"As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.’" (Mt 4:18-19).

At this invitation, the two brothers immediately dropped their nets and followed him. Thus began a relationship in which these first disciples came to know Jesus. They learned from his teaching, witnessed his miracles, participated in his ministry and came to recognize him as the Messiah, the Son of the living God. This relationship led the disciples through the experience of Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection, and reached its culmination when he commissioned them to go forth and make disciples of all nations.

At the center of this relationship was the promise of that first invitation. Just as Christ had called the disciples that day on the shore, so they were to call others to Christ. They were to become fishers of a different sort, casting their nets for people, drawing all people to Christ. The call to fish for people continues to lie at the center of the Church’s mission. It stands behind the Church’s proclamation of the Gospel, gives substance to its prayer, informs its teaching, and shapes its life and ministry.

The following pages are filled with stories of men and women who have embraced the call to priesthood, the permanent diaconate and the religious life. They, too, are stories of a relationship, stories of learning from Christ, witnessing his miracles, participating in his ministry and coming to recognize him as the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Though each story is different, all are united in the desire and commitment to draw others to the love of Christ.

To some degree, the purpose of this supplement is to celebrate the unique ways in which the vocational call to fish for people is lived out by priests, permanent deacons, and religious brothers and sisters. But these stories also afford us an opportunity to gratefully acknowledge the gift their response to God’s call is to us as the Church. They provide us with an occasion to remember with gratitude those men and women who helped us to listen, to see Christ’s miracles, to share our gifts in ministry, to acknowledge God’s presence and to encounter his saving love.

It is important that we do this. Through their celebration of the sacraments, countless prayers, preaching, counseling, teaching, works of charity, ministry, community, presence, and joyful witness to faith and hope, priests, religious brothers and sisters and permanent deacons draw us closer to the love of God offered to us in Christ Jesus. They cast their nets, and we and the Church are richer for it.

Perhaps most of all, priest, deacons and religious remind us of our own call to be fishers of people. In the ways we seek to love others, forgive, nourish, challenge, support and witness to our faith with joy, all of us are called to draw others into a relationship with God.

Such a call begins with an invitation, and I have come to believe that part of this call involves personally inviting men and women to consider embracing a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. We need their witness. Such an invitation nourishes their gifts, and affirms the importance of these gifts to the life of the Church so that all of us can more faithfully cast our nets."
Benedictine sister helps college students find God

By John Shaughnessy

Benedictine sister helps college students find God

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was in a horrible traffic accident and I

world and be part of a community that

searching for God and they are really

longings that she

when you believe it will cause them

making every day in life count after she

stresses and challenges.

seeking advice and comfort from their

Sister Jennifer when she counsels

often.

overcame hatred, fear and her own

connection between faith and service.

better community has been important to

related causes in state government.

Indiana Catholic Conference, which serves

committee. For 11 years, she was the

mission trips there to

love firsthand in his

experienced Wadelton's

in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, have also

check in with them, and the one-on-one

time through his regular phone calls to

himself to help people in need.

That desire has marked her own life

She personally knows the difficulty

Sister Jennifer knows the necessity of

The story of a young woman who

The children of Pedro Atala orphanage

—Seminarian Chris Wadelton

Ann Wadelton for a long time.

Wadelton majored in electrical

teaching engineering technology and graduated in 1990.

For the next 12 years, he worked in research and for companies

related to the computer industry.

"My prayer was generally, 'Give me

I needed to live my life today as God is

Ann Wadelton was in a horrible traffic accident and I

Try to talk me out of it, but I knew it

hard for them," she says. "They initially

resulted in hatred toward them. Besides,

wishing me. Then they joked that they

part of my life is what brings me joy

community and seeking God in every

Benedictines, that prayer and

Finding a home for others

Franciscans, Wadelton knew that God was

calling him to serve where he grew up. He

also realized that mission work was

Franciscan Father Jeremy Harrington.

Wadelton entered the novitiate of a

Franciscan province based in California

that does mission work in

in Central America and ministers to

Hispanic Catholics in the United States.

two forms of ministry that attracted him.

But after nearly two years with the

Franciscans, Wadelton said.

His family has known that for a long

time through his regular phone calls to

whether they are near or far away,

seminarian Chris Wadelton loves to give of himself to help people in need.

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TERRE HAUTE—The first years of our foundation resembled the journey with Jesus up Mount Tabor. The climb was steep as we labored to build our monastery, answering a call to be alone with the Lord in prayer and sacrifice at the heart of his Church.

Yet, at the same time, we were always in his company—for Jesus, who summoned us up the mountain, climbed it at our side as he once climbed with Peter, James and John.

With the marvelous help of his Providence and the loving assistance of many friends whom he inspired to support us, the goal was reached at last. Peter’s dream of erecting three tents on the mountain to honor Jesus and his prophets was realized on the hill of St. Joseph Monastery in Terre Haute on Oct. 7, 1947, the feast of the Holy Rosary.

We rejoiced in all that God had done for us.

A colonial style house served as our temporary monastery while our new monastery was slowly built in those first 25 years of our foundation. The cornerstone laid on Feb. 19, 1970, read, “Carmel of St. Joseph—the Gift of Friends” and “Lord, it is good for us to be here!”

The monastery seems to be frozen at the moment of the Apostles’ first passing glimpse into the Lord’s glory on Mount Tabor, but behind the walls, as the years marched on, our community has been called forward into other stages of the journey. We have tried to follow the Lord faithfully into the dusty life of the plain, into our unique encounters with the full range of his human experience.

With all our brothers and sisters in the mystery of the Church, we have found one reality to be constant. On the mountain, as in the valley, in light as in the darkness, on Tabor as on Calvary, the reality is a person: Jesus.

Our cloistered life is rooted in silence, solitude, generous work, reliance on God alone, unceasing prayer for the needs of the Church, a spirit of joy, sisterly love and cooperation in community as we continue to build our foundation in love from shared experiences of the passing years together.

(For more information about the Discalced Carmelite nuns of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute, log on to www.heartsawake.org.)
ST. MEINRAD—Surrounded by the stillness and beauty that one often finds in the wooded hills of southern Indiana, Benedictine Brother Martin Erspamer works quietly in an art studio just down the hill from Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

He seeks to make beautiful works of art that will lead others closer to God. Brother Martin has created stained-glass windows for churches across the country, using methods and tools that have largely remained the same as those used in the Middle Ages. He has also sketched thousands of drawings in a largely medieval style that have made their way into missalettes and worship aids used by millions of Catholic Americans.

How he came to join Saint Meinrad Archabbey is, in a sense, itself a work of art. Brother Martin joined the Marianist order in 1971 when he was 17. At the time, he was drawn to artistic work and liked the fact that the Marianists had brothers who dedicated themselves to art.

For periods, he studied art in Boston, worked as an artist in St. Louis and helped extend his order into India, where he also took in some of the fine points of traditional Indian art styles. In the mid-1980s, Brother Martin found himself back in St. Louis. As he was trying to establish himself as an artist for the general public, a studio turned down a group of his works for a showing because the art was “too religious.” “I got really angry and brought it home and put it all in a dumpster,” he said. “At that point, I decided to start working exclusively for the Church.”

He soon began to work with Emil Frei Associates, the St. Louis-based stained-glass studio that, decades earlier, had created the stained-glass windows in Saint Meinrad’s Archabbey Church.

Brother Martin also continued to create pottery and liturgical furniture. Renovations In the mid-1990s, the monks of Saint Meinrad were planning the renovation of their church and Brother Martin, still a member of the Marianists, agreed to create a triptych—or three panels of paintings—about the life of their holy patron. He came to Saint Meinrad for meetings on a nearly monthly basis in 1995. It was during that time that he started to consider that God might be calling him to live out more fully a contemplative and monastic impulse that had kept re-emerging within him for years.

Although attracted to the life of the monks at the time, it would be 10 more years until he joined the community. If the solemnly professed monks of Saint Meinrad approve, Brother Martin will profess solemn vows in the community in August.

Still, he looks back on that experience of creating the triptych, which stands today at the entryway from the church into the monastery, as a key point in his monastic discernment. “I worked on the renovation of the church, and the Benedictines worked on the renovation of me,” said Brother Martin, who acknowledged that he is still a work in progress.

The attractive power of beauty Although Saint Meinrad Archabbey stands in a long Benedictine tradition of promoting beauty in its liturgical music, churches and other monastic buildings, Brother Martin was attracted to the community by seeing beauty there in a much wider scope.

“It was the beauty of this place that attracted me,” he said. “And not just the physical surroundings—in terms of nature—but the beauty of the people, the beauty of the liturgy, the beauty of the music. It just really, really spoke to me.”

Benedictine Father Harry Hagan, Saint Meinrad’s novice and junior master, is Brother Martin’s superior. He also worked with him in 1995 on the renovation.

Father Harry thinks that beauty is an important way that people can be drawn closer to God. “We ... know God by beauty, by things that are beautiful and that take us really beyond this present moment and give us some sense of that which transcends,” said Father Harry. “Things that are beautiful are extremely important.”

For Brother Martin, the actual process of creating something that is beautiful can draw him close to God. “When you create something, I think it’s probably as close as a human being can get to being like God in some way,” he said.

Attracting others to God Brother Martin sees his work as an artist as his apostolate, as his way of proclaiming the Gospel and attracting others to God. But he sees himself doing this evangelizing in an indirect way. “It’s not me going out and preaching the Word,” he said. “It’s the work of my hands that’s doing it, and a lot of times, perhaps, in softer and more subtle ways than in actually using words.”

The work of Brother Martin’s hands may be evangelizing on a broader scale in the months and years to come. A collection of photos of his artwork has recently been published by Oregon Catholic Press. Titled The Work of Our Hands: The Art of Martin Erspamer, O.S.B., the book includes photos of art that Brother Martin has created for books and other publications, stained-glass windows, liturgical furniture and pottery.

“I hope people enjoy looking at them,” Brother Martin said. “I hope they find them inspiring. I tend to look at my own artwork as once they leave me, they live or die on their own. I wish them well.

“But I guess my attitude toward art is that the best ones are still yet to come.”

For more information about The Work of Our Hands or to purchase a copy, contact local Catholic bookstores, call Saint Meinrad’s Scholar Shop at 812-357-6731 or log on to www.saintmeinrad.edu/shop.
SEYMOUR—Father Todd Goodson likes spending time with the people he serves. On a recent Sunday morning in December, he welcomed newcomers to St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour—where he serves as pastor—by presiding over the Rite of Acceptance, a ritual in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. From there, he celebrated Mass in the packed church.

After Mass, Father Goodson chatted with parishioners as they browsed through Catholic books, videos and gift items that were on sale in the parish life center. Later, he went to Our Lady of Providence Parish in Brownstown, where he also serves as pastor, to celebrate Mass.

In the afternoon, Father Goodson was back at St. Ambrose to celebrate Mass in Spanish for the parish’s Hispanic community. He said he enjoys “just seeing Christ in the people you serve.”

“There are some tremendously powerful ministerial experiences that you have in just being with your folks,” Father Goodson said.

Just as he values being with his parishioners, Father Goodson is trying to persuade them to spend more time with each other and help them grow in unity. Although they are one in the Catholic faith they share, differences in language and culture have kept them apart in the past.

“While there are tremendous challenges with that, it’s a real grace-filled journey,” Father Goodson said. “I really feel that this is something that God has kind of placed in my care.”

“The grace-filled journey is one that he wants to make with a growing number of traveling companions. “He tries to get to know everybody one-on-one,” said Wanda Hunt, a member of St. Ambrose Parish. “He’s the same all the time. He is so caring, but so busy. He tries to draw in more and more of us parishioners to help him with some of the things that he has to do. He wants everybody involved.” One person that Father Goodson has gotten involved in is Ana De Gante, who helps coordinate the Spanish-language liturgies at St. Ambrose Parish.

De Gante appreciates how her pastor is working to bring people together in the parish. “He wants to have just one community. He came to tears on Ash Wednesday,” she said. “It was so touching to see him so touched. He brings us all together.”

Although he works to bring people together in all sorts of situations, Father Goodson said the unity is expressed at the best at Mass. “This is where you see the power of the Eucharist to unite people who wouldn’t, perhaps, ordinarily be united,” he said. “You really see the grace of the Eucharist in moving us—pushing us, really—to come together as a community.”

Father Goodson’s second dream is to help coordinate the Spirit of St. Francis Parish. As pastor of Providence Parish in Seymour and St. Ambrose Parish in Brownstown, he serves. “I find it's important to me to anchor myself in prayer, anchoring in the spiritual grace to get us through. And that's why this is a real grace-filled journey,” Father Goodson said. “I don’t necessarily have any sort of powerful experiences during that prayer time. But because I’m anchored in that, I see God in day-to-day events.”

Father Goodson preaches a homily during a Dec. 2 Mass at St. Ambrose Church in Seymour. He is pastor of St. Ambrose Parish and Our Lady of Providence Parish in Brownstown.

‘... because I’m anchored in [prayer], I see God in day-to-day [events].’
—Father Todd Goodson

‘There are some tremendously powerful ministerial experiences that you have in just being with your folks.’
—Father Todd Goodson
Little Sister of the Poor enjoys serving God and the elderly

By Mary Ann Wyand

Beatrice Spurgeon’s face lit up with joy as she showed family pictures to Sister Margaret Banar on Dec. 22 at the St. Augustine Home for the Aged in Indianapolis.

The 94-year-old resident moved to the St. Augustine Home in 2003 and enjoys visiting with the Little Sisters of the Poor, who are now part of her extended family.

The residents, happy family atmosphere and daily Mass at the home are among the reasons that Sister Margaret loves her ministry as a member of the international women’s religious order dedicated to serving the elderly.

“Caring for the elderly is a very rewarding ministry,” Sister Margaret said on Dec. 22. “We prepare the residents for heaven. We prepare them to meet their Maker, and it’s a great grace to do that.”

She related the residents, staff members, volunteers, benefactors, friends and relatives of the residents all contribute to the family atmosphere at the home.

“We are extremely grateful to all the people who support our ministry,” Sister Margaret said. “Without their support—whether it’s financial, volunteer or prayers—we could not fulfill our mission as Little Sisters of the Poor. We’re a team and we all need one another. That’s how our foundress, Blessed Jeanne Jugan, wanted it to be—a family where the sisters are dedicated to caring for the elderly.”

Sister Margaret completed coursework as a licensed practical nurse, earned a bachelor’s degree in special studies in health care, and is licensed as a nursing home administrator in Indiana and several other states. She served as the superior of the Little Sisters home in Pittsburgh for nine years during the 1990s.

In Indianapolis, she helps Sister Judith Meredith, the superior, with a variety of responsibilities at the 40-year-old home located at 2345 W. 86th St. The sisters currently serve 95 elderly residents who live in apartments, assisted living or the infirmary at the immaculately kept home.

Sister Margaret’s current ministry title is “begging sister” or “collections sister,” which encompasses public relations and development efforts as well as weekday outings in the sisters’ “begging van.” She visits Indianapolis-area distribution warehouses, businesses and trucking companies to ask them to support the Little Sisters’ ministry by donating food, money and other supplies.

She also discusses the sisters’ mission during Mass appeals at parishes in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and Diocese of Lafayette.

“My job is to keep in touch with people in the business world . . . to make our ministry known and make it possible for them to be part of our mission,” she said.

“As I tell people during church collections, not everybody can be a Little Sister of the Poor, but by their donations or volunteer work they can be a part of the team—God’s team—with the Little Sisters.”

The congregation was founded by Blessed Jeanne Jugan in 1839 in St. Servan, France. The Little Sisters operate 32 homes in the U.S. and 205 homes in 31 countries throughout the world.

Every few years, each sister receives a new assignment, she said, and she has gotten to know sisters and residents at many homes throughout the U.S.

“That’s a grace,” she said of each ministry assignment, “because it’s abandonment to God’s Providence.”

When Hurricane Katrina decimated the Gulf Coast in August 2005, the mother provincial in Baltimore asked her and several sisters from other homes to help care for displaced residents of their New Orleans home who were evacuated to safe quarters at a nursing home in Baton Rouge, La., hours before the storm. She served in Louisiana for about three weeks.

The Little Sisters have a great devotion to God, Jesus, Mary and St. Joseph, who is their patron saint and special intercessor for prayer requests. They trust that God will provide for the residents’ needs each day, and do not have endowments.

A native of Detroit and the second-oldest of five siblings, Sister Margaret felt called to religious life while attending the former Rosary High School and volunteering at the Little Sisters’ home there. She enjoyed helping the elderly.

“I thank the roots of my vocation came early in my life,” Sister Margaret said. “I always kind of thought I felt called to religious life or some other dedicated life of service. I always felt—although I have a great respect for marriage and children—that being in silence was larger than to have just a family with several children. I felt that I had a universal love for many people. So that and my love for God were probably the seeds of my vocation.”

After graduating from high school, she joined the Little Sisters of the Poor more than 30 years ago and was a postulant then a novice for two years before deciding to discern her future. She worked at a hospital for a year as a licensed practical nurse before rejoining the order.

“I still had that feeling of a calling from God,” she recalled, “and I didn’t want to spend a lot of time out of the convent if that’s where God wanted me to be.”

A religious vocation is a calling from God, she said, but it is difficult for people to hear God’s call today because of the noise and distractions of popular culture.

“To hear this call from God, you have to listen,” Sister Margaret said. “I think today it’s very difficult for young or middle-aged persons to listen to God because of the noise and constant interruptions in our culture and the fear of being in silence. I think many people today turn the radio or TV on the minute they get home—even if it’s just for company. It’s very difficult for God to talk to you if you’re always listening to other things. I think that might be a deterrent to a person really thinking about, ‘Is God calling me to a dedicated life?’

“I think faith is an atmosphere you have to live in every day,” she said. “It’s trusting in God. I think one of the most important things about my life as a Little Sister of the Poor, as a religious, is the witness value. My habit is a sign, a symbol, a witness, that I have dedicated my life to serving God and people.”

Sister Margaret Banar, a member of the international Little Sisters of the Poor order, looks at photographs with St. Augustine Home for the Aged resident Beatrice Spurgeon of Indianapolis. Sister Margaret said her "open doors" that otherwise would not be accessible in ministry.

We Pray for Vocations

Won’t You Pray With Us?

The Knights of Columbus are in solidarity with Pope Benedict XVI

Our bishops, and our priests

Norman Stoffel – State Deputy
Fr. Ron Rieder, O.F.M. Cap. – State Chaplain

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WADELTON continued from p. 15

usual gift exchange this past Christmas. The family’s children and teenagers instead bought gifts for the children living at Pedro Atala. Wadelton and five family members then went to Honduras to deliver the gifts and do mission work.

His niece, Kellie Moore, a member of St. Pius X Parish and a senior at North Central High School, both in Indianapolis, traveled to Honduras with him in 2006. She sees a connection between his love

Seminarian Chris Wadelton collects used computer parts on Oct. 20 in a parking lot at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis, where he is a member. Wadelton helped organize the collection of the parts, which were to be transported to Honduras and used in a vocational school.

for her and her family and the love he gives to those in need in Central America.

“Even our family, he’ll call and go out to dinner with one cousin and then the next cousin. He makes a lot of personal time for every single person,” she said.

“And then when he’s down there, it’s the same thing. He’s always the first to help. He’s just really generous with everything he has, and in reaching out and taking the extra step.”

Father Todd Goodson had a chance to observe Wadelton last summer when the seminarian ministered at St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour and Our Lady of Providence Parish in Brownstown, where Father Goodson serves as pastor.

He thinks Wadelton will be a “tremendous asset” to the archdiocese in large part because of the way that he approaches caring for people, an approach whose roots go back to the early years of his childhood.

“Chris wants to minister to people, and the more the better,” Father Goodson said. “It’s a part of who he is. Chris likes to bring the Gospel to people. He likes to be the presence of Christ to people.”

Fr. Ron Rieder, O.F.M. Cap. – State Chaplain
Sisters of Providence use biomass energy to care for the Earth

By Dave Cox
Special to The Criterion

The Criterion  Friday, January 11, 2008

St. Theodora Guérin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, often worked in her congregation’s gardens. The 1854 drawing below by Providence Sister Ruth Johnson, S.P., shows St. Theodora Guérin standing next to a garden. The Sisters of Providence are continuing to carry on her tradition of caring for the Earth by reusing natural materials in biomass energy.

By Sean Gallagher

What the catechism says about vocations

Priests

Priests, deacons, and men and women religious have been an integral part of the Church throughout its history and continue to be so today. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that these vocations are part of the Church’s mission to spread the Gospel and continue Christ’s work of salvation in the world.

Deacons

Deacons share in Christ’s mission of grace and service in a special way. The sacrament of Holy Orders marks them with an imprint (character) which cannot be removed and which configures them to Christ, who made himself the ‘deacon’ or servant of all.

Among other tasks, it is the task of deacons to assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the proclamation of the Gospel and praying, in presiding over funerals, and in dedicating themselves to the various ministries of charity (#1570).

Priests

[The] priesthood is ministerial. ‘That office … which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a service;’ it is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood, it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a ‘sacred power’ which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all. ‘The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him’ (#1551, quoting Lumen Gentium and St. John Chrysostom).

Religious Life

Religious life derives from the mystery of the Church. It is a gift she has received from her Lord, a gift she offers as a stable way of life to the faithful … Thus, the Church can both show forth Christ and acknowledge herself to be the Savior’s bride. Religious life in its various forms is called to signify the very charity of God in the language of our time” (#926). †

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By Sean Gallagher

In his native Puerto Rico, deacon candidate Emilio Ferrer-Soto grew up worshipping at a church named after St. Patrick that had been built by his grandfather.

After entering the U.S. Army in 1971, he went far away from his Caribbean home, serving for periods in Europe, Central America and South America.

After retiring from the military, Emilio’s travels eventually brought him to New York in 1999 where he began working for the Social Security Administration.

Near the end of that year, he was asked to work in Indianapolis as a bilingual claims representative.

Emilio had never set foot in the city before, and didn’t know where to go to find Mass celebrated in Spanish, his native language.

“I called a taxi and told the taxi driver to take me to a Spanish-speaking church,” he said.

Where did he end up? At a church named after St. Patrick, a reminder of the one he worshipped at as a boy back in Puerto Rico.

When he got there, he asked the taxi driver to wait for him.

Franciscan Father Tom Fox celebrated the Mass and, at the end of the liturgy, asked if there were any newcomers.

Emilio introduced himself and, afterward, chatted with some of St. Patrick’s parishioners.

“I remember going back to the taxi and the bill was $84,” Emilio said with a laugh. “It wasn’t long before he got involved at his new parish.

“I remember telling Father Tom, ‘I want a job,’” Emilio said.

He eventually became a member of the parish council and served as a lector.

Just a few weeks later, Father Tom approached Emilio and told him that the archdiocese was going to begin its first deacon formation program and that he would be a good candidate for it.

“I couldn’t speak,” Emilio said. “And Maria was looking at me. I told him that I needed to speak to Maria. Maria told him, Father, two weeks ago, he told me that he wanted to be a deacon.”

The rest, as they say, is history.

Ferrer-Soto applied to the deacon formation program and was accepted.

If all goes according to plan, he and 24 other men will be ordained to the diaconate on June 28 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. They will be the first group of men ordained as permanent deacons in the history of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Emilio’s journey to that historic day began under the patronage of St. Patrick long ago and far away in Puerto Rico. It has continued under that same saint’s care in Indianapolis.

“I saw that connection as [a sign of] my calling,” Ferrer-Soto said.

Another confirmation of his calling to the diaconate has come over the four years of his formation in his ability to successfully balance a growing number of commitments.

Emilio and Maria are involved in the St. Vincent de Paul Society and assist in marriage preparation at St. Patrick Parish.

He has ministered in the parish’s Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, made hospital visits and Communion calls, and helped lead people through the Church annullment process.

The deacon formation program requires several hours a week. But, in addition to that, Emilio is also pursuing an online master’s degree in religious education through Felician College in New Jersey.

He and his wife are also involved in the Third Order Franciscans.

To top it off, Ferrer-Soto is striving to be a good husband, father and Social Security employee.

Franciscan Father Arturo Ocampo, pastor of St. Patrick Parish, is amazed by Emilio’s balancing act.

“Emilio is really disciplined and dedicated.”

Father Arturo said. “He has a great love for ministry and for the Church.”

Emilio credited Maria’s presence in his life as making a big difference through the years of his formation.

“She’s been with me along every step of the path,” said Emilio. “I don’t know if I would have been able to do it without Maria. She is the power behind me.”

Maria, however, looks even deeper for the strength that has helped her and Emilio along the path to ordination.

“I think that the balance of all my involvement in Emilio’s formation is centered in Jesus as the center of our lives,” she said, “and that has helped us balance all these activities in a way that he can remain a good husband and father.”

Once he is ordained, Emilio hopes to have a positive impact on Hispanic Catholics in the archdiocese. He is already doing that through work when Hispanics come to the Social Security office for assistance.

“I’m always asking them if they go to church,” he said. “I try to guide them to St. Patrick, and there I offer the services of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. A lot of these people are in need.

As men who work in the marketplace, they are, in a sense, emboldened among the laity, permanent deacons are in a unique position. By virtue of their ordination, they are a special sign of Christ and can have a positive influence in ways that aren’t ordinarily available to priests and bishops.

For Emilio, that opportunity is a call to show Christ to others through humility.

“You have to humble yourself every day. You have to pick up your cross and carry it every day. That’s the way that I see portraying Jesus.”

—Deacon candidate Emilio Ferrer-Soto

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Franciscan sisters find fulfillment in leading parishes

By John Shaughnessy

She raised the question on “Familly Night” at the parish, hoping to get the parents and the children to learn to share their answers about “What are you grateful for?”

Franciscan Sister Patty Campbell smiled as she listened to one child say “love,” another mention “our health,” and a third proclaim “each other.”

Considering the question herself, Sister Patty mentioned the special relationship she has with the members of St. Mary-of-the-Rock Parish in Franklin County, where she serves as the parish life coordinator.

“They’re like a second family to me,” says Sister Patty, who is 81. “They’re very attached and volunteer for everything.”

While the role of a parish life coordinator is basically to help parishes stay open, become more active and grow in the faith—during a time of a limited number of priests—the bond that forms between coordinators and their parishes often becomes a deep one.

Just ask Sister Patty and three other Franciscan sisters in the archdiocese who serve as parish life coordinators.

All of them are members of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, which is based in Oldenburg.

“Part of what I enjoy about it is you touch every aspect of people’s lives—baptism, first Communion, confirmation, graduation, new life and other marriage events,” says Sister Christine Ernestes, the parish life coordinator of Immaculate Conception Parish in Millhousen and St. Denis Parish in Jennings County.

“Shrinking membership has forced us to rethink the way we do things, how we relate to people,” says Sister Shirley Ernstes, the director of the Benedict Inn Retreat Center in St. Meinrad.

“We’ve been saying our prayers for 150 years.”

By Sister Mary Sujita Kallupurakkathu, S.N.D.

The congregation has applied for a third child proclaim “each other.”

The presence of a parish life coordinator makes a difference to the faithful, parish life coordinators also rely heavily on the lay members of the parish.

“The lay people are like the backbone of our parishes,” says Sister Mary Sujita.

“A cooperator is the one who is being called by God to that ministry,” says Sister Shirley Ernstes.

“This is not a ministry just for women or for men or just for those in religious life,” she said. “This is a ministry of leadership and service that is open to all Catholics who have the desire to do what is necessary to develop the qualifications that are desired.”

“There’s one qualification that these four sisters consider essential.

“I feel the purpose of my entire ministry is to call others to Christ,” says Sister Margie. “As I organize spiritual, educational and social events, I constantly ask myself: To what segment of the parish will this appeal? Will people appreciate themselves, their neighbors and their God more after participating in this?”

For Sister Patty, all the questions from her 81 years of life lead her to one answer: “Calling others to Christ is the mission of every Christian.”

The sisters have been in the archdiocese for 25 years and that was nice. This is where I belong. How can I be of service? How can I be of service? How can I be of service?”

“Family Night” at the parish, hoping to learn how to serve. “It’s one thing to say you’ll accept it, but there is something beautiful that comes, that I believe—because it’s our vocation—when we are needed the most,” said Sister Mary Sujita.

The Sisters of Notre Dame serve under a variety of conditions in different countries, but Sister Mary Sujita says their mission remains the same: to be Christ to the world today.

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Sister Mary Sujita Kallupurakkathu, a native of Kerala, India, who has led the nearly 2,400 Sisters of Notre Dame in 15 countries since 1998.

“We have to change our approach toward becoming parish life coordinators.”

“College is such an important time in the world.”

We've been saying our prayers for 150 years.

By John Shaughnessy

TOLEDO, Ohio (CNS)—The superior general of one of the largest congregations of vowed women religious in the world believes religious life is changing, but she says that “absolutely no fear” that there are no men needed out.

“The vocations will continue to come, that I believe—because it’s God’s will. We can’t win the battle. There is no battle there to respond to that, all through his heart,” said Sister Jennifer Mechtild Horner, O.S.B.

“God doesn’t need huge numbers. It’s added, ‘It needs people with the hearts to respond.’ Across the international congregate, Sister Jennifer observed a growing desire to reach out to the poor, especially women, in the fields of education, health care and social services.

The congregation has applied for a third child proclaim “each other.”

One of the gifts I can give to students as a Benedictine sister is a sense of commitment.”

Sr. Jennifer Mechtild Horner, O.S.B.

founding with membership has forced the sisters to shift from thinking in terms of big institutions to consider new ways to present the Church.

“Church is not only a matter of [the] number of sisters, it’s not a matter of doing something we always did,” but it is a matter of giving our energy where we are needed the most,” said Sister Mary Sujita.

“The heart of the message is to see the individual and the society through the eyes of Jesus, and to give a response that is fitting,” she said.

Sisters in the United States have made concrete steps to be with people living on the margins of society, she said.

“We cannot change the world, but there is something beautiful that we can contribute to that transformation,” she added.

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