



Sister of Providence ministers to Hispanic children, page 10.



Seminarian is inspired by Archbishop Oscar Romero, page 11.



Benedictine sister follows angel's lead to vocation, page 12.



A day in the life of a seminarian, page 13.

# 'Hearing God's Call'

By Fr. Eric Johnson

Director of the archdiocesan Office of Priestly and Religious Vocations

"I have called you by name, you are mine" (Is 43:1). These beautiful words of God to his people speak to the knowledge, intimacy and love that God has for each one of us. They serve as an invitation to trust in his promise, and to follow wherever he leads us.



Fr. Eric Johnson

They are words that summon us to come to know God's will for us, and to see in that will our own life and happiness. God's call is personal, addresses us by name, makes us his unique possession and, through this, leads us in service to other people.

It is from this original call that our own unique vocation is born. Whether married, single, deacon, priest or religious, our vocation is a response to Christ's word of salvation and promise.

It is a call that leads us into a deeper knowledge, love and service of God, and summons us to love and service

of others.

At its heart, our unique vocational call is a reflection of who we are and who God intends us to be. It is a relationship with the one who calls us each by name, and desires our fulfillment and happiness.

This means that part of our task as Christians is to open our heart to hear God's call in our lives. We need to humbly ask: "Lord, what are you calling me to do?"

This is true as we seek to discover our vocation, but it is also important as we strive to live our vocation. We are called to be people of prayer, seeking to discern God's will in all that we do and to respond faithfully with all that we have.

God calls each of us by name and makes us his own. But while this call is deeply personal, issued to us in the silence of our hearts, I also believe that it often comes to us through the tangible help and invitation of others.

It was Eli who recognized the voice of God in Samuel's experience and instructed him to respond: "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sm 3:10).

In my own life, I am reminded of parents, family and friends who wrestled with how they were being called to live out their own vocation. I think of the example of so many priests and religious who lived

faithful lives of prayer and service, and those who encouraged, supported and nourished my own vocational call to the priesthood.

Part of hearing God's call is opening our hearts to the invitation of others, learning from their example, and allowing them to share in our discernment.

The following pages are filled with stories of men and women who have heard God's call and responded by embracing a vocation to the priesthood, the permanent diaconate or the religious life.

Each of their stories is unique, a reflection of God's personal invitation, shaped by their relationships with others.

These stories are still being written, as these men and women continue to listen, continue to trust and continue to joyfully respond to God's invitation to service.

Such a response is a unique gift to the Church. Through their own lives and ministry, priests, deacons, and men and women religious help us to remember God's call in our own lives.

It is good that we remember them. They teach us to listen, call us to service and witness to the God that calls each of us by name. Their vocation reminds us of the importance of discovering and living out our own. As we read, may we more faithfully strive to hear God's call. †



# Priest ministers with joy after 43 years of service

By Sean Gallagher

Father James Wilmoth sat on a bench outside Roncalli High School's small chapel one day in November as the sound of a buzzer marked the end of a class period in the middle of the day.

Soon the students poured into the hallways of the Indianapolis South Deanery high school, which buzzed with the chatter of hundreds of conversations.

A few dozen students made their way through the crowd to the chapel. Some stopped to chat with their school's 69-year-old chaplain. Others went in for a few minutes of quiet prayer before the school's daily Mass.

Father Wilmoth began his second stint as Roncalli's chaplain in 2006, more than 30 years after he started his first period of ministry there.

When he was asked two years ago to minister at Roncalli again, Father Wilmoth was the pastor of St. Roch Parish, a faith community on Indianapolis' south side that has seen a healthy amount of growth since he began his ministry there in 1997.

After serving as a priest for more than 40 years, a natural reaction to the request to add Roncalli's chaplaincy to his ministry portfolio might have been a polite, "No thank you."

But that is not Father Wilmoth's way. "As soon as [the archbishop] asked about it, I said I'd be happy to, that I'd love to do it," Father Wilmoth said. "It's because I'm so committed to Catholic schools."

He also remains committed to St. Roch, where he continues to serve as pastor, and to its school, where he goes early each morning to help students out of their buses and parents' cars.

"He's just very selfless," said Bonnie Schott, a member of St. Roch Parish. "He hardly ever thinks about himself. He's just always thinking about

other people, and how to make their lives happier and better."

Father Wilmoth's selfless ministry begins early each day when he spends time in quiet prayer, offering up many intercessions for those to whom he ministers.

Then it is off to the parish school. He celebrates Mass for St. Roch students three days a week, and at Roncalli every day. His ministry then often extends into the evening when he might meet with parishioners, couples preparing to be married or attend a school sporting event.

Father Wilmoth spoke in Roncalli's chapel about how after four decades of priestly ministry he still gets the energy to give of himself from dawn to well after dusk.

A buzzer sounded again and the school's halls, which had been silent moments earlier, were buzzing again.

"These kids give you energy," Father Wilmoth said. "Just listen. How could you not be energized by all that, by hearing them out there laughing, talking to their buddies, just between classes, by walking down the hallway and they say, 'Hey, Father' or high five you?"

Charles Weisenbach had been one of those students back in the early 1970s when Father Wilmoth was in his first tenure at Roncalli.

He is now in his 14th year as the



Father James Wilmoth, chaplain of Roncalli High School and pastor of St. Roch Parish, both in Indianapolis, gives the sign of peace to Audrey Meyers, a Roncalli sophomore who is a member of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Beech Grove, during a Nov. 12 Mass at the school. Waiting to give the sign of peace to Father Wilmoth is Roncalli sophomore Meg Naumovich, a member of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood.

school's principal.

"It doesn't seem as if anything has changed from my recollection from when he was here 30 years ago," Weisenbach said. "He's still very kid-oriented. He still has a high energy level. He's still passionate about the Church [and] his Catholic faith."

One thing that Weisenbach is happy that has changed about Father Wilmoth is that he is no longer helping coach the school's freshman basketball team.

He was a member of that team decades ago when Father Wilmoth walked the sidelines. The team lost far more games

than they won.

"I would say that it was probably to everyone's best benefit that he stayed with the clergy and not continued coaching basketball," Weisenbach said with a laugh. "We struggled, but I believe that it was probably more due to the talent level of the team and not the coaching."

Weisenbach's son, Sam, got to share an experience with his dad when Father Wilmoth was his chaplain during his senior year at Roncalli.

"He's a great guy. I love him," said Sam. "He's a great priest. And he's just

See **PRIEST**, page 14

# Sister of Providence senses God's presence in her ministries

By Dave Cox

Special to The Criterion

And to think that Providence Sister Therese Whitsett once thought it was her idea to enter the Sisters of Providence, go to Bolivia and Peru, spend a summer ministering at a migrant farm camp, work at an Indian reservation in North Dakota, become certified as an English as a New Language teacher, and now use her skills as an ENL staff member at an Indianapolis parish school in a high-crime area.

"At one time, I wanted to be a Maryknoll missionary, then I didn't want to be a sister at all. Then I thought I'd like to be a teacher. I knew I would like to serve the Church," said Sister Therese. "In those days, in the 1950s, there weren't many options for women. You were a nurse, you were a mother or you were a nun.

"I originally started out thinking it was my idea to come to the convent to be a sister, but as I grow older, I have realized it is more than that. God had a lot to do with it. As I grow older, my relationship with God deepens, as it should."

She added, "Religious life has a whole different meaning for me now than when I first entered. It's the ministry that shows me God. I think the experiences I have had in community life, and the many good sisters I have lived with over the years, have taught me a lot about that."

Sister Therese, who is 64, grew up in St. Anthony Parish on Indianapolis' west side in a devoted Catholic family with nine children.

"I had Sisters of Providence for teachers all through my elementary school years," said Sister Therese. "I liked watching what the sisters were doing. They seemed like they were a happy group of people. I liked how they taught me.

"My family was very religious. We prayed the rosary every night after supper. It was like I almost had my novitiate started for me in those days. It was easy for me to consider being of service to the Church because my family was very involved in the Church."

The desire to be a missionary appealed to Sister Therese.

"I used to read books about the missionaries. It was something out of the ordinary, giving your life to go far away. I would have been like an adventure to do something heroic," she said.

She entered the Sisters of Providence in 1962. In 1969, she went to Bolivia to learn Spanish and later spent 18 months ministering at a Jesuit elementary school in Peru.

Sister Therese returned to the United States for a transition ministry in an elementary school then spent a summer ministering at a migrant farm camp in southeastern Indiana in Sunman.

"That changed my life forever," she said. "I got acquainted again with the Spanish community."

Providence Sister Peggy Nau called and asked her to join the staff at a Native American reservation in North Dakota.

"Every mission I have been on has changed me. You do not have to leave the United States to be a missionary," Sister Therese noted.

She used her Spanish skills again when she returned to the Chicago area in a parish community heavily populated by Hispanic and Puerto Rican families.

After a sabbatical at the University of Notre Dame and an interim teaching ministry, she joined Providence Sister Marikay Duffy at the Hispanic Education Center in Indianapolis, which has since merged into La Plaza, a centralized service agency for



Marisol Canchola, left, and Lorena Luna, both third graders at St. Philip Neri School in Indianapolis, listen to Providence Sister Therese Whitsett on Dec. 11 at the Mother Theodore Catholic Academy. Sister Therese is an English as a New Language teacher at the Indianapolis East Deanery grade school, where many Hispanic children are enrolled.

Hispanics in Indianapolis.

She learned about an opening for an ENL teacher at St. Philip Neri School in Indianapolis. "[The] Sisters of Providence began teaching at St. Philip's in 1910, so it is a real privilege to serve at this school," she added.

"It's my dream ministry," Sister Therese said. "Every day is a challenge. I have a chance to be with every grade level in the school and help students who are learning English as a new language.

"The children are so welcoming and very loving. The parents are very appreciative. I can also help the teachers with strategies and materials for students who need more help with English."

Working at the migrant camp was the awakening.

"I know that I have heard God's call. When I was invited to come to the migrant camp, it touched me," Sister Therese said. "Life is a wonderful blessing. I would never have had these experiences otherwise. Being with these other cultures has really enriched my life.

"Now I know it was God calling me all the time. I have allowed God to have more credit," she said with a laugh. "I thank God every day for the gift to be a Sister of Providence."

(For more information about the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, log on to [www.sistersofprovidence.org](http://www.sistersofprovidence.org).) †



# Seminarian from El Salvador inspired by Archbishop Romero

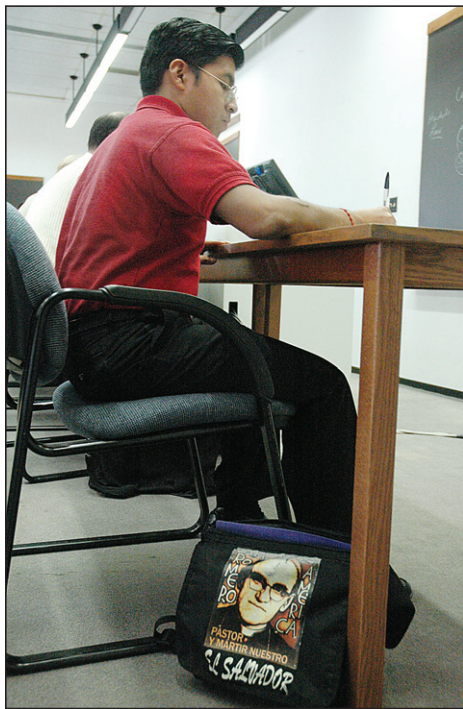
By John Shaughnessy

As he walks the halls of Saint Meinrad School of Theology in St. Meinrad, seminarian Oscar Vasquez carries a book bag that reminds him of the hero who serves as an inspiration for his life—and his desire to become a priest.

The image on the book bag depicts Archbishop Oscar Romero, the bespectacled, balding Church leader in El Salvador whose vocal support of the poor and human rights caused him to be assassinated in 1980 as he celebrated Mass.

“My vocation became stronger when I read about his life and his work,” says the 30-year-old Vasquez, who was a toddler in El Salvador when Archbishop Romero was shot and killed during that country’s civil war.

“He’s not only a model of my faith, but a model of my life in all ways. I also lived during the civil war in El Salvador.



Seminarian Oscar Vasquez takes notes during a class on Dec. 4 at Saint Meinrad School of Theology in St. Meinrad. The book bag at his feet depicts the image of his hero, the late Archbishop Oscar Romero. Vasquez, a first-year theology student at Saint Meinrad, is a member of St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis.

My family had to flee from one city to another city because it was attacked. Archbishop Romero inspired hope, to give yourself for others. He did it with his life. He always was for the poor people.”

In Archbishop Romero, Vasquez sees a man who “gave himself to the Church, who gave himself to God.”

It’s an approach that Vasquez has adopted, an approach that helps to explain the unusual journey that has led him from El Salvador to a seminary in southern Indiana.

“I can see the hand of God in my life,” Vasquez says. “I really can’t explain why I came here. I just really want to serve the Catholic Church. Whether it’s in my country or another country, it doesn’t matter to me. God is moving me where he wants me to be.”

His faith journey began as a teenager when he was part of a youth group at his parish in San Salvador. As the years passed, he led the youth group and also directed several mission trips.

During those years, Vasquez met Father Kenneth Davis, a member of the Conventual Franciscan Province of Our Lady of Consolation based at Mount St. Francis in the New Albany Deanery, who was serving in El Salvador. Father Kenneth asked him if he had thought about becoming a priest, but Vasquez didn’t feel called at that point in his life. Instead, he went to college then worked as a supervisor in a company for more than three years.

“After that, I was talking to Father Ken,” Vasquez recalls. “He was still talking to me about becoming a priest. He said, ‘I will leave you with one idea. Ask God in your prayers if he wants you to be a priest.’”

Vasquez prayed. This time, he heard God’s call.

“I asked if he would consider serving in the United States,” says Father Kenneth, who now teaches at Saint Meinrad School of Theology and resides at Mount St. Francis Friary.

“When he agreed, I began to look for a place where he would be welcome, and found the then-vocation director of the archdiocese—Father Joseph Moriarty—very open and supportive. Oscar went



Seminarian Oscar Vasquez laughs during a class on Dec. 4 at Saint Meinrad School of Theology in St. Meinrad. Vasquez, a first-year theology student at Saint Meinrad, is a member of St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis.

through the same process for acceptance as any other seminarian.”

Vasquez came to the United States in 2005, finding a spiritual home at St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis.

“My parish in El Salvador was the Immaculate Conception,” Vasquez says. “When I came here, I was happy my parish was St. Mary’s. I dedicated myself to the Virgin Mary. St. Mary’s is my home parish. I feel I belong to that place. I see their needs. I see their fruits, too.”

Vasquez has been a blessing for St. Mary Parish, says its pastor, Father Michael O’Mara.

“It’s a good place for him because we’re a bilingual parish,” Father O’Mara says. “He’s done so much ministry for us. He’s been a catechist with children and adults. He’s done vocation programs. He has worked with the poor. On the anniversary of the death of Archbishop Romero, he led us in prayer. You can see the sincerity of his prayer. He has worked hard to learn English, too.”

Father O’Mara pauses and then says, “Both of his parents are deceased. I have a very special bond with him. I feel like he’s a brother or a son to me. Here at St. Mary’s, we are his family.”

Since August, Vasquez has been trying to make a new home at Saint Meinrad School of Theology.

“The beginning was a little hard,” he says. “Now, I feel comfortable. I feel much better. I really like the spiritual life.”

He talks again about his life “being in the hands of God.” Then he adds a twist to that phrase, a twist that gives a hint of the future he sees for himself.

“We are the hands of God,” he says. “If we do something, it has to be for God. I would like to help the poor people. If we are open to serve God, the work will be easy for us.”

(For more information on archdiocesan seminarians, log on to [www.hearGodsCall.com](http://www.hearGodsCall.com).) †

## ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS SEMINARIANS



Rev. Mr. Sean Danda, Pontifical North American College, St. Malachy, Brownsburg; Rev. Mr. Jeremy M. Gries, Saint Meinrad School of Theology, Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Indianapolis; Rev. Mr. John J. Hollowell, Saint Meinrad School of Theology, Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Indianapolis; Rev. Mr. Peter A. Marshall, Saint Meinrad School of Theology, St. Mary, Indianapolis; Rev. Mr. Chris Waderton, Saint Meinrad School of Theology, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Indianapolis; Dustin Boehm, Saint Meinrad School of Theology, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood; David Proctor III, Saint Meinrad School of Theology, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood; Jerry Byrd, Saint Meinrad School of Theology, St. Louis, Batesville; Andy Proctor, Saint Meinrad School of Theology, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood; Aaron J. Thomas, Bishop Simon Brute College Seminary, Marian College, St. Andrew, Richmond; Oscar Vasquez, Saint Meinrad School of Theology, St. Mary, Indianapolis; Joshua Cole, Saint Meinrad School of Theology, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford.

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# Doctor deacon brings together physical and spiritual healing

By Sean Gallagher

GREENSBURG—As he works as a physician from day to day in Greensburg, Deacon Arthur Alunday doesn't just attend to his patients' physical ailments.

He also cares for the health of their spirit and the interplay between body and soul.

"[Being a deacon] just seems to be a natural extension of my practice and the healing process," said Deacon Alunday. "I've been addressing the physical ailments. Now I feel more confident to recognize the spiritual component."

Joann Mokanyk is a member of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg, where Deacon Alunday ministers, and has been one of his patients for many years.

He also cares for Mokanyk's son, Darren, who suffers from severe migraine headaches.

Long before Deacon Alunday entered the archdiocesan deacon formation program in 2004, Mokanyk was confident in his attentiveness to the spiritual aspects of physical illnesses.

"When we were trying to find help for Darren and everybody was saying there was no help out there, Doctor Alunday kept saying, 'Keep the faith. Keep praying. Keep going. We'll find it



Deacon Arthur Alunday listens on Nov. 18 as Sue Colee, a nurse for the Decatur County Board of Health, explains a new piece of medical equipment in the board's offices in Greensburg. Deacon Alunday is the Decatur County health officer.

somewhere," Mokanyk said. "... It really helps to know that your doctors are religious men, and they know there is a higher [power] than what they are."

Deacon Alunday is definitely aware of a "higher power" at work in his life.

He believes it was the "hand of God" that led him to practice medicine in Indiana after being born and raised by Filipino parents in southern California, studying medicine and getting married in the Philippines, and doing his residency in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Deacon Alunday first became familiar with the diaconate while living in New York, and started to grow in his life of faith after he and his family moved to Greensburg in 1994.

A little less than a decade later, he was spiritually ready to consider a possible call to the diaconate when the archdiocese announced that it would be starting its first deacon formation program.

"As I look back, God had his plans for me," Deacon Alunday said.

It was a time when God made his plans abundantly known during a patient visit about 10 years ago that started Deacon Alunday considering more consciously the spiritual aspects of his medical practice.

At the time, he was treating a patient with physical problems who was also coping with depression.

"Something [inside] said to me, 'Talk about God,'" Deacon Alunday said. "I went, 'What?' There was this push I felt inside to talk about God. I'm having this conflict [inside], 'I can't do that.' I didn't want to do it. But then it came out."

After that first instance, talking about God with his patients became easier and more natural for him.

Msgr. Harold Knueven, administrator of St. Mary Parish, said Deacon Alunday's work as a doctor prepared him well for his life and



Deacon Arthur Alunday blesses Madelyn Meyer while she is being held by her mother, Mary Meyer, during a Dec. 7 Mass at St. Mary Church in Greensburg. Deacon Alunday ministers at St. Mary Parish, where the Meyers are members.

ministry as a deacon.

"He's more compassionate, more understanding, more helpful because of his being a doctor," Msgr. Knueven said.

Mokanyk certainly agrees. She calls Deacon Alunday her "spiritual guide" and said his bringing together his medical practice with the diaconate is "like the right hand meeting the left hand."

Participating in the deacon formation program also helped Deacon Alunday grow closer to his wife of 25 years, Ana.

"It's been a journey for both of us, not just for me," he said. "In marriages, you always have your ups and downs. But I think, since starting this, we've become closer. Our marriage has become stronger. Things that we may have argued about before we don't now."

Ana Alunday went to nearly all of the deacon formation weekends with her husband, sitting in on the classes and getting to know the other deacon candidates and their wives.

On the day of the ordination last June, she was brimming with joy.

"I was crossing the street to go to the cathedral and I just kept hearing in my

head the song, 'This is the day that the Lord has made,'" she said. "... There were people who were driving by looking at us. And I thought, 'I wonder if they can feel how happy we are.' There was so much happiness in the air."

Deacon Alunday said he is still "on a spiritual high" from his ordination.

He experienced that elation in a special way that brought his ministry and his medical practice together.

An elderly woman who was dying of a blood disorder was admitted last July to Decatur County Memorial Hospital. While Deacon Alunday was caring for her, she mentioned that she wanted to be baptized.

"I came back that afternoon and I baptized her there in the hospital," he said. "The nurse was my witness. I asked her if I could read some prayers for the sick and she said that would be fine. So I read the prayers and I blessed her."

"I thought it was great that I could be there and do that for her."

(For more information about the archdiocesan deacon formation program, log on to [www.archindy.org/deacon](http://www.archindy.org/deacon).) †

# Guardian angel helps sister continue vocation tradition

By John Shaughnessy

BEECH GROVE—Before she heard it from her future sister-in-law, Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick never knew there was a way for people to learn the name of their guardian angel.

Even when she learned the way, Fitzpatrick never imagined it would help her decide whether or not she should pursue a religious vocation.

"In late 1994, after a couple of vocation retreats, I went to visit my brother and his fiancée who were just engaged," she recalls. "She told me I could pray to God for the name of my guardian angel. I did and, incredibly, it came to me."

It was a name she never expected, a name that wasn't exactly among the most popular female names at the time: Gertrude.

Still, the name stuck in her mind. And then she heard it again a short while later as she watched the news on television and saw a woman named Gertrude being interviewed.

So when she returned to Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove where she had made her vocation retreats, she told the story about her guardian angel's name to two of the Benedictine sisters she had come to know.

"They both got big grins on their faces," she recalls. "They told me, 'Gertrude was a great Benedictine saint and we belong to the Federation of St. Gertrude.'"

She smiles and says, "God speaks to us in all ways."

So that's how Sister Sheila Marie joined the Sisters of St. Benedict in 1995.

Still, it was a decision that surprised a lot of people who knew her earlier in her life, including her parents.

"She had a good job, a house, even a dog," says her mother, Peg Fitzpatrick. "She was dating a nice young man. She seemed settled."

Six years earlier, in 1989, Fitzpatrick had just graduated with a master's degree in information science from the University of Pittsburgh. She was hired by Eli Lilly and Company in Indianapolis to work in information technology. She also started dating a gentleman she knew from the University of Pittsburgh, a friend who also took a job at Lilly.

They were a couple for three years when he asked a question that changed everything, "When do we take the next step?"

Trying to sort out that answer, they both met with separate counselors. In the course of their discussion, she told the counselor that on her mother's side of the family there had been eight consecutive generations of someone choosing a religious vocation.

The counselor asked her, "Do you want to be married the rest of your life, be single or what about religious life?" She said she hadn't consciously considered a religious vocation, but the counselor still suggested she meet with the vocations director at Our Lady of Grace Monastery.

"One of the things that came up in the conversation with the vocations director was that you can work in a



Benedictine Sister Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick, left, a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, talks with Benedictine Sister Carol Falkner, prioress, about scheduling a meeting at the Benedict Inn, a retreat and conference center operated by the monastic community.

number of settings in monastic life," Sister Sheila Marie says. "That helped me quite a bit. That put it in front of me. That was in '92. It would be three years before I entered. I still needed to come to terms that it was the right choice."

Enter the double-play combination of God and Gertrude.

Fourteen years later, Sister Sheila Marie knows she made the right choice.

"I enjoy being in community with the other sisters and sharing this life," she says. "The other aspect I appreciate is

the constant reminder of God in our lives. As I lived as a single person, it was a struggle for me to find time to pray and find the focus to pray. We have the opportunity to pray several times a day here. It's helped me grow closer to God."

That commitment to prayer life includes praying the rosary every weekday as she walks with her close friend, Benedictine Sister Anna Marie Megel.

"We always pray for the special intentions of the day—birthdays, our





Archdiocesan seminarian Doug Marcotte, left, a member of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield and a second-year philosophy student, chats between classes with Ross Parker, a seminarian for the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa, on Dec. 4 in Saint Meinrad School of Theology's Alumni Commons.



Archdiocesan transitional Deacon John Hollowell, a member of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis and a fourth-year theology student at Saint Meinrad, enjoys a time of quiet prayer before Mass on Dec. 4 at the seminary's St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel.

# A day in the life of a seminarian

By Sean Gallagher

ST. MEINRAD—Dec. 4 was the next-to-last day of classes in the fall semester at Saint Meinrad School of Theology for the 2008-09 academic year.

Seminarians from the archdiocese, and scores of other dioceses and religious communities from across the country and around the world, were scurrying to finish their academic work and prepare for the following week's final exams.

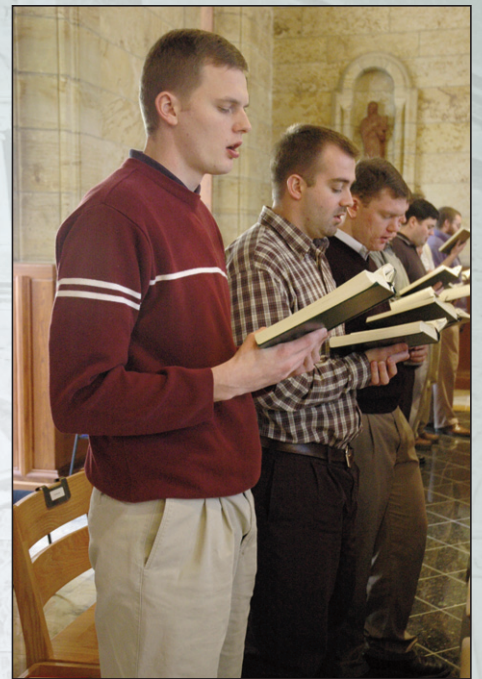
At the same time, the school community was in the midst of a 40-hour eucharistic adoration devotion led by retired Benedictine Archabbot Lambert Reilly. Final preparations were also being made for the seminary's festive St. Nicholas Banquet, which was to be held that night.

In the midst of all this activity, Benedictine Father Denis Robinson, the newly installed rector of the seminary, told students in a class he was teaching that everything that goes on at the seminary ultimately contributes to a seminarian's formation into a future priest, and is ultimately rooted in and flows from the Eucharist.

Saint Meinrad School of Theology is the primary place where the Archdiocese of Indianapolis educates seminarians who have already graduated from college.

Currently, there 12 archdiocesan seminarians enrolled in the southern Indiana seminary.

(For more information on Saint Meinrad School of Theology, log on to [www.saintmeinrad.edu](http://www.saintmeinrad.edu). For more information about archdiocesan seminarians, log on to [www.hearagodscall.com](http://www.hearagodscall.com).) †



Above, archdiocesan seminarian David Proctor, left, and Jeff Read, a seminarian for the Evansville Diocese, sing a hymn during Mass on Dec. 4 at the seminary's St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel. Proctor, a member of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood, is a second-year theology student at Saint Meinrad.

Left, seminarians Andrew Proctor, left, Andrew Syberg and Jerry Byrd chat on Dec. 4 on the steps leading up to the front entrance of the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einseideln in St. Meinrad. The seminarians are enrolled at Saint Meinrad School of Theology, which is operated by the monks of the southern Indiana Benedictine monastery. Proctor and Byrd are first-year theology students at the seminary. Syberg is a first-year philosophy student. Proctor and Syberg are members of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood. Byrd is a member of St. Louis Parish in Batesville.



Archdiocesan transitional Deacon Peter Marshall, right, a member of St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis and a fourth-year theology student at the seminary, chats with Aaron Wessman, a member of the Glenmary Home Missioners and a first-year theology student at Saint Meinrad, during lunch on Dec. 4.



Seminarian Aaron Thomas, a member of St. Andrew Parish in Richmond and first-year theology student at Saint Meinrad, prepares hosts for Mass on Dec. 4 in the sacristy of the seminary's St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel.



# Adopt-a-Sis program helps students get to know Franciscan sisters

Criterion staff report

Today's high school students wonder about their future, and seek to hear God's call much as young people did in generations past.

Members of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg accompanied young people along that path of discovery for more than a century as faculty and staff members of their Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception.

In recent decades, their presence in the halls of that private Catholic high school in southeastern Indiana has decreased.

But their influence continues through the academy's Adopt-a-Sis program.

Begun in 2002, the program connects students in the now coeducational school with the Franciscan sisters who live next to the school at their order's motherhouse.

Today, more than 60 percent of the academy's 207 students are paired up with a sister. They share lunch with them a couple of times a month. The sisters will often send cards or notes to their student at happy moments in their life or in more stressful times, such as when final exams roll around each semester.

Senior Julie Martin of Aurora feels particularly close to Franciscan Sister Ruthann Boyle, whom she has been paired with for four years.

But her connection with Sister Ruthann goes back even further. Julie's older sister is also a graduate of the academy and got to know Sister Ruthann through Adopt-a-Sis.

"We have a lot of history together," Julie said. "We have a lot of things in common now since we've been together for a long time."

Knowing each other for a long time has helped Sister Ruthann get to know Julie well.

"Hearing God's call in people and situations appears to be natural to Julie," Sister Ruthann said. "Many qualities of Julie are evidence of the God-centered spirit of her family. She is open-minded, joyful, humble intelligent and particularly helpful to the poor. Her positive personality often moves others to help where there is need."

The Adopt-a-Sis program also helps keep the historic connection between the academy and the Oldenburg Franciscans with the students who now fill its halls.

"Our history is through the sisters, and they sponsor us," said Alicia Tilly, who teaches religion at the academy and is the program's moderator. "We're only here because of them and the work that they've done. It's a way to pay them back, in a sense."

That history is written into the family of Oldenburg Academy senior Cassondra Hebauf of West Harrison. Her great-grandmother, aunt and cousin all attended the academy.

Participating in the Adopt-a-Sis program strengthens those ties for her.

"It kind of gives you an idea of how the academy was when they did have nuns teaching," Cassondra said. "And it helps you get to know the Franciscan ideals, which is what Oldenburg Academy is about."

Cassondra has been paired with Franciscan Sister Lorraine Geis for the past four years.

Sister Lorraine describes Cassondra as "a gentle, interested person, who uses her potential and is determined to reach her goal."

In getting to know Sister Lorraine, Cassondra has also gained an appreciation for her counterpart's vocation to religious life.

"It makes you realize how much hard work she puts into [her vocation] and how



Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception senior Julie Martin of Aurora, left, listens to Franciscan Sister Ruthann Boyle. They have gotten to know each other over the past four years through the academy's Adopt-a-Sis program.

much she enjoys it, too, and how much she gets out of it," Cassondra said.

Oldenburg Academy sophomore Sarah Lierman, a member of St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg, appreciates having that connection to the past through her friendship with Franciscan Sister Claver Ehren. But she also gets direction for the present through her, saying that "she's shined a light for me."

"You see things from a different perspective, and you learn more about the past," Sarah said. "Since she's older, she has more experiences and has more to tell you. And you have a new friend."

Over the year and a half that she has gotten to know Sarah, Sister Claver has seen a deeply spiritual side to this young woman.

"God comes into our conversation every time Sarah and I meet," Sister Claver said. "She is looking for God when she comes

to visit the sisters."

Tilly said the Adopt-a-Sis program can help academy students open their eyes to the possibility of a religious vocation by helping them see that religious take part in and enjoy many of the same things they do, but consciously view them all through the eyes of faith.

"It's good that they're able to see that they have relationships and they live in community," Tilly said. "They're just like us [except] that they've dedicated their lives to something different."

(Franciscan Sister Judith Warner contributed to this article. For more information about the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception, log on to [www.oldenburgacademy.org](http://www.oldenburgacademy.org). For more information about the Oldenburg Franciscans, log on to [www.oldenburgfranciscans.org](http://www.oldenburgfranciscans.org).) †

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Father James Wilmoth, pastor of St. Roch Parish and chaplain of Roncalli High School, both in Indianapolis, greets St. Roch parishioners Amy Jo and Kurt Wessing after a Dec. 7 Mass at the parish.

## PRIEST

*continued from page 10*

been going at it for so long, I have the utmost respect for him. You can just tell that he loves what he does."

Father Wilmoth loves who he is and what he does as a priest, in part because he grew up seeing priests loving their vocation as they ministered in the 1940s at St. Philip Neri Parish on Indianapolis' near-east side.

"They always seemed to be happy in what they were doing," he said. "They seemed to love what they were doing. They were always guys who were compassionate and service-oriented."

Their example led young Jimmy Wilmoth to become a seminarian and receive priestly formation at the former St. Mary Seminary in southern Kentucky and later at Saint Meinrad Seminary, where he was a classmate of Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein.

"Father Wilmoth was well-liked and respected by his classmates," the archbishop said. "As is the case now, years later, he had a consistently upbeat and cheerful spirit."

Ordained in 1965, Father Wilmoth has ministered in a wide variety of fields: as a seminary instructor, school chaplain, sheriff and fire department chaplain, Newman Center chaplain and parish priest.

"My life as a priest is my life," Father Wilmoth said. "It's not a career. It's not a job. It's my life. My life right now is the people of St. Roch Parish and Roncalli High School."

"It's an extremely happy life. I've been in it for 43 years. And I've been very happy the whole time."

(To learn more about archdiocesan priests and seminarians, log on to [www.hearGodscall.com](http://www.hearGodscall.com).) †



# 'A happy witness'

## Conventual Franciscan brother looks forward to ordination

By Mary Ann Wyand

Conventual Franciscan Brother John Bamman credits St. Clare of Assisi for leading him to his religious vocation and formation for the priesthood.

During a pilgrimage to Italy in 1996, Ann Doherty—who is a friend of his mother, Joanne Rizzardi—told him that St. Clare would “visit him in a special way” and have a profound influence on his life. At the time, he thought she meant that he would marry a woman named Claire.

After a decade of discernment and a life-changing experience on her feast day, he realized that God was calling him to follow the way of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare as a Conventual Franciscan.

Looking back on his childhood in Toledo, Ohio, at St. Joseph School, staffed by Franciscan sisters, and his teenage years at St. John’s Jesuit High School, Brother John laughed as he recalled how many times adults and teenage friends told him that he would be an excellent priest.

“I think I first heard God’s call when I was in grade school,” he said. “I had this sense of being called to the priesthood. I got a lot of attention from being the class clown, and spent many days in [Franciscan] Sister Maria Goretti’s principal’s office. We are very good friends today.

“In high school, when I was on senior retreat, all my friends told me they thought I would make a great priest,” he said. “They asked me if I had thought about it, but I was afraid to go down that path.”

He earned a bachelor’s degree in natural resources, parks and recreation management at Ohio State University then moved west to Washington to work as an emergency medical technician for a search and rescue patrol at the Stevens Pass Ski Resort in the Cascade Mountains during the winter months and as a Catholic Youth Organization summer camp counselor, nature director then camp director for the Archdiocese of Seattle.

He also studied theology “for fun” at Seattle University then got his commercial driver’s license and a summer job as a motor coach driver for a tour bus company in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska.

His employment contract stated that a driver who ran out of fuel on a tour bus filled with people could be fired.

One rainy August day, he miscalculated his mileage and ran out of fuel on a busy highway near the end of a 28-day bus tour.

A man driving a pickup truck soon stopped to help. The Good Samaritan was a diesel mechanic, had a 50-gallon drum of diesel fuel in his pickup, and knew how to prime the engine to restart the bus.

Thankful for his amazing luck, he drove to a gas station and asked the tourists from Ohio—his home state—to disembark for refueling. They missed a boat tour of Puget Sound, but didn’t mind because it was raining.

He received a two-month suspension from his job,

Photo by Dave Hiseack/The Catholic Spirit



Conventual Franciscan Brother John Bamman, a native of Toledo, Ohio, poses for a picture in the chapel at St. Joseph Cupertino Friary in Prior Lake, Minn., where he is preparing for his ordination as a transitional deacon in 2009 and his ordination to the priesthood in 2010. He has assisted with youth retreats at Mount St. Francis Retreat Center in southern Indiana.

and decided to go on a mission trip to Lima, Peru, that changed his life. During the trip, his brother, Brian Bamman, told him that he had run out of fuel on Aug. 11, St. Clare’s feast day. Ann Doherty’s prediction had come true, and that inspired him to visit religious communities at age 34.

He was drawn to the Conventual Franciscans, who have retreat ministries at Mount St. Francis Retreat Center in southern Indiana, Prior Lake in Minnesota and Mesilla Park in New Mexico.

The friars also staff the Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation in Carey, Ohio, where countless people have been cured of illnesses and physical infirmities then left their wheelchairs, braces or crutches.

He had visited the shrine for a Teens Encounter Christ retreat when he was a junior in high school, and again felt drawn to the Franciscans’ spirituality and love for nature as an adult.

“God had clearly led me there,” he said. “I knew it was time to say ‘yes’ to God.”

At the age of 41, he felt his life “coming full circle” on Aug. 8, 2008—the day he refers to as “08-08-08, a day of crazy eights”—when he answered God’s call and professed his solemn vows as a Conventual Franciscan at the basilica.

Conventual Franciscan Father James Kent, provincial vicar who resides at Mount St. Francis Friary, described Brother John as “very dedicated to St. Francis, to a simple

life, to witnessing the Gospel in word and deed.”

Father Jim added that “he is a fine friar and will make a fine priest. He is a happy witness, and brings joy to people. It’s a joy, I think, that is rooted in his faith.”

During his formation, Brother John studied Spanish with friars in Costa Rica and took a sabbatical to spend time with his parents, Bill and Joanne Bamman, when his father was dying. He completed his novitiate at St. Francis Friary in Mishawaka, Ind., and has helped with youth retreats at Mount St. Francis.

He lives at St. Joseph Cupertino Friary in Prior Lake and is finishing his final year of theology studies at St. Paul Seminary at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., in preparation for his ordination as a transitional deacon in 2009 and his ordination to the priesthood in 2010.

“I am discerning working at one of our order’s three retreat centers, which is exciting,” he said. “I never even thought of retreat ministry until the friars saw it within me. ... It’s a humbling call and a little nerve-racking to imagine myself at the altar leading the great sacrament of the Eucharist. ... There is an amazing joy of life expressed in the Franciscan lifestyle. I have been pleasantly surprised by God.”

(To listen to Franciscan Brother John Bamman’s reflection on his vocation, log on to [franciscans.org/FrJohnsProf.cfm](http://franciscans.org/FrJohnsProf.cfm).) †

## ANGEL

continued from page 12

families, what’s going on in our sisters’ lives,” Sister Anna Marie says. “She’s a quiet leader. She really cares about the environment. She’s the one who keeps us up on all the world events. She has a great love for her family, too.”

Her family, who lives in Effingham, Ill., couldn’t be happier for Sister Sheila Marie.

“We’re absolutely delighted,” her mom says. “She’s always been a caring person and a strong person. There couldn’t be a better community than the one she’s part of. We love going there. It’s very satisfying and the job she has there is challenging, which she needs.”

Sister Sheila Marie serves as the director of facilities for the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center in Beech Grove. She oversees the maintenance, the kitchen, the pool and the housekeeping staff. She also schedules the use of the facilities.

“My nieces and nephews love to come here,” she says. “There’s a pool, a gymnasium, a lot of room outside to run around, and there’s good food, too. The last time they were here, we roasted marshmallows. They love coming here.”

She pauses and smiles, “I may be setting the stage for the 10th generation of religious vocations in our family. We’re praying for that.”

She has a message for her nieces and nephews and all young people about a religious vocation:

“I would definitely tell them to be open to God speaking to them in their lives,” she says.

Never overlook the influence of a guardian angel either.

(For more information about Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, log on to [www.benedictine.com](http://www.benedictine.com).) †

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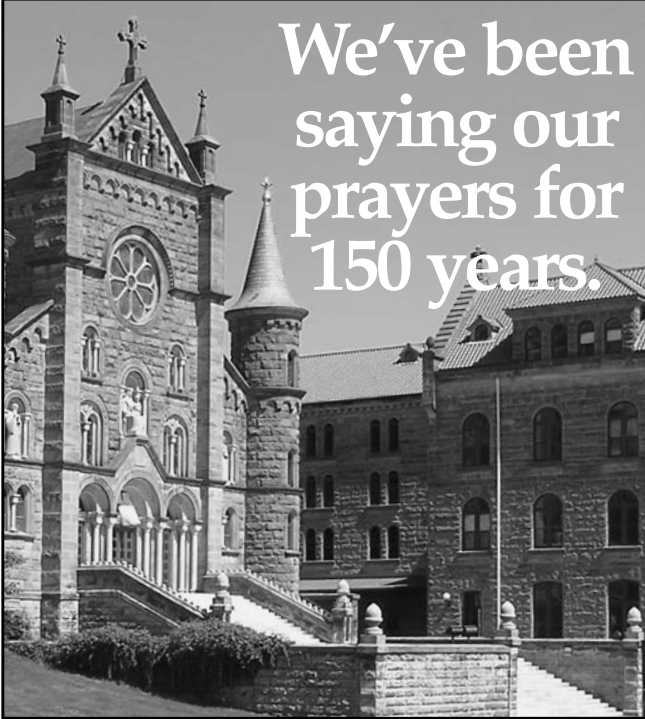
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# Total consecration

## Franciscans of the Immaculate serve Jesus and Mary

By Mary Ann Wyand

MONROE COUNTY—"Ave Maria." From throughout the United States and many countries around the world, men and women have answered God's call by joining the Franciscans of the Immaculate missionary order, whose members greet people by praising the Blessed Mother.

Several Franciscans of the Immaculate priests and sisters serve Jesus, Mary and God's people in central and southern Indiana through their retreat ministry at Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center on State Road 48 west of Bloomington.

They begin each day at 6:30 a.m. by praising God at Mass, which is open to the public, and honoring Mary with the rosary at the scenic retreat center built around a large hill in rural Monroe County. Every Thursday, the public may participate in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament from 9 a.m. until the holy hour at 6 p.m.

As the Franciscan friars and sisters climb the steep and winding path every morning, they pray the mysteries of the rosary on their way to the chapel built in the woods on the summit.

It is a holy place, a sacred space, a peaceful respite in the country for people to spend time in prayer and reflection as they offer thanks and petitions to God, grow closer to Jesus and Mary, and find healing in their lives.

Franciscan Father Elias Mary Mills, father guardian of the Marian Friary of Our Lady Coredeptrix at Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, said the order's "charism is based on the spiritual ideal that St. Maximilian Kolbe had, which is living the Franciscan vocation in light of the total

consecration to the Immaculate.

"St. Maximilian was inspired by the Marian charism that he saw implicitly in the life of St. Francis of Assisi and by Blessed John Duns Scotus, a Franciscan theologian who was able to explain Our Lady's Immaculate Conception," Father Elias Mary said. "He saw the golden thread, you might say, running throughout the Franciscan charism was this devotion to Our Lady and her Immaculate Conception."

Father Elias Mary said Pope John Paul II reminded people that, "Our Lady is the star of the new evangelization. Just as the star led the wise men to the manger in Bethlehem, we have a new star. We don't have to look for a star in the sky. We have Our Lady, who guides us to Christ."

St. Maximilian Kolbe was a Conventual Franciscan priest in Poland who was martyred by the Nazis at the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1941.

"He dedicated his life to evangelizing people to bring about the reign of the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary," Father Elias Mary said, "so our mission is to follow that same ideal of St. Maximilian to spread total consecration to Our Lady and, first and foremost, to live it out in our own lives, to be her instruments, her missionaries, and to do it in a Marian way, and to use all means possible to evangelize, meaning the mass media."

The Franciscans of the Immaculate operate Catholic radio and television stations



Franciscans of the Immaculate Father Jacinto Mary Chapin, left, vocation director, and Father Elias Mary Mills, father guardian of the Marian Friary of Our Lady Coredeptrix, stand beside a statue of Mary on Nov. 6 at Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center near Bloomington. Franciscan Father Joachim Mary Mudd and five Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate also minister at the retreat center. The friar's order was founded in Italy in 1970 and granted pontifical status in 1998. The sisters' order was founded in 1985.

in Italy as well as a Web site and blog at [www.AirMaria.com](http://www.AirMaria.com) as evangelization tools, he said, and the Marian order will begin a new radio ministry in Bloomington during 2009.

"We've already gotten permission—we have the license—from the Federal Communications Commission," Father Elias Mary said. "We hope to begin [broadcasting in the Bloomington area] sometime next year if everything goes well. We hope to use programming to reach out to the [Indiana University] students and [residents of] the area. It's important to get the Catholic truth out. We'll be using part of the Eternal Word Television Network programming, and hope to have local programming for four hours every day."

Franciscans of the Immaculate friars and sisters came to the archdiocese to staff the Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center in February of 2005 at the invitation of Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein.

Since then, the friars and sisters have expanded retreat programming, and opened a Catholic bookstore and gift shop as another tool of evangelization.

Father Elias Mary said he started thinking about a religious vocation during his college years.

"I earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics and computer science at the University of Nebraska at Kearney in 1985," he said. "After college, I helped a priest at a parish in Wyoming as a volunteer. ... I was looking for a religious community. ... He helped me get started at Holy Apostles Seminary in

Cromwell, Conn., and that's where I met the friars."

He finished his priestly formation with the friars at their seminary in New Bedford, Mass., and was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz on May 27, 2000, in Lincoln, Neb.

"At that time, the friars were taking care of the sacristy at the Basilica of St. Mary Majors in Rome," Father Elias Mary said. "As a deacon and up until my ordination to the priesthood, I was serving at the sacristy. Then I went from there in July of 2000 to Perth and Toodyay in Australia, where I served for three years."

In November of 2003, he was assigned to minister in Connecticut followed by brief assignments in Italy and again in Connecticut. He arrived in Indiana in June of 2007.

"When our Lord says, 'He who gives up everything to serve him will be rewarded in this life and the next,' it's true," Father Elias Mary said. "I would say to whoever is thinking about a [religious] vocation that they should pursue it because it is really a great gift that God gives us to serve him as a consecrated religious, and as a priest even more so, and to do it in a way that is promoting Our Lady is a very great gift, a blessing, an honor and a privilege."

"... God works through you, and it's obvious that he can take men who are fragile vessels and use them to do wonderful things. It's very humbling to serve God." †

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