places to point is the Eucharist. As a priest, one is given the grace of celebrating these mysteries of new life, of marital commitment, of forgiveness, of anointing the sick, of the very Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. That Christ would call me, or you, to continue to celebrate these mysteries for the People of God, day after day, weekend after weekend, is a joy beyond words.

There are many other joys to the priesthood: spending time in the grade school, listening to teenagers, walking to the gravesite with a family, welcoming the stranger, speaking for the voiceless, caring for those who have no one else to care for them, and daring to represent Christ to His holy people. Yes, there are sacrifices that a priest makes, but so many joys that far make up for them.

Newsletter Options

If you would like to receive the *Come & See* newsletter by e-mail, rather than postal mail, please contact Joan Sobczak in the Vocations Office, at 414-747-6437 or jsobczak@sfs.edu. It would come to you as an e-mail attachment in PDF format.



Book Review

Connolly, Fr. Sean, *Simple Priesthood*, London: St. Paul's Publishing, 2001 (188 pages).

The title of chapter one, "Reality Bites," gives an immediate clue about the author's willingness to talk about the paradox of trying imperfectly to reflect the perfection of Christ. The book covers topics ranging from the personal (such as celibacy and sexuality) to the structural (Church hierarchy and spiritual consumerism).

The author, Fr. Sean Connelly, draws on experiences from his first five years of priesthood, and also includes essays from three ordained and one soon-to-be priest. The settings and language are British, but the issues easily cross the Atlantic.

Fr. Connelly writes that parishioners seemed to believe that seminary formation made him an expert in everything. As a newly ordained priest, did they really expect him to have all the answers?

"When a parishioner comes to me about a medical problem...what they are really looking for is not medical advice but for someone to accompany them through whatever medicine is about to throw at them. When someone asks me about their daughter's truancy, it is because they need support," he realized.

In discussing celibacy, he says, "Perhaps at worst our celibacy makes no impact on anyone at all." He continues, however, "If I aim for celibacy in its widest implications, then I will come across as someone for whom God is God: someone who has given up on substitutes because he has learned that they can never ultimately satisfy his eternal longings."

The essays in Part II of the book delve into some major issues facing the Church. For example, Fr. Ian Dalgleish says that consumerism has become a part of religious practices as Catholics pick and choose from amidst the whole of our faith and tradition.

Fr. Dalgleish suggests looking to the early Church for ideas. "Since every Christian is called to be an evangelist, many areas of pastoral activity...should be carried on by teams of laymen and women.... This reflects the methods of the early Church, which did not concentrate all missionary and pastoral activity in the hands of the elders," he wrote.

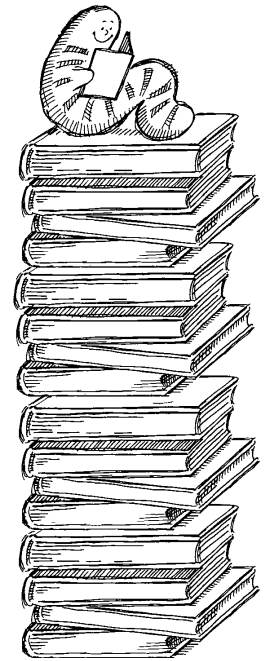


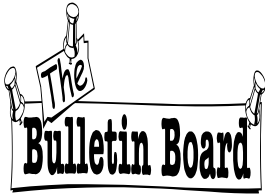
Graduate Awards

Congratulations to this year's recipients of awards for graduates of Saint Francis Seminary. Rev. Rafael Rodríguez received the John A. Schulien Award, and Carmelo Giuffre won the Younger Brother Schulien Award. Deacon Rafael was ordained to the priesthood on May 21. Carmelo has completed his second year of graduate theological studies and will be on parish internship next year at St. Andrew Parish, in Delavan.

In the Diaconate Formation Program, Sanford Sites received the DeSales Award. Two awards for lay students were also conferred. Debra Hamm, who earned a Master of Divinity degree, won the Maranatha Award. Mary Ann Erdtmann graduated with a Certificate in Pastoral Services and earned this year's DeChantal Award. Honors are determined by the faculty and administration of Saint Francis Seminary.

The graduating class of 2004 included eight students earning a Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies and five graduates earning Master of Divinity degrees. In addition, 20 graduates received their certificates in Pastoral Services, Administrative Services, or Christian Formation Leadership. Commencement took place on May 7.





World Day of Prayer for Vocations

On Good Shepherd Sunday, Catholics worldwide focus on vocations. To celebrate World Day of Prayer for Vocations this year, seminarians joined men and women in formation with area religious communities and guests interested in Church ministry. Bishop Richard Sklba celebrated Mass, which was followed by brunch at the Seminary.

The formation process for religious life differs from formation for diocesan priesthood. The event brought people together to mutually support each other as they continue to discern and prepare for priesthood or religious life as sisters and brothers.

Peter Berger, a fourth-year seminarian who worked part-time this year for the Vocations Office, originated the idea for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations celebration in Milwaukee. If you have ideas for future events that would help you in your discernment, contact the Vocations Office at 414-747-6437 or vocations@sfs.edu.

Candidacy to Diaconate and Priesthood

Bishop Richard Sklba called seminarians Peter Berger, Michael Lightner, and Norberto Sandoval to candidacy to the diaconate and priesthood at a Mass on April 29 in Saint Francis Seminary's Christ King Chapel. Each of the seminarians submitted to the bishop a signed statement asking to be admitted as a candidate to receive holy orders and declaring that he will freely receive holy orders and devote himself permanently to ecclesiastical ministry. At the same time, the seminarians publicly made their commitment to celibacy, obedience to the bishop and his successors, and a simple life-style. All three are preparing for ordination as transitional deacons in September 2004 and then ordination to priesthood in May 2005.

Upcoming Retreats

Life Directions: Are you looking for a retreat geared toward people in the beginning stages of discernment? Join single men and women, ages 18-45, for the Life Directions Retreat this summer. The retreat includes prayer and reflection, workshops, and group and one-to-one conversation. This year's retreat will take place August 20-22, 2004, at the Schoenstatt Center, in Waukesha. Serra International and Vocation Ministers of the Milwaukee Archdiocese co-sponsor the retreat. There is no fee for participants. For more information, contact the Vocations Office at vocations@sfs.edu or 414-747-6437.

Reach Out/Reach In: This six-day service experience for people ages 15-18 places each participant in a social-service setting, such as Soujourner Truth House, Hope House, the Salvation Army, Casa Maria, or a family farm. Students live at Our Lady of Divine Providence (St. Casimir site, in Milwaukee), go to their service sites during the day, and participate in discussions to reflect on their experiences and social issues in the evening. The dates are July 25-30, 2004. The fee is \$140, but some scholarships are available. Contact Cathy Pinter, program administrator, at cmpinter@world-net.att.net or 414-962-8155.

More Retreat Information: To provide your parishioners with a variety of opportunities, log onto www.thinkpriest.org/retreat.html for a roster of upcoming retreats and camps.

