

(CNS photo/Chaz Muth)

2021 Vocations Awareness Supplement

Living a holy life inspires holy vocations in others

By **Father Michael Keucher**

Special to *The Criterion*

In speaking to a group of priests responsible for recruiting new seminarians, a saintly priest said this:

“If you want Godly men, be Godly men.”



These words have become a motto for me lately. I carry them around with me in my mind and heart. I tell them to my brother priests. I tell them to myself.

Holy vocations produce more holy vocations. Put another way, a saint produces other saints.

If priests want more holy priests, then they must *be* holy priests—and vocations will follow.

Venerable Fulton Sheen commented that seeing a priest kneeling in silent

prayer in a sacristy before Mass inspires more priestly vocations among altar boys than a thousand pieces of inspirational literature about the priesthood.

Holy, pious, active, zealous, charitable priests generate a future army of priests of the same sort. Brother priests: if we want Godly men in our ranks, we must be Godly men!

What about religious and consecrated women and men? It’s the same here, of course. St. Theodora Guérin, co-patroness of our archdiocese, famously wrote in her journals, “How impiety deadens the heart.”

She wrote, too, about the piety and holiness of one sister in particular who had had a profound impact on her vocation: “Sister St. Francis Xavier is necessary for my existence. . . . I have need of her advice, of her example, I will even say of her little scoldings.”

Mother Theodore knew it well: holy vocations inspire holy vocations. Her own vocation was proof. And think

of how many she has inspired down through the years!

We see this principle of holiness begetting holiness in family life as well. Holy married couples tend to generate other holy families. Married couples in love with Jesus inspire other married couples to be in love with Jesus. This is the logic behind sponsor couples in marriage preparation; if an engaged couple is connected with a married couple on fire with love for Christ, that fire spreads.

Naturally, vocations cross pollinate as well. Many a great priest, for example, was inspired by a great nun or priest, or by the holiness they saw in their parents or other relatives.

All vocations need each other! Holy families need holy priests. Holy priests need holy families. Holy religious need holy priests. Holy priests need holy religious. It works in every direction. And we must remember: all vocations require holy families in order to come about and grow in the first place!

In this year’s Vocations Awareness Supplement, you will come to meet some folks who have fallen deeply in love with Jesus. These people were each inspired by others and, having been inspired, they are laying their lives down for our blessed Lord in beautiful ways, ways that God has prepared just for them.

Let us pray for them. Now they are inspiring others. And in this Vocations Awareness Supplement, let them inspire you and strengthen your own vocation.

Finally, let us remember this always: if you want holy vocations—which we all want and need—then be holy!

(Father Michael Keucher is vocations director for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. He also serves as pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville and sacramental minister of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County. He can be reached by e-mail at mkeucher@archindy.org.) †



Compassion and faith guide deacon, page 4B.



Postulant overcomes speech challenges, page 8B.



Photos from a day in the life of a priest, pages 6B-7B.





Seminarian looks to the guidance of Mary in his journey to the priesthood

By Sean Gallagher

ST. MEINRAD—Through four years of priestly formation, seminarian Jack Wright has never wavered in his conviction that God is calling him to be a priest.

God willing, he'll take a significant step toward the fulfillment of that goal next spring, when he is scheduled to be ordained a transitional deacon.

A member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond, Wright, 31, has known of God's call in his life for 12 years.

But he had a hard time accepting his vocation during much of that time—so much so that he actually stopped practicing his faith for some years.

What led him not only back to the Church, but even further to a firm embrace of his vocation?

Wright credits it all to a relationship he began to nurture with the Blessed Virgin Mary with the help of a book about her that his grandfather had given him at a time when he had not darkened the doors of a church for years.

"One of the reasons that I've felt so solid in my vocation is because of my relationship with her," he said. "As I've been in seminary, I've trusted that she's leading me and that my life is in her hands. She's acquiring the graces for me that I need to become the priest that God wants me to be."

'I didn't want to do it'

As Wright grew up, the Catholic faith gradually took on a more prominent role in the life of his family. By the time he was in high school, he asked God daily what he should do with his life.

For years, the answer to those prayers remained hidden—until his sophomore year at Marian University in Indianapolis.

His awareness of God's answer came to him rather suddenly in 2009, but in a way that disturbed him.

"I woke up at like three or four in the morning," Wright recalled. "For some reason, I had this overwhelming awareness that I was supposed to be a priest. That was what God wanted me to do."

"I got up and started walking around campus and was just crying my eyes out, crying like I had never cried before. It wasn't a joyful cry. It was a cry of misery. I didn't want to do it."

This clear awareness of God's call and his clear resistance to it led him to walk away from the faith.

Most of Wright's friends didn't go to Mass. And with conflict about his vocation in his heart, he stopped going to Mass, too.

"Once you skip one week, it's easier to skip the next week," he said. "Before long, I stopped going."

And it was all rooted in God's answer to Wright's prayer—an answer he turned his back on.

"God had shown me what he wanted—which was what I was asking him in prayer to do—and I rejected it," Wright said. "So, he said, 'OK. I'll let you go your way.' That's really what happened."

"At that point, God wiped the thought of [the priesthood] from my mind. I never thought about it again until 2016, many years later."

'That's when our Lady entered my life'

In the interim, Wright graduated from Marian



Holding a rosary, seminarian Jack Wright stands before a statue of Mary at the Shrine of Our Lady of Monte Cassino in St. Meinrad. A member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond, Wright credits Mary with guiding him to his priestly vocation.

(Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

in 2012 with a bachelor's degree in biology and worked for five years for a small chemical company in Indianapolis.

While living on his own in an apartment on the northwest side of the city, Wright decided to pick up and read a book his grandfather had given him years earlier by an Italian priest with a deep devotion to Mary. The book, titled *To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons*, included messages that the Blessed Mother had spoken to the priest in his heart.

"I finally picked up the book and started reading it," Wright recalled. "Something about our Lady's messages in that book really touched my

heart, I guess. I think that it was at that point when I really made the decision to start practicing my faith again and to take it seriously."

Looking back on it, Wright sees that moment as a turning point in his life.

"That's when our Lady entered my life," he said. "I had prayed the rosary before, and I always felt a kind of vague connection to our Lady. But that's when she really took over. It started from that book."

Wright began going to Mass, praying before the Blessed Sacrament in adoration chapels and praying the rosary daily.

In 2016, he had a conversation with a retired priest from the Cincinnati Archdiocese who lived near Richmond who had been a spiritual director for his grandfather.

"He told me that I shouldn't be afraid to become a priest, to say 'yes' to the calling to the priesthood," Wright recalled. "That was a big moment. I realized that this whole time I think I had just been afraid. It was out of fear that I was saying 'no' to the priesthood."

That message opened a door to a possible vocation

See SEMINARIAN, page 12B

Vocations Awareness Supplement highlights the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life

This issue of *The Criterion* features our annual supplement that highlights vocations in the Church to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life.

It is ordinarily published during the U.S. bishops' annual Vocations Awareness Week, which this year is on Nov. 7-13.

From the beginning, the Church has recognized that marriage is also a vocation, a pathway to holiness, to which God calls people. *The Criterion*

publishes two marriage supplements annually, usually in February and July.

In addition, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis has three offices which promote vocations. For information on the Office of Marriage and Family Life, visit www.archindy.org/marriageandfamily. For information on the diaconate, go to www.archindy.org/deacon. For information on the priesthood and consecrated life, visit www.archindy.org/vocations. †





Sister of Life from Indianapolis calls Jesus ‘the greatest adventure’

By Natalie Hoefler

Laura Zetzl started at Indiana University in Bloomington in the fall of 2010 “ready to take on the world.”

“I wanted to be a wife, a mother with lots of kids,” she said. “I wanted to be a neonatologist. I had it all. But still, I was unhappy, restless and frustrated.”

So began the first steps in the vocational journey of 29-year-old Sister Lucia Christi, who, “God willing,” will profess her final vows next summer as a Sister of Life.

But before the former member of St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis could start the baby steps of her journey, there was a seed planted, a thought that would give birth to her vocation.

‘That phrase kept coming back to me’

While a student at Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis, a call to the religious life was far from Sister Lucia Christi’s mind.

“At that point, I’d never considered a religious vocation as an option,” she said.

While at Ritter, she attended short sessions taught by the school’s then-chaplain Father John Hollowell. One day, the topic was vocations.

“A few days later, he said to me, ‘Maybe you’ll be a sister sometime.’ I laughed it off,” Sister Lucia Christi said.

By the end of her freshman year of college, her restlessness and dissatisfaction became unbearable.

“I looked at my dreams and thought, ‘This can’t be it.’ I was mad at God because I thought this was his plan for me. But I never really *asked* him what his plan for me was.”

So she asked.

“I spent my sophomore year asking him, ‘How have you made my heart to love? What are your dreams for me?’”

“As I started discerning, that phrase ‘Maybe you’ll be a sister sometime’ kept coming back to me.”

Sister Lucia Christi started spending more time in adoration and praying more with Scripture.

“I found that the more time I spent with the Lord, that’s where my heart found joy and rest,” she said.



Sister of Life Lucia Christi smiles while holding a newborn during a Christmas party while serving a two-year mission at the Sisters of Life’s crisis pregnancy center in New York City, where they provide support to pregnant women in crisis and offer continuing support to them following the birth of their children. (Submitted photo courtesy of the Sisters of Life)

“And Father Hollowell’s question came back.”

At first, she said, she was “totally terrified” at what life as a religious sister might look like.

“Jesus was so kind and patient and persistent,” she said. “As I spent time with him and prayed

more deeply, I found myself falling in love without realizing that’s what was happening.

“Finally, I heard Jesus say, ‘Would you be my bride and mother all of my children?’”

“Finally, I was able to say yes. But then I thought, ‘Now what?’”

‘What a way to spend a lifetime’

Sister Lucia Christi spoke with a priest at St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington at the end of her sophomore year. After sharing her story with him, he simply said, “I have the perfect order for you—the Sisters of Life.”

She looked them up online, and she knew she’d found her vocational home.

“I read through the whole [site],” said Sister Lucia Christi. “It was an experience of encountering my own heart written out.”

“All my dreams for my life I found in our charism—to love the human person just because they are. Not because of anything they can do or their status, but just because God loves them and created them.

“To live a life of love and joy and invite people into a life where God loves him. To lay down my life so others may live. To be a voice for the voiceless, the elderly, the unborn, the forgotten, those whose lives count for less in the world. To be a sign pointing to heaven.

“I thought, ‘What a way to spend a lifetime.’ It was everything I wanted without having words to express it at the time.”

Sister Lucia Christi contacted the order’s vocation director, who helped her learn more about the order “and about my own heart.” She also started spiritual direction with a priest.

“It was pretty clear this is where the Lord was calling me,” she said.

The order requires its sisters to have a college degree, so Sister Lucia Christi dropped her pre-med classes and focused on earning a bachelor’s degree in human biology.

She entered the Sisters of Life as a postulant a few months after graduating in 2014.

See ADVENTURE, page 12B



Sister of Life Lucia Christi, far left, smiles with college students of the Colorado School of Mines and three of her fellow Sisters of Life atop Mt. Sherman in Colorado. Her current mission has her ministering to the students of seven colleges in Colorado and one in North Dakota. (Submitted photo)





Deacon's combination of concern, compassion and celebration of faith guide his ministry

By John Shaughnessy

There are heartbreaking moments in life when a person appreciates even more what it means to be part of a faith community.

For Deacon Juan Carlos Ramirez, one of those poignant moments occurred recently when he received the news that one of his brothers had died unexpectedly.

"I was able to travel to Mexico to attend his funeral, and though I was sad for the loss, I also have the consolation that he is now on his way to the presence of God. And the Holy Spirit showed me—through the words and prayers of many co-workers, friends, family and parishioners—that we should be grateful for the blessed moments we had with him, and we should celebrate his life."

That outpouring of concern, compassion and celebration of the faith for Deacon Ramirez reflects the same approach that he has given to members of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus ever since he began his ministry there after being ordained in 2017.

"Deacon Juan Carlos is well-respected by all the various ministry leaders and brings people together for the benefit of the entire community," says Father Christopher Wadelton, St. Bartholomew's pastor.

"There are lots of people who hold strong opinions about how things should be done in the Church. Deacon Juan Carlos has an amazing ability to enter into the conversations with people of all backgrounds with patience and kindness. He is a peacemaker and a great example for other leaders—including myself—to look up to. I admire the way he interacts with people with the kindness of Christ."

Deacon Ramirez says his approach to people and his ministry has been significantly shaped by a moment that happened during his ordination in 2017—a moment when he felt the presence of the Holy Spirit.

'An opportunity to be in contact with God and his people'

"There were no words," he said at the time, "but I know the Holy Spirit was saying, 'You are now my instrument.'"

Four years into his ministry, the 55-year-old deacon has no doubt that the Holy Spirit guides him in every moment.

"The Holy Spirit continuously reminds me that this is not about me, my capability or my capacity," he says. "It is all about the love God wants to transmit to those in need through us and let them know that he is present in every step of our life."

"There are many moments to see how the Holy Spirit can comfort those who feel lost, or accompany those who need support, motivation or direction. The

relationship is the key factor—the opportunity to be in contact with God and his people, to accompany them where they are."

His relationship with his wife of 32 years, Gabriela, is also key to his ministry. They work together on evangelization efforts for the Hispanic community, serve as part of the parish's healing ministry, take Communion to the sick and participate in eucharistic adoration. They are also involved in planning a weekend retreat to support married couples.

Gabriela has seen the difference that being a deacon has made to the faith of her husband—and also to hers.

"Juan Carlos has been a great husband, father and friend, but what is more visible for me is his praying time," she says. "As a person of faith, he has been improving not only the quantity but also the quality of praying."

"Because of his continuous spiritual growth, I've also had the benefit of accompanying him and growing my personal relationship with God through helping and accompanying others where they are in their journey. Being the spouse of a deacon, I am more conscious of the privilege to serve others as a blessing from God."

The blessings have been many for the couple, including their three grown children, Karla, Carlos and Oscar. Deacon Ramirez strives to keep a focus on family in his ministry.



Deacon Juan Carlos Ramirez says, "The way we treat our families should be the same way we should treat everybody else—with Christian love." In this family photo, he and his wife Gabriela are pictured with their three children, Oscar, left, Karla and Carlos. (Submitted photo)



Then-Archbishop-designate Charles C. Thompson ritually lays hands on deacon candidate Juan Carlos Ramirez on June 24, 2017, in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis during a Mass in which Ramirez and 20 other men from across central and southern Indiana were ordained as permanent deacons. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

"Through formation, we frequently were reminded that our first ministry is our family," he says. "It makes a lot of sense because the way we treat our families should be the same way we should treat everybody else—with Christian love."

Trusting in God's will and mercy

That sense of family extends to parishioners for him. One particular moment stands out.

"One time, we were bringing the Eucharist to a home care facility to a great friend who suffered from dementia," he recalls. "She was so happy to receive it with all the solemnity and respect, reminding us of the

presence of God in the Eucharist and in our lives."

Father Wadelton also mentions the difference the couple has made in leading retreats for Latino members of the parish.

"At the end of the retreat, the participants form into 'small Church communities' or 'iglesitas,'" Father Wadelton says. "Many of the *iglesitas* have continued to meet regularly for years, forming strong bonds and spiritual support for each other. The small Church communities have thrived in large part due to Deacon Juan Carlos and Gabby."

Deacon Ramirez deflects any credit, giving it all to God. An industrial engineer by profession, he works as a quality director at Cummins Inc., in Columbus. He says the reason he wanted to become a deacon was to improve his relationship with Jesus "and help others to do the same."

"I was terrified that I would be unworthy, not capable and this could be only a personal desire," he says. "However, through personal and intercession prayer, spiritual direction and discernment—but, more importantly, humility to trust this was God's will—I was able to accept the invitation to serve and become a deacon."

Trusting in God's will has led to the deeper relationship with him that Deacon Ramirez sought.

"Through formation and studies, I have been able to understand better our faith," he says. "Through prayers, I have been able to recognize God's mercy. And through my relationships, I can see his love for all of us. As we know more about our faith, I understand that I have a God that is all merciful."

(For more information on the archdiocesan diaconate program, contact Deacon Kerry Blandford, director of deacon formation, at 317-236-1492 or dblandford@archindy.org †)





Our Lady of Grace Monastery's care for creation rooted in Benedictine spirituality

By Sean Gallagher

BEECH GROVE—The Church's teachings on care for the environment may seem to be fairly new, only coming on the scene following the Second Vatican Council.

The Benedictine Sisters of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove know different.

They see in the 1,500-year-old *Rule* of St. Benedict, which guides the life of their community, the application of Gospel principles to the care of the Earth and understanding humanity's place in it.

And they've been putting those principles into action since the monastery was founded more than 60 years ago, maintaining a forest of more than 1,300 trees on its 30 acres of land in highly urbanized Marion County.

Since 2014, three acres of that land has been turned into the community's Peace and Nature Garden where local flowers and other plants are able to grow free amid paths and benches that dot the landscape.

So, when Pope Francis issued in 2016 his encyclical letter, "*Laudato Si'*: On Care for Our Common Home," the Beech Grove Benedictines knew right away that the spirit of their community resonated well with what the pope taught in it.

"We human beings are related to every single thing on the Earth," said Benedictine Sister Angela Jarboe, who helps oversee the Peace and Nature Garden. "Benedict was ahead of the game in that sense."

Praying together as a community several times a day has been at the heart of Benedictine spirituality since its beginning. Benedictine men and women pray the Liturgy of the Hours and worship together at Mass daily.

Benedictine Sister Marie Therese Racine, Our Lady of Grace's director of liturgy, said care for creation has become an integral part of that prayer.

"We find ourselves always praying for the creation, the poor, for justice and mercy," she said. "We're listening to the world [and its needs]."

Our Lady of Grace has also observed the Season of Creation, a time of prayer for the environment which spans annually from Sept. 1-Oct. 4, ending on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. Pope Francis began the Church's

participation in the Season of Creation in 2015.

The Beech Grove Benedictines have had Taize prayer services for creation during the season. This year, they used various Masses for special needs found in the *Missal*, including for a Mass following harvest, for the sanctification of human labor, for the preservation of peace and justice and in time of famine.

"Throughout the season, the prayers for Mass were from these ritual Masses," Sister Marie Therese said. "Our chaplain, [Benedictine] Father Matthias [Neuman] loves the season and was grateful that we decided to incorporate it into the Mass."

Benedictines have also at the heart of their charism the virtue of hospitality. So, when guests and the neighbors who live around the monastery come to their grounds, they see a physical witness to the sisters' value of creation.

"We've run programs and given tours," Sister Angela said. "I feel like my calling is to make people aware of what their surroundings are really about."

She especially appreciates helping people understand the place of the Peace and Nature Garden in the wider ecology of the area.

"We're witnessing," Sister Angela said. "People come and think that there's nothing but bugs over there and that they bite. No. They're pollinators, and they're not interested in us."

Benedictine Sister Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick points to the growing efficient use of electricity in the monastery's buildings, to its recycling and care for its grounds as a way of setting an example for those who visit Our Lady of Grace.

She's especially excited about the monastic community currently considering how it can participate in the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, a coalition between the Vatican, Catholic organizations around the world and people and groups beyond the Church to care for creation.

"We're doing this and are inviting others to do it, too," Sister Sheila Marie said. "It's a constant invitation, encouragement and celebration of progress. It's an ongoing effort to build upon



Sister Marie Therese Racine, left, Sister Angela Jarboe and Sister Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick, all members of the Benedictine Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, pose on Oct. 4 in their community's Peace and Nature Garden. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

what's already done and to include others."

In considering how to care for the environment in the midst of the particular needs of today and with an eye to the future, Sister Sheila Marie never forgets that this interest of hers is rooted in her Benedictine vow of conversion.

"It's about growing closer to God and growing closer to [others in] relationships," she said. "As we grow closer to God, we grow closer to our neighbors and the Earth. It's all creation that comes together. We do it together, as a community. That's so much of what Pope Francis says throughout *Laudato Si'*."

(For more information about Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, visit www.benedictine.com.) †

Providence sister's 'recalculation' of life journey leads to her vocation

By Jason Moon

Special to *The Criterion*

Prior to becoming a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Providence Sister Joni Luna felt lost and began a journey of discovering her true purpose.

"As my GPS says, when I have taken a wrong turn, 'recalculating,'" Sister Joni commented. "I recalculated my path and began to pursue my spirituality, which I



Providence Sister Joni Luna is seen in this 2015 photo enjoying time with students of St. Patrick School in Terre Haute where she was an administrator and teacher at the time. On Aug. 14, she professed perpetual vows as a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. (Submitted photo)

had neglectfully left out of my calculations."

That simple recalculation led Sister Joni to the Sisters of Providence. On Sept. 17, 2012, Sister Joni made real her calling by entering the community of religious sisters in western Indiana. And on Aug. 14, Sister Joni fulfilled her call to the Sisters of Providence by professing final vows with the congregation during a ceremony at the Church of the Immaculate Conception on the community's motherhouse campus in St. Mary-of-the-Woods.

Prior to her visits to the Sisters of Providence, Sister Joni, a self-described overachiever, was close to reaching her life goals. She had graduated college, began teaching and coaching, moved into an athletic coordinator and vice-principal position and was close to becoming an athletic director or principal.

But Sister Joni admitted getting that close to her life goals scared her.

"I realized that this pursuit included very little practice of what my parents had instilled in me about family, community and faith," Sister Joni commented. "I was serving myself and it was not feeling good anymore. I found myself lost, spiritually bankrupt if you will. There was a hole that had eroded within me as I chased the corporate ladder. I realized I had it all wrong."

So, Sister Joni simply "recalculated." And it worked. "That's how I arrived here," she said. "I had to undergo a makeover, which included shedding old, unuseful ideas that did not serve me spiritually. I had been blinded to my spiritual life, to my heritage, my culture and my roots. This was where my journey began."

The journey included many visits to St. Mary-of-the-Woods. She attended come-and-see retreats and even became a Providence Associate before she eventually knew she was destined to be a woman religious. Providence Associates are lay people who seek to live out the charism of the Sisters of Providence in their daily lives.

And nine years later, after professing perpetual

vows, Sister Joni said she is "beyond words" when it comes to describing the "recalculation" of her journey.

"I overcame my fears of saying the first 'yes' and all the little 'yesses' in between," she said. "Through all the good and hard times, I knew one thing: My life was not serving me in a way that was life giving, and I was willing to do whatever it took to find my treasure."

Sister Joni added she has also spent a significant amount of time in recent years studying her heritage, including her Native American background, which has influenced her greatly.

"White Eagle, a Native American who was chief of the Ponca Indians from 1840 to 1914, said, 'Never fear your journey ahead, for as God has watched over you all your life ... so God will take you through the dark valley into the light.' I am resolved to follow these ancient teachings and live my life in faith, truth, virtue and goodness as a devoted partner to my Creator."

Sister Joni spent the past year in what is called tertianship by the Sisters of Providence. It is the final formal period of initial formation.

"We are always welcoming new women who wish to join in our mission," said Providence Sister Jenny Howard, a member of the order's leadership. "The purpose of this congregation is to honor Divine Providence and to further God's loving plans by devoting ourselves to works of love, mercy and justice in service among God's people."

"We're very blessed to have new members so that together we can carry forward God's mission in our world."

(Jason Moon is the media relations manager for the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. To learn more about life as a Sister of Providence, go to SistersofProvidence.org or contact vocation director Sister Joni Luna at 361-500-9505 or via e-mail at jluna@spsmw.org.) †



A Day in the Life of a Parish Priest

By Natalie Hoefler

JEFFERSONVILLE—We are a pilgrim people, always on the move toward our destination of heaven. Our priests are there to shepherd and guide us, in particular our parish priests. In fulfilling that role, they too are on the move—every day, a lot. To get a feel for what a day in the life of an archdiocesan parish priest looks like, *The Criterion* shadowed Father Matthew Tucci for a day on Sept. 29.

As pastor of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Augustine parishes, both in Jeffersonville, and as the new associate archdiocesan director of vocations for the New Albany Deanery, his day was full, lasting as it often does from 4 a.m. until about 8-8:30 p.m. The journey included prayer time, a workout, a staff meeting, a funeral and burial, a visit to Sacred Heart School in Jeffersonville, Mass at a private Catholic academy, adoration and confession followed by a parish Mass, and ended

with dinner at the home of a family of parishioners. "Today was a pretty busy day," admitted Father Tucci, 34, before heading to dinner. "But some days are busier, and some days are not as busy. You just never know what the Lord's going to throw at you! But it's what you do when you really love your parishioners." And it's what you do when you really love your vocation. "I love being a priest. I do," said

Father Tucci. "It's something different every day. You give your life for Christ, and you go where the Spirit takes you. When you do an examen at the end of the day, there's a different reason every day to be thankful for being a priest." (For more information on vocations to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, call the archdiocesan Vocations Office at 317-236-1490 or go to HearGodsCall.com.) †

'I love being a priest'

4 a.m.

Father Tucci uses his phone to pray the Liturgy of the Hours in his "prayer chair" in a corner of his room he set up specifically for prayer. "I get up at 4 a.m. Sometimes I work out first, sometimes I say my prayers first. I pray the Liturgy of the Hours, do *lectio divina*, pray the rosary—I pray the rosary throughout the day. You have to pray every day, both under the promise you make as a priest and because you can't live a life like this without a life of prayer. It's impossible. That grace you receive from prayer every day is what you need. Sit with the Lord at the beginning of the day and sit with the Lord at the end of the day, and then you'll see all the grace he's given you."



7 a.m.



Father Tucci enters a gym in Jeffersonville. "I do some kind of exercise every day. Sometimes I go to the gym, sometimes I ride my bike, sometimes I go mountain biking."

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Father Tucci's day continued with a meal at the home of a family of St. Augustine Parish. "Generally, there are meetings at night once a week, but it depends. We're in the midst of a capital campaign right now, so I've had more evening meetings lately. I usually get back to the house anywhere between 6:30 to 8 or 8:30 [p.m.]. A lot of times I'm ready to just turn in and go to bed."



5:30 p.m.

Father Tucci is assisted at Mass at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Church by transitional Deacon Brent Thayer, a seminarian from the Diocese of Nashville, Tenn., who is in formation at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. During the hour prior, adoration was held, and Father Tucci heard confessions. "People share a lot of things with you whether they're Catholic or not. They bare their soul to you, inside or outside the confessional. I love dispensing mercy to people."



2:30 p.m.

Students of Immaculata Classical Academy in Louisville raise their hands to answer a question Father Tucci poses during a homily. He celebrates Mass there a few times a year upon the invitation of a family of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish with a student at the school.



"What you're doing is representing the Lord in a special way, and you're the Lord's presence in those most important times of people's lives, and that shows that God is there in the critical points of people's lives, from birth to death." (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)

1:10 p.m.

A young student at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Jeffersonville shows his schoolwork to Father Tucci. "I try to do a big visit once a week, do a sweep of the school. I really do wish I had more time to go to the school. I like making kids laugh. It's like feeding them what they need, real joy."



10:15 a.m.



Father Tucci holds a staff meeting with Jesse Schuler, left, Tim Seman, Kelly Ueding (in yellow) and Keri Flowers in the parish office building at St. Augustine Parish. "I do my very best to split my time completely between both of the parishes. As a pastor, I think I really need to do my best to give my all to both. Sometimes administration gets in the way of ministry, and sometimes ministry gets in the way of administration. You have all these grand plans to get all this stuff done, but then all of a sudden you're swept away for three hours."

11-12:30 p.m.

Father Tucci prays at a burial site at Queen of Heaven Cemetery in Jeffersonville after a funeral. "We do a lot of funerals here, about 50 a year. I'm at the hospital three to four times a week."





Postulant with speech challenges finds spiritual home with Oldenburg Franciscans

By Sara Geer

Special to *The Criterion*

OLDENBURG—God’s call to be a Sister of Saint Francis came to Hannah Houser through a familiar Disney song that, unbeknownst to listeners, incorporates Franciscan undertones within the lyrics.

“While I was listening to ‘Colors of the Wind’ sang by Pocahontas one day, I realized that God had been calling me my whole life to become a Franciscan sister,” Hannah said.

It was a big realization for her. She started following his call shortly after her first Communion. Then, during her confirmation, the call strengthened and became more apparent to her through prayers and songs.

She said the Blessed Mother Mary was always calling her through songs and that one day she felt Mary wanted her to use another gift to share the Gospel with others at Mass—American Sign Language.

Hannah learned American Sign Language in school while attending St. Rita School for the Deaf in Cincinnati, located about 20 miles from her hometown in Hamilton, Ohio. While not deaf, Hannah was born with a severe speech disability called apraxia that makes it difficult for her to speak.

A teacher and she worked together to start a program at the school to help children with other speech impediments succeed. Hence, sign language became a second language for her to talk with her family, other students and teachers and to use to share her love for following Jesus Christ. St. Rita “holds a special place” in her heart.

“Apraxia is a speech impediment that affects how the messages are sent from the brain to the mouth,” Hannah explained. “So, sometimes what I want to say, and what I do say, doesn’t always connect correctly. I have to remind myself throughout the day to slow down, pronounce and to use proper grammar.”

Growing up in a family of seven and having two loving parents who were also teachers, her disability was never a problem. Yet, when she attended grade school at St. Joseph Consolidated School in Hamilton, other students teased her because of her disability. The experience, however, was not negative for Hannah. Instead, it helped her become who she is today.

“It taught me a lot about how to stand up for myself and to stand up for others,” she said. “I learned during this time how to accept God into my life and how to be a disciple for others.”

God planted other seeds in her journey to religious life as well. The Franciscan charisms that she now lives by daily were not foreign to her growing up. An uncle is a Franciscan priest, and a great aunt was a Franciscan sister. Her mother, grandmother and several aunts were students at the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg, which is a ministry of the Franciscan sisters there. Hannah remembers fondly visiting the sisters and has many Franciscan roots in her life.

“I grew up knowing the Franciscan way of life, and I’m learning how to adopt the Franciscan charisms into my life right now through formation,” Hannah said.

Hannah also has a strong love for nurturing animals and caring for the environment, another Franciscan value ingrained in her. She attended college at Muskingum University in New Concord, Ohio, where she studied sociology with a focus on animal and environmental issues. And during the summers, she worked as a camp counselor and taught the nature program at the Cleveland Sight Center Highbrook Camp in Chardon, Ohio, for children, families and adults with vision impairments.

“I was trying to connect my love of animals, and faith, and many other things from my life,” Hannah said. “Then when I graduated college and met vocations director Sister Kathleen, I found my vocation calling to be a Franciscan sister. It came full circle.”

Franciscan Sister Kathleen Branham, the vocations director at Sisters of Saint Francis in Oldenburg, explained the uphill battle Hannah experienced through gaining acceptance to join a religious community due to her speech disability.

Hannah had written an initial letter to many religious communities introducing herself and asking for guidance with God’s call for her. She had learned writing and grammar differently in school because



Hannah Houser, a postulant with the Franciscan Sisters in Oldenburg, uses American Sign Language (ASL) by a statue of St. Clare of Assisi on the campus of the sisters’ motherhouse. Although not hearing impaired, Hannah has learned ASL because a disability she has called apraxia can make it difficult for her to speak. (Photo by Sara Geer)

of her use of American Sign Language. She received many letters and e-mails back stating they could not accept her.

“I was at NRVC [National Religious Vocations Conference] when she must have sent out a letter to several different congregations because we all got the same letter. The grammar due to her speech impediment was terrible,” Sister Kathleen said. “So, many vocations directors said after reading the letter, ‘This is a person we can’t accept.’ Yet, they never called or met with her to understand why.”

Sister Kathleen said after reading the letter several times, a red flag went off that Hannah may be deaf. She was not going to turn someone down until she met her. After an initial meeting, connections and clarifications were made and there was a better understanding for her about Hannah.

“Religious life needs to be more open to listening to everybody,” Sister Kathleen said, “People are called to the religious life regardless if they have a disability or not. And that is what a vocations director needs to do. It’s about walking with them in the discernment process. Is religious life for you? Is the single or married life for you? It really should not be my job to judge if religious life is for them or not. There is no room for judgment.”

Sister Kathleen said accepting Hannah to join the Sisters of Saint Francis has been a gift given to all the sisters. She explained since the community has a history of sisters who are educators, many sisters have volunteered their time to help tutor Hannah with improving her writing and grammar. And the congregation is in the process of expanding its education and evangelistic efforts with introducing American Sign Language classes and having Hannah sign at each Mass.

With the help of Laboure Society, an organization that provided financial assistance and spiritual support to pay off \$60,000 in educational debt, Hannah has now entered fully into the discernment process and became a postulant in April.

“I love being a disciple of God, walking the faith and living out the Franciscan way of life,” Hannah said. “I didn’t always see it, but God has been calling me to come home my entire life.”

(Sara Geer is a freelance writer and a member of St. Louis de Montfort Parish in Fishers, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. To learn more about the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg, visit www.oldenburgfranciscans.org.) †





Recreation, humor help Benedictine monks draw closer to God, each other

By Br. Zachary Wilberding, O.S.B.

Special to *The Criterion*

I guide tours for visitors to Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad in southern Indiana.

They often ask, “What do you monks do?” My answer usually includes a very basic introduction to our way of life based on the *Rule* of St. Benedict, which he wrote about 1,500 years ago.

Following the *Rule*, our life is focused on seeking God so that prayer is at the center of our life. Our prayer consists of the celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours as a community. Privately, monks are expected to engage in *lectio divina*: slow, reflective and prayerful reading of Scripture.

Our prayer then calls us forth to work in service of the monastic community and the wider Church and world. The work we do is wide-ranging and includes teaching in our seminary, pastoral work in parishes, leading retreats, maintenance of buildings and grounds, gardening, fine arts and service on the local volunteer fire department.

Hence, one motto popular with Benedictines since the 19th century is “Pray and Work,” or in Latin, “*Ora et Labora*.” You will see it written in stone at the front of our Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln.

For most visitors, that is as much of a description as they are seeking. They never seem to ask, “What do you do for fun?” Perhaps the sight of black-robed men processing into church singing Gregorian chant leads people to believe that this is a serious place without room for much levity.

It is a serious place. And it is true that St. Benedict never mentions play or recreation in his *Rule*. He urges caution regarding laughter, hoping to discourage mockery of others and encourage quiet.

However, Benedict is very much in favor of moderation in the monastery. He says that the strong should have something to yearn for, but the weak should have nothing to fear from monastic discipline. Correction of faults should not be too harsh.

Benedict warns that, in disciplining others, the abbot should not rub so hard at the rust that he breaks the vessel. From the centuries before Benedict, we have an ancient story about St. Anthony of Egypt, one of the early monks who lived in the fourth century, that illustrates this point.

A visiting hunter noticed some of Anthony’s monastic companions joking and laughing and expressed his dismay at such behavior among monks. Anthony replied, “Put an arrow in your bow and draw the string tight.”

He kept telling the hunter to draw it tighter until the hunter said, “If I make it any tighter the bow will snap.” And Anthony replied, “It is just so with monks. If they do not have some relaxation, they too will snap like your bow.”

A more recent witness to the importance of fun in



Benedictine Archabbot Kurt Stasiak plays catch on May 22, 2020, on the lawn by Saint Meinrad Archabbey and its Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln in St. Meinrad. Times of recreation can help Benedictines enter more deeply into the work and prayer that is at the heart of their vocation. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

the spiritual life is Jesuit Father James Martin. He says that joy, humor and laughter are “under-appreciated values in the spiritual life.” He continues, “Anyone truly in touch with God is joyful.” As to extreme seriousness he says: “When you are deadly serious, you are seriously dead.”

St. Irenaeus of Lyons famously said, “The glory of God is the human being fully alive.” To be fully alive depends in part on rest, relaxation and delight. This does not mean that you have to spend the day looking for funny videos on YouTube.

It does mean being open to the beauty and humor that come our way in everyday life as well

as appreciating the occasional joke or funny cat video. The relaxation promoted by humor and laughter goes a long way to supporting the patience and gentleness needed for living in community.

Thus, monks pray, work and play for the sake of spiritual, mental and physical health. At Saint Meinrad, Father Harry Hagan and Brother John Glasenapp find the work of gardening to be a form of recreation.

Their work in the garden yields delightful tomatoes, potatoes, cucumbers and Swiss chard for the monks. Brother John Mark Falkenhain fosters attractive flowers and shrubs

which give pleasure to the eye. Father Simon Hermann keeps the courtyard mowed so that we can actually see those flowers and shrubs.

Bicycling is a popular form of play for a number of younger monks. Father Simon and Brother James Jensen have participated in a famous long distance bike ride across Iowa called “RAGBRAI.” Brother Nathaniel Szdik is fond of running and has participated in marathons as well as our own Saint Meinrad 5 K run. Gym exercise also has its adherents, a few of whom, like Father Adrian Burke and Brother Basil Lumsden, go in for weightlifting.

There are less physically intensive forms of play as well. Brother Francis Wagner enjoys fishing and reading novels. Monks enjoy science fiction, serious novels as well as mystery and crime fiction. For example, I have read all of Lee Child’s Jack Reacher novels.

Movies are popular and available nowadays by streaming. Tastes run from the black and white classics, to foreign films to Disney. Then there are some monks who are avid sports fans and follow their favorite teams. Brother Francis is devoted to the Cincinnati Reds while Father Eugene Hensell supports the St. Louis Cardinals.

Play includes communal as well as individual pursuits. Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, Father Simon and Brother Nathaniel often enjoy a game of catch on the lawn after supper as long as the daylight lasts.

Chess is popular in the evening. There is a regular rotation of chess games between Brother Andrew Zimmermann, Brother Maurus Zoeller and Brother Mario Ibison. Sometimes it is best not to ask who won.

Euchre games also draw some eager players. Banagrams and checkers are also popular.

A person’s sense of humor and fun is individual and personal. We don’t all enjoy the same things all the time. But the joy that results is a part of the monastic goal of seeking God.

(Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding is vocations director for Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad. For more information about Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, visit saintmeinrad.org.) †



Benedictine Brother Mario Ibison, left, plays chess with Benedictine Brother Maurus Zoeller while Benedictine Brother Andrew Zimmermann watches. All are members of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)





ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS 2021-2022 Seminarists

Saint Meinrad Seminary



Dcn Michael Clawson
Fourth Theology
Annunciation, Brazil



Dcn Matthew Perronie
Fourth Theology
St. Malachy, Brownsburg



Tyler Huber
Third Theology
St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County



José C. Neri
Third Theology
St. Monica, Indianapolis



Jack Wright
Third Theology
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond



Anthony Armbruster
Second Theology
St. Malachy, Brownsburg



Samuel Rosko
Second Theology
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, Indianapolis



Bobby Vogel
Second Theology
St. Joseph, Jennings County



Liam Hosty
Pastoral Internship
St. Barnabas, Indianapolis



Aaron Noll
First Theology
St. Bartholomew, Columbus



Khui Shing
First Theology
St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis



Isaac Siefker
First Theology
St. John the Apostle, Bloomington



Thomas Day
First Theology
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, Indianapolis



Lance Tony
Second Philosophy
St. Simon the Apostle, Indianapolis
** Co-sponsored with the Diocese of Palayamkottai, India*



Casey Deal
First Philosophy
St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington



Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary



Kristofer Garlich
Fourth Year College
St. Mary, North Vernon



Samuel Hansen
Fourth Year College
St. Roch, Indianapolis



Khaing Thu
Fourth Year College
St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis



James Hentz
Third Year College
St. Michael, Greenfield



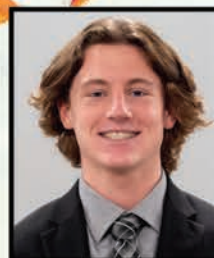
Randy Schneider
Second Year College
All Saints, Dearborn County



Nathan Thompson
Second Year College
St. Ann, Jennings County



Emiliano Enriquez De Alva
First Year College
St. Ambrose, Seymour



Luke Hornbach
First Year College
All Saints, Dearborn County



Alexander W Lindberg
First Year College
St. Joseph, Jennings County



Robert McKay
First Year College
St. Ann, Indianapolis



Noah Sherman
First Year College
St. Mary, North Vernon

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Fr. Eric Augenstein
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RELIGIOUS IN FORMATION

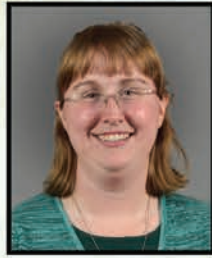
2021-2022



Sr. Maria Nguyen of the Holy Family, OCD - Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Terre Haute, Temporary professed



Sr. Marie Therese Miciano of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, OCD Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Terre Haute, Temporary professed



Sr. Arianne Whittaker, SP Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Temporary professed



Sr. Anna Fan, SP Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Temporary professed



Sr. Tracey Horan, SP Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Temporary professed



Sr. Emily Tekolste, SP Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Anthony, Indianapolis, Temporary professed



Sr. Teresa Kang, SP Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Temporary professed



Sr. Jessica Vitente, SP Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Temporary professed



Hannah Houser Sisters of St. Francis Oldenburg, IN Postulant



Sr. Mary Lily among Thorns McCann, SSVM Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matara, All Saints, Dearborn County, Temporary professed



Sr. Evelyn Lobo, SSps Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, St. Monica, Indianapolis, Temporary professed



Sr. M. Evangeline Rutherford, OSF Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, St. John the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Temporary professed



Sr. Mary Peter Ruschke, OSF Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, Batesville, Temporary professed



Sr. Mary Amata Naville, OSF Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, St. Mary, Navilleton, Temporary professed



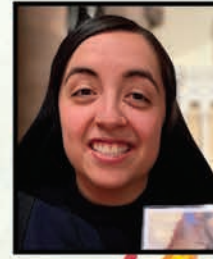
Kelly Armes Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, St. Ambrose, Seymour, Postulant



Sr. Lucia Christi, SV Sisters of Life, St. Gabriel the Archangel, Indianapolis, Temporary professed



Sr. Agnes Mary Graves, RSM Religious Sisters of Mercy, St. John the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Temporary professed



Sr. Maria Guadalupe Figueroa Religious Sisters of Mercy, St. Anthony, Indianapolis, Temporary professed



Sr. Magdalene Marie Schafer Daughters of the Holy Mary of Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Temporary professed



Sister Mary Paul, FSGM Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George, Novice



Sr. Stephanie Pahren Missionaries of Charity, All Saints, Dearborn County



Sr. Ashley Barnett, SOLT Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington, Temporary professed



Br. Basil Lumsden, OSB Saint Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, IN, Temporary Professed



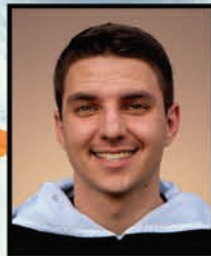
Br. Michael Reyes, OSB Saint Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, IN, Temporary Professed



Matthew Morris Saint Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, IN, Novice



Connor Zink Saint Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, IN, Novice



Br. Dominick Jean, OP Order of Preachers- Province of St. Albert the Great, St. Vincent De Paul, Bedford, Temporary Professed



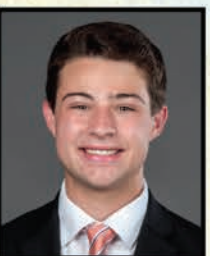
Br. Marcius Bunch, OP Order of Preachers- Province of St. Joseph, Annunciation, Brazil, Temporary Professed



Br. James Henke, CSC Congregation of Holy Cross, United States Province of Priests and Brothers, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood, Temporary Professed



Benjamin Sasin Congregation of Holy Cross, United States Province of Priests and Brothers, St. John the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Novice



Josh Amodeo Congregation of Holy Cross, United States Province of Priests and Brothers, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Old College



Br. Alberic Henry, OCSO Abbey of Gethsemani, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood, Novice



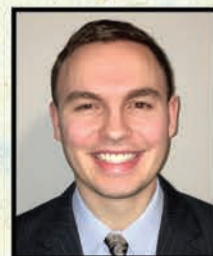
Br. Joseph Michael Kraemer, SJ Society of Jesus- Jesuits West, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Theology



Br. Taylor Fulkerson, SJ Society of Jesus- Midwest Jesuits, St. Mary, Lanesville, Regency



Ben Jansen, SJ Society of Jesus- Midwest Jesuits SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, First Studies



Mike Rushka, nSJ Society of Jesus- Midwest Jesuits, St. Barnabas, Indianapolis, Novice



Br. Nicholas Green, nLC Legionaries of Christ, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Novice

Religious Communities

Sisters of St. Benedict
Beech Grove | benedictine.com

Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis
Oldenburg | oldenburgfranciscans.org

Sisters of Providence
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods | spsmw.org

Sisters of St. Benedict
Ferdinand | thedome.org

Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, Mishawaka | sspfpa.org

Discalced Carmelite Nuns
Terre Haute | heartsawake.org

Order of St. Benedict | Saint Meinrad Archabbey | saintmeinrad.org

Franciscans of the Immaculate
maryschildren.com

Dominican Friars Central Province
domcentral.org

Conventual Franciscan Friars
franciscansusa.org

Little Sisters of the Poor
littlesistersofthepoor.org

Missionaries of Charity
motherteresa.org

Society of Jesus Midwest Province
jesuitsmidwest.org

Order of Friars Minor St. Louis Province
thefriars.org





SEMINARIAN

continued from page 2B

to the priesthood that Wright had closed so firmly seven years earlier.

“Gradually the desire to become a priest began to grow in me,” he said. “Before, in college, I wanted nothing to do with it. Now, I really started to desire it. I just started praying to our Lady every day just to get me into the seminary.”

By the spring of 2017, Wright was in contact with then-archdiocesan vocations director Father Eric Augenstein and began the process to become an archdiocesan seminarian.

He was accepted and by August of 2017, Wright had quit his job and enrolled at Saint Meinrad Seminary

About Jack Wright

Age: 31

Parents: John and Dotty Wright

Home Parish: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond

Education: Centerville High School in Centerville; Marian University in Indianapolis; Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad

Favorite Scripture passage: Psalm 23

Favorite saint: St. Francis of Assisi

Favorite prayer or devotion: The Rosary

Favorite book: *New Seeds of Contemplation* by Thomas Merton

Favorite movie: *Into the Wild*

Hobbies: Reading and playing basketball

and School of Theology in St. Meinrad.

‘His leadership is quiet and effective’

Wright’s relationship with Mary during his four years of priestly formation has led him to have a desire to give of himself in service to others—something he began to recognize when he spent Christmas break at his parish a couple of years ago.

“I really started feeling myself loving the people of my parish like I hadn’t before,” he said. “I really wanted to give my life to the people of my parish. I think my love for our Lady is evolving into a love for and desire to give myself to my future parishioners and the Church.”

Benedictine Father Tobias Colgan, Saint Meinrad’s vice rector, sees Wright’s self-giving in his life at the southern Indiana seminary.

“He is well known in the seminary for his quiet outreach to anyone in need, and has been especially attentive to the international seminarians as they continue their process of enculturation,” said Father Tobias.

This leadership in service comes forth from Wright in a variety of ways, from being the liaison between the seminarian community and the seminary’s physical facilities staff, to serving as the grand knight of Saint Meinrad’s Knights of Columbus council.

“His leadership is quiet and effective,” Father Tobias said. “Jack has a very gentle manner and excellent listening skills. People who are hurting or in need, especially, will find Jack to be an outstanding person from whom to seek advice or spiritual counsel.

“Jack has a heart for ministry and will, I think, be especially attentive to the disadvantaged and the marginalized. I cannot wait to see him ordained and out in the field.”

Neither can seminarian Tyler Huber, a classmate of



Seminarian Jack Wright kneels in prayer on Aug. 9 during a Mass at the chapel of Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis. The liturgy took place during the annual convocation for archdiocesan seminarians. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Wright and a member of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish in Floyd County. Their friendship deepened over the summer as both were student chaplains at St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis, together with their third classmate, seminarian Jose Neri.

“I am really looking forward to the day we are brother priests,” Huber said. “I really appreciated getting to know Jack better and to see him in the chaplain role at the hospital. He was a natural at it, and he will be a great brother priest one day.”

When asked to give a word of encouragement to young men considering a possible priestly vocation, Wright naturally thought of Mary.

“Grow closer to our Lady,” he said. “Give your future to her. Allow her to lead you in whatever direction she wants to.”

(To learn more about a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit www.HearGodsCall.com.) †

ADVENTURE

continued from page 3B

‘The light of Christ’

For the Sisters of Life, postulancy is a roughly 10-month time frame during which the potential sisters learn more about the order and their way of life.

It is also a time when the women discern the religious name they wish to take.

“It’s about asking the Lord, ‘What are you calling me to do and what’s the mission you’re inviting me into?’” Sister Lucia Christi explained.

“I felt like the Lord put that name [Lucia Christi] on my heart. It means ‘the light of Christ.’”

“It’s my experience of Jesus being the light who shines in the dark and the dark cannot, will not overcome it, and him inviting me to be that light in the world in a way only possible for me, and in doing that to have his light shine through everyone I encounter in only the way they can.”

Sister Lucia Christi likens living out her name to the Easter Vigil. The sanctuary is dark until the paschal candle is processed in. Then one person lights a candle from that candle’s flame, and that light is passed on until the sanctuary is lit by the flames of the candles held by each in the congregation.

“When the light of Christ shines brightly in our heart, then the whole world catches fire,” she said. “Letting his light shine through me and bringing

that light to everyone I meet.”

In July 2015, Sister Lucia Christi received her habit and her new name, then entered her two-year novitiate.

‘One of the greatest challenges and joys’

Sisters of Life novices spend the first year “in deep prayer, study and formation, and allowing the Lord to do some deep interior work, healing and growing in our own identity,” she explained.

The second year is spent learning about the sisters’ apostolates, spending two months at a time at their different mission houses.

Sister Lucia Christi professed her first vows in August 2017. The next two years she served at the sisters’ crisis pregnancy center in New York City.

During that mission, she “really grappled with the call to go into the darkest places of humanity and encounter sin in a way I never experienced before, the ugliness of it, and the pain and suffering in other people’s lives, and be invited to bring Jesus into the darkness.

“It’s one of the greatest challenges and also one of the greatest joys.”

She is currently more than halfway through her second two-year mission, “sharing the Gospel and our charism” with students on seven college campuses in Colorado and one in North Dakota.

“I’m preparing to make final vows next summer, God willing,” she said.

‘Be not afraid’

Sister Lucia Christi’s vocational journey has been full of grace, she said, but not without its difficulties.

“In the beginning, the great challenge was to let go of my own dreams and desires, the letting go of what I thought my life would look like, to surrender my will to the will of the Father, which is different sometimes” from ours, she said.

“It required sacrifices along the way—the initial separation from family and friends, the move from Indiana to New York City, which was quite a change.”

But now Sister Lucia Christi sees “the Lord blessing those sacrifices, knowing Jesus never takes something from us without giving something in return.”

To youths and young adults considering a call to a religious vocation, Sister Lucia Christi offers three simple words of advice: “Be not afraid.”

“Jesus is the desire of every human heart,” she said. “He’s the greatest adventure. He knows you and loves you more than you could ever imagine.

“Whatever you go through, it will be your greatest joy. Whatever he asks of us, he has more to give us—more love, more joy, a more abundant life.

“So, be not afraid.”

(To learn more about the Sisters of Life, go to sistersoflife.org. For those seeking crisis pregnancy help, text 212-203-8716 or call 877-7771277. For those seeking help after an abortion, call 866-575-0075 or e-mail hopeandhealing@sistersoflife.org.) †

