

Fall Issue 2004

Companions of the Cross



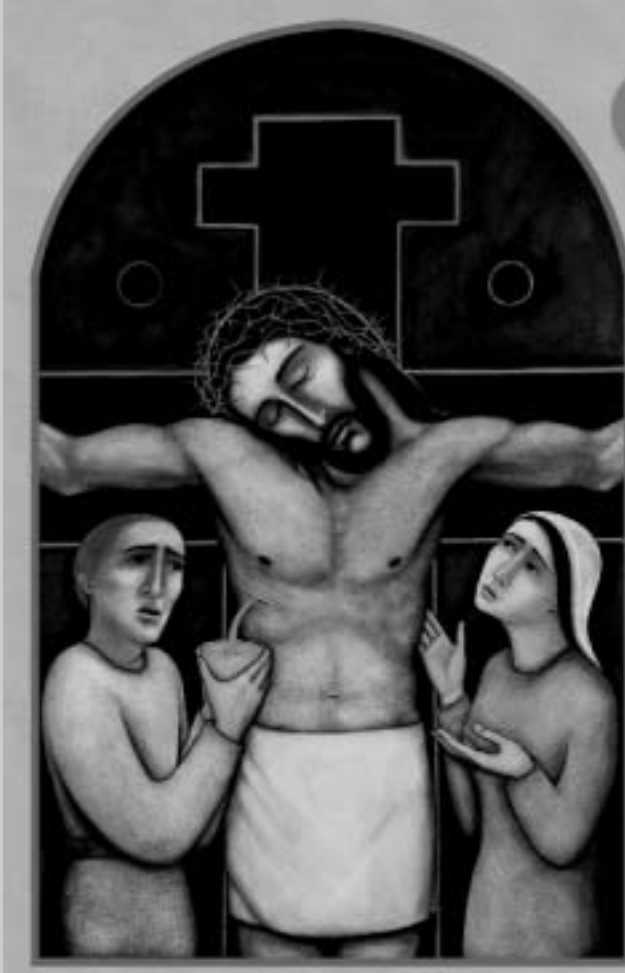
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Fr. Allan MacDonald

New Halifax Parishes

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Credits

Publisher
 The Companions of the Cross

Editors-in-Chief
 Fr. Robert Bedard, Founder
 Fr. John Vandenakker

Managing Editor
 Christine Labrosse

Graphic Design
 Dyann Bernard
 Pigs Can Fly Design
 pigscan@allstream.net

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 Mailing Address:
 199 Bayswater Avenue,
 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1Y 2G5
 Office: (613) 728-3175
 Fax: (613) 725-1590
 Website: www.companionscross.ca
 E-mail: compccros@cyberus.ca
 Publications Mail Agreement #: 40016244



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W e l c o m e



Fr. Rob Arsenault
Kingston, ON



Michael Clarke
Coaldale, AB



Michael Garcia
Orange County, CA



Lawrence Hyginus
Toronto, ON



Jim Lowe
Troy, MI



Ray Reitzel
Kitchener, ON



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N e w A p p l i c a n t s

FEATURE

The Spiritual Fatherhood of the Priest

By Fr. Bob Bedard

A priest acts in the very person of Jesus Christ. Like the apostles, he is ordained to be Christ to the world. He is ordained to do the things that Jesus did. He is, in fact, an alter Christus, another Christ. Like Jesus at the Last Supper, he confects the Eucharist. He stands at the altar and says the very words that Jesus himself said, making them his own: “*This is my body... This is my blood*” (Mt 26:26-28). Jesus’ presence in the bread and the wine becomes “real,” “true,” and “substantial”. These are the words the Church itself uses to describe how Christ is present in this exalted Sacrament. We call it “the Blessed Sacrament”.

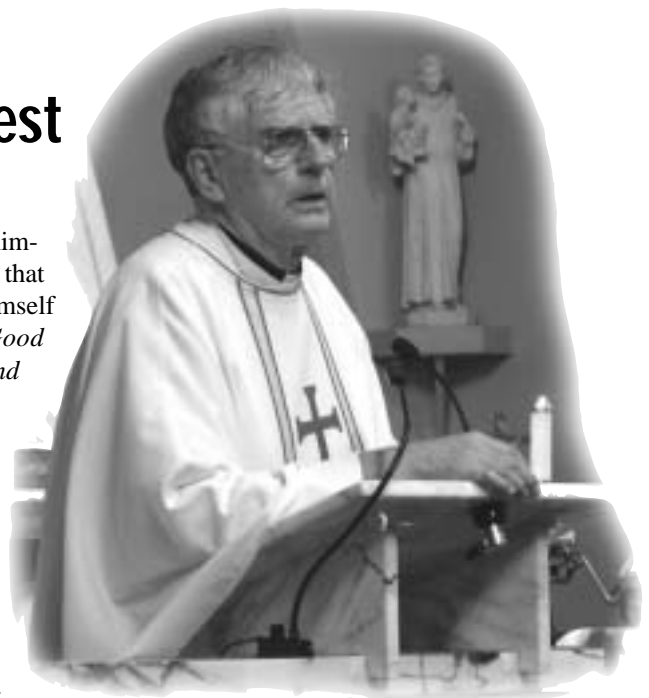
Although the appearances of bread and wine do not change, the reality does. This most dignified of the Sacraments becomes, at the words of Jesus himself, the actual Body and Blood of the Lord. A man who is ordained to the priesthood received a configurement to Christ himself. He becomes what Christ is. And he does the things that Christ does. He must do the Father’s will in all things. Like Jesus, he must make it his food. He proclaims the Good News of the Kingdom. He announces the Father’s incredible plan for mankind, a fullness of life both here and hereafter. What we receive here as we give our lives to him – a life of peace that the world cannot give, not even understand, a love that casts out all fear, an abundance of life, a fullness of joy, and the freedom of the sons and daughters of God (Jn 14:27) – we enjoy forever in Heaven. Like Jesus, the priest teaches the truths of the Kingdom of God. He leads people into a transforming relationship with the Holy Spirit. He blesses, he forgives sin.

I’m talking here about “spiritual fatherhood” as it is to be lived out in the life of a priest. Since a priest acts in the very person of Jesus we must verify “fathering” as one of the important things he did.

The role that Jesus ascribes to himself that speaks most clearly to that of a father is his reference to himself as a shepherd: “*I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and they know me... for these, I will give up my life*” (Jn 10:15). The sheep are, of course, his people. I am one of his sheep. It is clear that he wants a close bond with me, and he wants it for each of us. Much of what is implied in the relationship goes over our heads completely because we do not really understand the full reality of the shepherd-sheep relationship the way his hearers did.

I was totally in the dark about this relationship until I heard it explained a few years ago. In my own experience as a sometime observer, there did not seem to be much interaction between today’s sheep and the farmers who owned them. We do not even call the farmers shepherds. But this was not the reality Jesus was speaking from. The way sheep were attended to in his day was very different from our modern customs. We are told that there is only one person on earth today who care for sheep the way it was done in the New Testament times. These are the Basques, who live mainly in the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains in northern Spain.

In Jesus’ day a group of owners (shepherds) of good numbers of sheep would construct or buy a large fenced-in sheepfold. Each man would put his herd in it for the night. The men would take turns standing guard at night lest wolves or other predators attack and kill the sheep. Each shepherd would customarily name each member of his herd just as people today give names to their dogs, cats and other pets. Every morning, the shepherds would in turn come to the gate of the pen



and call out to their respective sheep. The latter, recognizing their own particular owner’s voice would head for the gate. We are certainly familiar with the voice recognition part of it. Dog owners know how well these quadrupeds become familiar with the sound of their owners’ voices.

Each shepherd would then lead his flock out into the meadows and fields to spend the day. The sheep were accustomed to having a steady and purposeful, but leisurely, day. The shepherd would take up a suitable place (out of the sun on a very hot day) where he could keep an eye on all of them. The owner would then begin to call each of the sheep by name, in turn, to come to him. Recognizing its own name, each one would amble eagerly over to where the shepherd was. This was its own special time of the day. This was the time for it to receive individual attention. The shepherd would gently comb out the coat, dislodge the burrs and ticks, apply oil to any cuts or abrasions, work the shoulder and neck muscles a bit, all the while talking in quiet and tender tones to the sheep itself, just the way dog owners of today minister to their pets. All of this had the effect of soothing the animal’s feelings and giving reassurance that it had somebody to love and care for it. This is the way the Basques do it today. And this

is the way the shepherds did it in Jesus' day. This has many of the appearances of fathering done well. The priest has to be this kind of father to his flock; a father like Jesus was to his disciples, especially the apostles.

I find this shepherd analogy persuasive. But more persuasive still has been my own experience. Through the years the conviction has been deeply planted in my heart and mind that our Heavenly Father desires his priests to be fathers to his people.

I was born into a fervent Catholic family. But it was very untypical. I was the only child. As I grew into adulthood, I was not at all well-equipped to enter marriage with the attendant children that would have inevitably been part of that. I knew nothing about children. Had I got married in my mid-twenties, I would have been a disaster as a father. I would have started out, I think, as a type of martinet – all discipline – and degenerated over the years to a “who cares?” parent. Of course, nothing would have worked. The children would have been in total rebellion by the time they were 12 or 13. I would have had a strange assortment of adolescents around me – wildly coloured hair, rings in ears and noses and other protruding parts of the anatomy, every outrageous clothing fad. But the Lord had other ideas. He saved society from the merry chase upon which my progeny would have led it. He drew me into priesthood.

After three years of ordination, the archbishop pointed me to teaching at a new boys' high school he was starting, from which he hoped to get some decent prospects for the seminary. I was horrified. I had already had a bad experience teaching catechism in my last year at the seminary in a local Catholic elementary school. It was the parish school for the nearby St. Theresa's parish. It was customarily called “Little Flower School”. If ever a school in the history of Catholic education was misnamed, it was that one. It should have been called “Sing-Sing” or “Alcatraz”. I explained this to the arch-

bishop. He was sympathetic but suggested I consider trying it for a year. I taught for 20 years. With the grace of God, I not only survived, I thrived. I even became principal for a term at the age of 32.

I obtained my qualifications as a school counsellor as well as teacher. This led me into many individual meetings with young men. I got to understand them quite well, I believe. I learned that they do not quickly trust adults. But, once they become convinced the older man can be trusted, they begin to open up. And that is what happened. Once we got past the Math and Geography problems, the real issue was broached. I became more and more amazed at the number of times the fathers of the boys would come up for discussion. Fully four out of five of the young men saw the source of their difficulties in the relationship with their fathers. “I can't get along with my father,” one would say. “My father doesn't understand me.” Some said they just did not like their fathers. It was like a broken record. I was aghast.

We have a major sociological problem on our hands here, I said to myself, and one of which I was not even aware. I had to conclude that not too many fathers were doing a good job. These boys were largely unfathered. It did not take long for me to move from chatting with the students to trying to provide some of the fathering they were actually longing for. Over the years, I gradually learned what a father should be. And I opened up, I believe, to what the Lord was teaching me through my experiences.

A father needs to know how to affirm his offspring and how vitally important affirmation is. A critical spirit has to be conquered. The son needs to hear from his father that he is loved, not just for what he does, but simply for himself. No matter what scrapes he gets himself into, the boy has to be sure it will not change his father's love for him.

Odious comparisons should be avoided entirely. “Why can't you be like... ?”

types of comments have to disappear. Firmness, yes, when need be, but fairness always. Father and son have to have quality time together, have to go places together. The father has to be unflinchingly reliable. And he must learn how to move along with the moods of the young, not putting up with everything, but understanding everything.

After 20 years in the classroom, my teaching days came to an end. It's about time, I said to myself, that I begin to involve myself more with the general adult population. But the Lord, once again, had other ideas. It was not long before I found myself involved with the foundation of a new community of priests. In fact, I was the founder. I had to do it. The Lord left me no other choice. He had me where he wanted me. He knew, of course, what he was doing. The community, the Companions of the Cross, received early approval by the archbishop and began to grow steadily.

The Lord brought dozens and dozens of impressive young men to join us, and continues to do so. We are a group, at this point, of over 70 men, ordained and seminarians. But, impressive though they be, many of them still need lots of fathering. What I learned as a teacher, I do now as a founder. If I am to believe the men around me, fathering has become my main gift. I would think the Lord's obvious will for me is to carry on into whatever years he still has appointed for me, as a father to young men. Not only that, I have to model for them the role of father that they themselves will find is awaiting them.

Has this fathering business been my discovery? I prefer to think that it is God's revelation to me. But, in any case, it should not have surprised me that I have become what people began to call me the day I was ordained – “Father”. ☺

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*Fr. Bob Bedard is the founder of the
Companions of the Cross.*

On Becoming a Lifetime Member

By Fr. Allan MacDonald

On February 11th, 2004, the Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, I wrote the following to Father Scott McCaig, the Director of Formation: “It is with heartfelt thanks to God the Father and the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mother, that I write you this letter to formally express my desire to apply for admission to Permanent Membership in the Society of the Companions of the Cross...”

It seems like it was only yesterday that I attended my first Community prayer meeting. This was in January, 1996, at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church here in Ottawa. Since that time, through many experiences and circumstances, I have come to see God’s providential hand at work in bringing me to the day of taking Lifetime promises.

From 1996-2001, I was an associate priest of the Society. During these years I came to know, understand and firmly believe the charism and vision of the Society. I have made it my own. Being involved in fulltime parish ministry during this time, I was able to witness firsthand this vision for ministry. People’s lives were being changed for the better as I cooperated with the Holy Spirit in leading them to Jesus. My involvement with the Society gave me the tools necessary to be an active participant in the New Evangelization. But yet, something was still missing.

After considerable prayer and dialogue with my bishop, I came to realize that the “missing ingredient” was the love, support, affirmation and challenge of living as one among brothers united in a common cause, the building up of Christ’s Kingdom and the salvation of souls. And so, in January, 2001, I was granted a leave of absence from my home Diocese of



Alexandria-Cornwall to join the Society as an Applicant.

Since then, I have come to realize just how incomplete my own priestly formation has been. Yet, the Lord continues to work! Over these last three years, through various responsibilities, ministries, apostolates and experiences in the Society, I have really been going through "remedial formation". The Lord placed me exactly where He wanted me, so as to bring about the greatest good in my life.

And now I come to the stage of Permanent Membership in the Society, effective September 14th, 2004. Everything that I have experienced since January, 1996, has been a preparation for this moment. What have I learned in the last eight years that gives me the confidence to take this step?: There is strength in the fraternity of brotherhood and the pursuit of holiness; the Cross is my only salvation and rallying point; there are other men like myself who have a desire to see Christ praised and honoured in His Church, and His people brought to accept Him as Lord and Saviour of their lives; prayer life (both personal and communal) is not optional, but is essential in my life as a priest; I am totally dependent upon God for everything; I know what it means to love others and to be loved, not for my gifts and qualities, but because of my weaknesses and vulnerability. To live in a Society where I am loved for who I am, and not because of what I do, has brought incredible freedom to my life and ministry as a priest.

I am not the same person I was eight years ago when I attended my first Society meeting, nor three years ago when I entered into the Formation program at Assumption Farm. All of this was God's doing. Mary played no small part in this, either. Over these past eight years I have

come to feel at home here among my brothers in the Society. I simply cannot see myself anywhere else! The Society of the Companions of The Cross has done so much for me, and I want to give my life for the Society. I know that the Society is not perfect, human relationships never are. I know the Society has problems, worries and concerns about many things, but every religious community does. But

it is God's work in renewing His Church and bringing people to His Son, Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that I want to be about! This will never be easy I know, but the Lord will always provide me with the grace I need to carry out His will. I am a "Companion of the Cross" by the way, not a "Companion of the Couch"! I know that He, who has begun this good work in me, will bring it to completion. ☺



"When I found your words I devoured them. They became the joy and happiness of my heart."
Jeremiah 15:16

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FEATURE

Just Married to Christ

By Sr. Catherine Lynn Forsythe, TOR

As it says in the photo, I am “Just Married to Christ.” My sisters in community threatened to tie cans to the back of the car I would be riding home in after my final profession Mass and reception, and attaching the appropriate message to the car. No, I did not ride home in this truck and no, the sisters did not go through with their threat (although I wouldn’t put it past them to do so in the future). This message actually applies to all Christians, since we are each the bride of Christ in the Biblical sense, all receiving and returning the love of God, our eternal Bridegroom. This photo was taken by my brother Paul in Vancouver, a few days before coming to attend my profession. It caused me think about what God has made all of us for.

On Sunday, June 6th, 2004 I was graced to profess solemn vows of chastity, poverty and obedience with the Franciscan Sisters, TOR of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother at the chapel of the Franciscan University of Steubenville. Many family and friends attended and I was delighted that two of the Companions were able to concelebrate that day. During this ceremony we are clothed in a white mantle and a crown of red and white roses. The white mantle symbolizes both Baptism and its spousal fulfillment in the consecrated life. The red roses symbolize Christ’s crucified love poured out for us on the cross and an invitation to martyrdom; while the white roses represent the self-giving love required of us daily. Together, the red (blood) and white (water) remind us to receive and give the



merciful love of God that gushed from the side of Christ when He was pierced with a lance. During the ceremony I exchanged this bridal crown for a crown of thorns. We receive a crown of thorns at final profession to remind us that we are married to, and following the way of a crucified spouse. The single red rose I received during the ceremony, and offered to Jesus, represents both the beauty and thorns of the consecrated life as they unfold during life. I also received a gold ring, symbolizing the eternal and spousal nature of the consecrated covenant. This serves as a daily reminder that I am privileged to be a spouse of Christ. I had been living and growing into this way of life for almost 7 1/2 years, so when I laid down in total surrender on the floor of the sanctuary during the singing of the Litany of the Saints, I had a clear sense about the commitment I was making. The Church, in her wisdom, allows consecrated persons a good amount of time to discern this final commitment. June 6th was the end of a rather long discernment process, and I have only arrived at this point by God’s abundant grace, given to me through Our Lady.





At the initiation of my faithful parents, Harold and Shirley, my family entered the Catholic Church when I was six (where the heck would I be today if they had not made that decision!). I attended both public and Catholic schools in Oshawa, Ontario, learning little about the faith at any of them and knowing almost nothing about religious consecrated life – Sally Field in “The Flying Nun” was the most positive image of religious life that I had growing up (note: I avoided attending Catholic high school because of the uniforms – does God have a sense of humour, or what!, here I am in a uniform for life). Because of my parents involvement in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (starting when I was aged 10), I began to learn about a very personal and life-changing faith in Jesus Christ, but it was not my idea of being normal at the time, so I tried to ignore it all and that worked (sort of) for awhile. Then, at 17, I began to ask the “meaning of life” questions and finally accepted that there was only one answer – Jesus. He became the loving and true center of everything for me, including my future and I began to actually ask Him what He wanted me to do with the rest of my life. He answered with another question (just like God), inviting me during my college years to



consider consecrated religious life. This mainly happened through my prayerful reading of the scriptures.

The idea of being a sister filled me with a sense of awe and dread simultaneously. I began to learn about the Catholic faith and spent most of my 20’s avoiding/considering this dubious/awesome invitation from God to marry Him. Gradually a scripture passage began to haunt me, “*If you delight in the Lord, He will give you the desires of your heart.*” (Ps. 37:4). I knew that He would eventually make His desire for my life my own desire. The flame of that desire was fanned by Jesus Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, as I was able to attend Eucharistic adoration daily, and within a year, my heart had turned 180 degrees in the direction of religious life. I knew very clearly then that I would never belong to anyone but Jesus and that I had to live the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience for the rest of my

life in a community setting. Of course, wonderful and holy people encouraged me along the way.

I was drawn to our community because of the contemplative way of life that included the works of mercy. I also loved the Franciscan spirituality and the poverty/humility that St. Francis embodied. And what can I say, my sisters in community are outstanding. When I finally made it here to Ohio (after a very fruitful side-track in Ottawa with the Companions of the Cross sisterhood) in January of 1997, the real discernment began – the proverbial rubber hit the road when this call was tested in a community setting. During the years of initial formation I had a lot to learn from these holy women about living religious life fruitfully and I had various formative experiences: the beautiful liturgical and contemplative prayer life of our community; working at the university in the student life office; taking a scripture

Continued from page 7

class with Dr. Scott Hahn and many other formation classes in the monastery; being the vocation contact person for the community; ministering with the poor, the sick and the elderly; participating in parish missions; teaching the faith to children; receiving initial training for spiritual direction and many community experiences both spiritual and temporal in nature. The temporal ones, like living with 20 some other women, are the ones that really test a vocational call. And here I am now, finally committed, with the gold ring to prove it. God has deigned to allow me to be His alone and I could not be happier.

My community, the Franciscan Sisters, Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother, was established in 1988 in the Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio, by Bishop Albert Ottenweller. We are a contemplative/active community called to a life of on-going conversion through our charisms of crucified love, mercy, poverty and contemplation. We live out these charisms through a daily rhythm of prayer, work and ministry in three settings: the Motherhouse, the hermitage and mission houses. As we are filled with God's merciful love through our life of prayer, we are empowered and compelled to share this great love that God has for all His people. To foster our contemplative life and to help support our life and ministry financially, we have two in-house works: making religious articles and distributing altar breads. We also have some Sisters who work part-time outside the house, but most of our ministries are voluntary. Our main support comes from the generosity of those who believe in our way of life. We are still a young group and many of our sisters continue to need training and formation to fulfill the needs of the community. Our community now numbers 26, with 19 professed sisters, 4 novices, and 3 candidates. God is blessing us with vocations, and we want to respond to Him as generously as possible through our life of prayer and ministry. If you would like to receive our newsletter, just contact me.

Currently, I remain at our mission house in Steubenville, ministering with the materially poor and preparing for the year to come. I have begun formation ministry, being the Sister Servant of Junior Sisters and the Vocation Coordinator for our community. I want so much to be faithful to the Lord in dealing with the lives of all these women and helping them to continue their formation and discernment. If

you know any young woman (18-35 years) who is interested in religious life, please encourage her to contact us or another community so that she can continue her discernment. I can be reached at scltor@juno.com, 815 North St., Steubenville, OH 43952 (740) 282-8590. Our community's web site is at: <http://www.torsisters.com/index2.htm>. ☺

THE PROFESSION OF VOWS

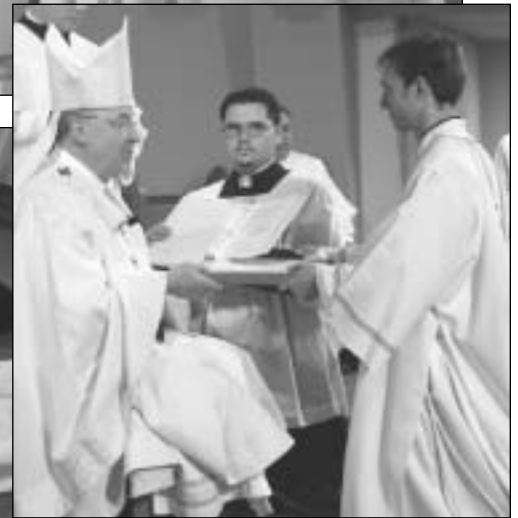
“I, Sister Catherine Lynn, vow to Almighty God to live for the whole of my life the counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience according to the Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis and the Constitutions of the Franciscan Sisters Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother. With our community as witnesses, I freely make my profession in your presence, Reverend Mother. Relying on His mercy, I entrust my life to the chaste, poor and obedient Christ. I freely choose to join our Sorrowful Mother at the foot of the cross, and, with St. Francis as my model of Gospel living. I place myself at the disposal of this religious congregation, to glorify God and to make known His merciful love.”

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FEATURE

Four Companions Ordained Deacons

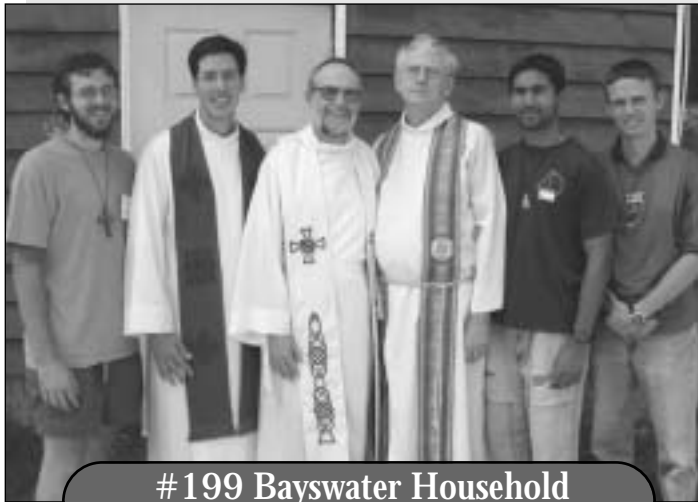
On Sept. 14th of this year, on the feast day of the community (The Triumph of the Cross), four seminarians were ordained to the diaconate by Archbishop Marcel Gervais of Ottawa. They

are: Francis Ching; Brian Christie; Michael Minifie; and Michael Scherrey. Earlier in the day these four men (along with Fr. Allan MacDonald) made their final "lifetime" commitments to the community. It was quite a day in the life of our community! A great time to rejoice with our new "lifers" and to pray for the four new ordinands. Many family, friends, lay associates, and parishioners turned out for the inspiring Mass of Ordination and reception. Fr. Bob was in fine form as he delivered another classic homily. Many thanks go out to Maria Lobo and her wonderful choir, the reception coordinators, Andy McGorman - MC of the liturgy, and to Archbishop Gervais (who said he loved coming out to St. Mary's because he always receives such enthusiastic applause!). Please keep these four men in your prayers as they exercise their diaconate and prepare for ordination to the priesthood in the spring of 2005. Deacons Francis Ching, Brian Christie, and Mike Minifie are in their final year of pastoral studies at St. Augustine's Seminary in Toronto. Deacon Michael Scherrey is in Houston where he is already a part of the pastoral team at the Catholic Charismatic Centre. We are very proud of these men and wish them God's abundant grace as they serve God's people. ☺

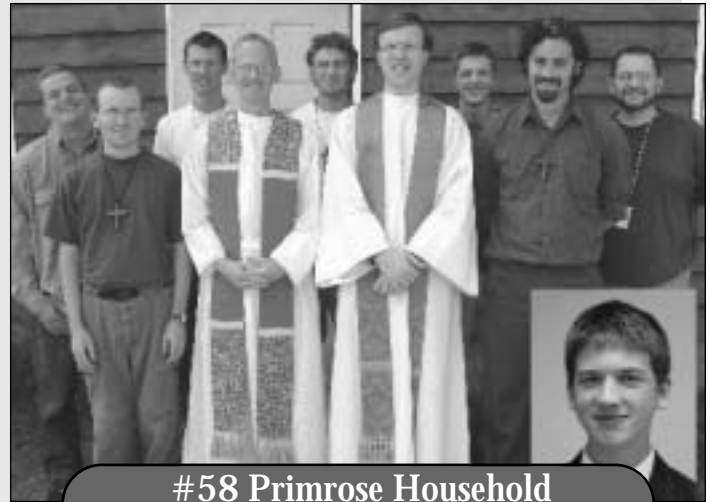




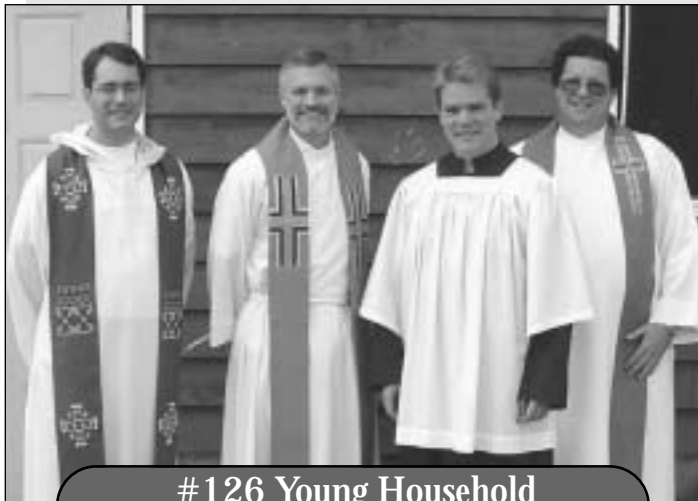
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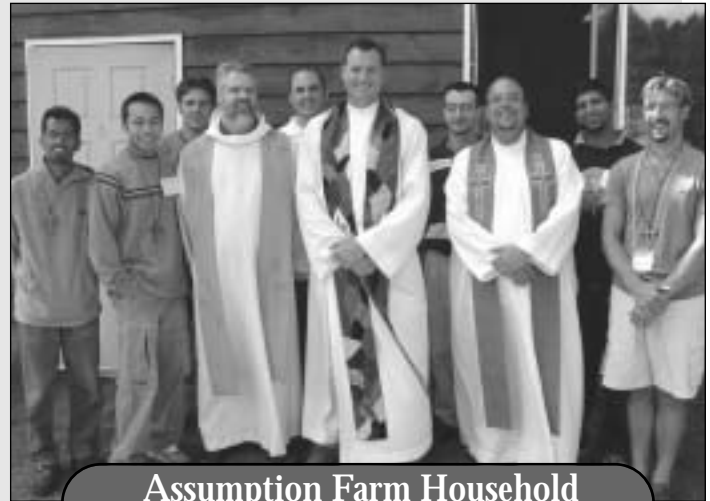
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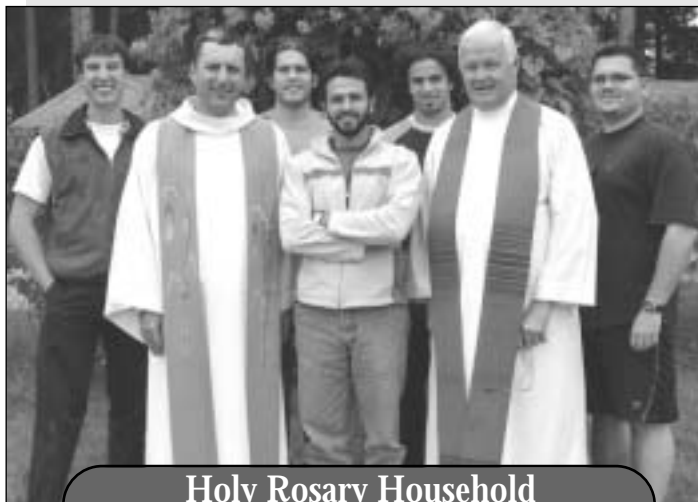
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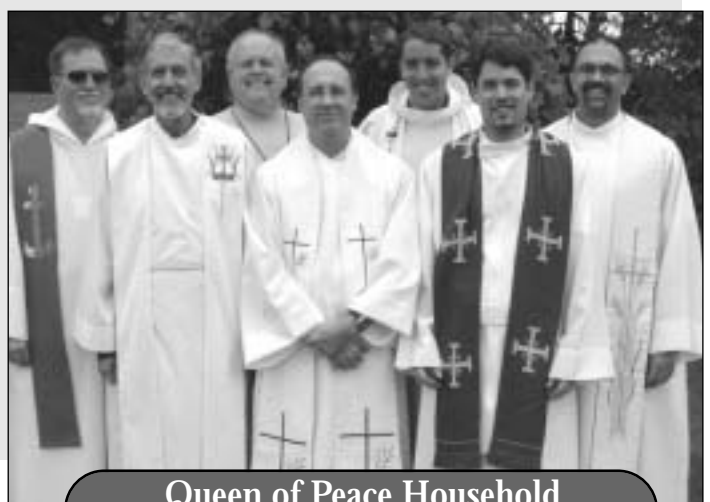
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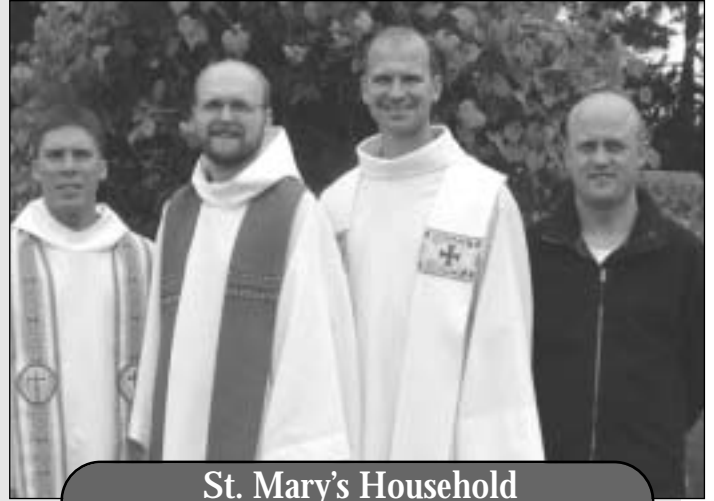
Queen of Peace Household
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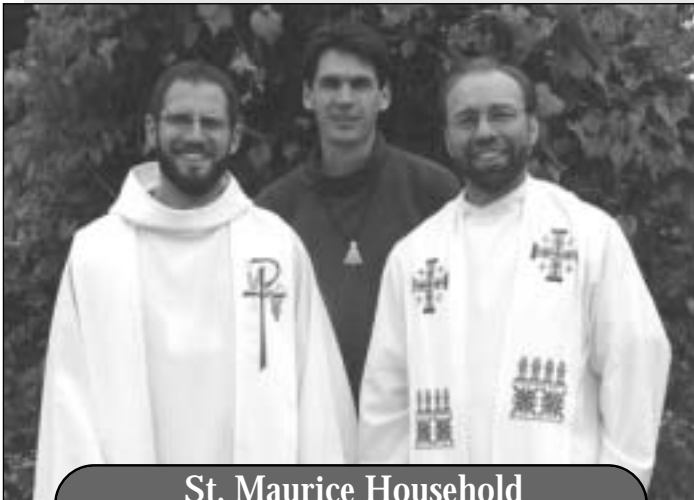
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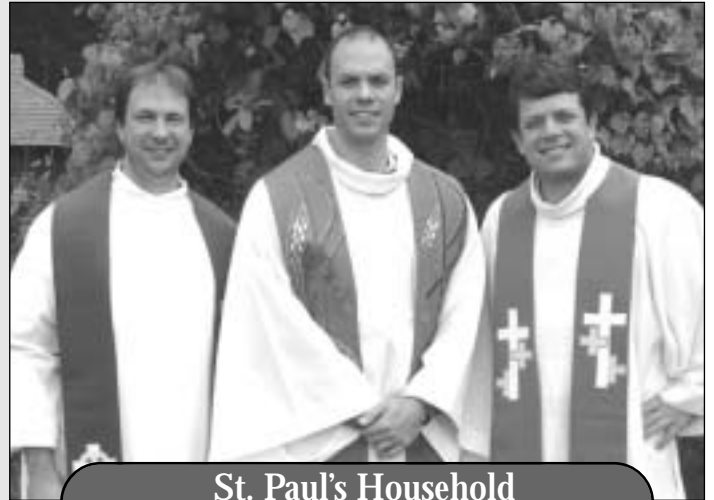
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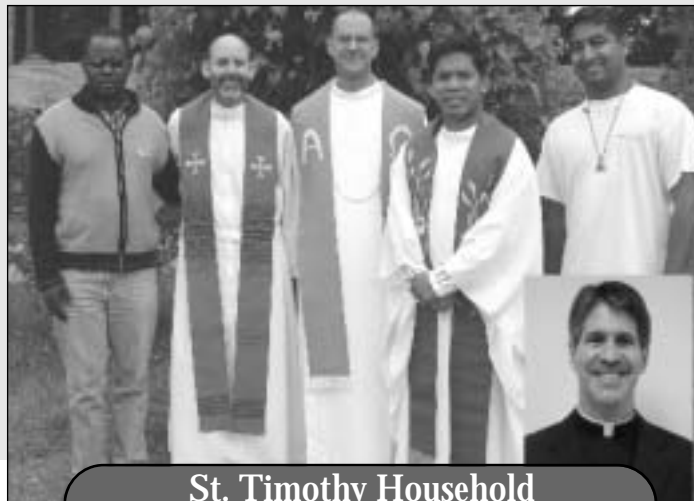
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Companions of the Cross

D O N O R R E S P O N S E F O R M

I would like to participate as a partner with the Companions of the Cross in the formation of candidates for the priesthood. I have indicated below the method of support that I prefer. To view our Privacy Policy please visit our web site www.companionscross.ca. All information sent to us will be kept strictly confidential.

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Telephone: () _____ Email: _____

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SECTION(S) BELOW WHICH APPLY TO YOU:

Enclosed is my cheque payable to the Companions of the Cross in the amount of \$ _____

Enclosed are _____ post-dated cheques, payable to the *Companions of the Cross*.

I prefer to charge my donation to my credit card (*check one*): Mastercard VISA

Number: _____ Expiry: ____ / ____ Amount: \$ _____

Signature : _____ Date: _____

Make this a (*check one*):

one-time donation monthly donation (can be cancelled at any time with one month's advance notice)

Automatic Monthly Direct Payment:

I hereby authorize the Companions of the Cross to deduct (*check one*):

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$200 Other: \$ _____ on the _____ day of each month from my account indicated below. I understand that I may cancel this transfer at any time by notifying the Companions of the Cross at least one month in advance.

Name of Financial Institution: _____

Bank Number Transit Number Account Number

Signature: _____

I/we have enclosed the required personal cheque marked "void".

I would like a free subscription to the Companions' quarterly newsletter.

Please pray for the following special intention: _____

Please tear out this entire page, place it in the postage paid envelope provided, and then drop it in the mail. Your support of our community is very much appreciated!



"Our progress does not consist in presuming that we have arrived,
but in tending continually towards the goal."

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, 1139 AD.



*(Companions of the Cross group
photo taken Sept. 2nd, 2004)*

HELP US REALIZE OUR GOAL: to serve Christ, to renew the Church, to evangelize the world!

We need your financial and spiritual assistance to continue the work and mission of the community, especially in the area of training seminarians for the priesthood. The Church desperately needs vocations. We have them! Your support has been awesome to date, but we are currently facing a serious 'budget crunch' in the current 2004-05 fiscal year.



We are managing our resources as best we can, being careful with our spending in all areas. But we truly do need your kind assistance, now more than ever, to help us stay on track with our mission. Please give generously to this appeal. The Lord will bless you for it, and so will we!

**You are in our thoughts
and prayers.**



FEATURE

by Fr. John Fletcher

Companions Begin Ministry in Two

For the past three years I've enjoyed the somewhat laid back pace of being the Catholic Chaplain at Dalhousie University in Halifax. It was a great first three years of priesthood and a time to ease into the new reality of being a priest - perhaps not too different from a child learning to crawl and beginning his first halting steps. But eventually a child is encouraged toward ever increasing challenges which is exactly what has happened to me.

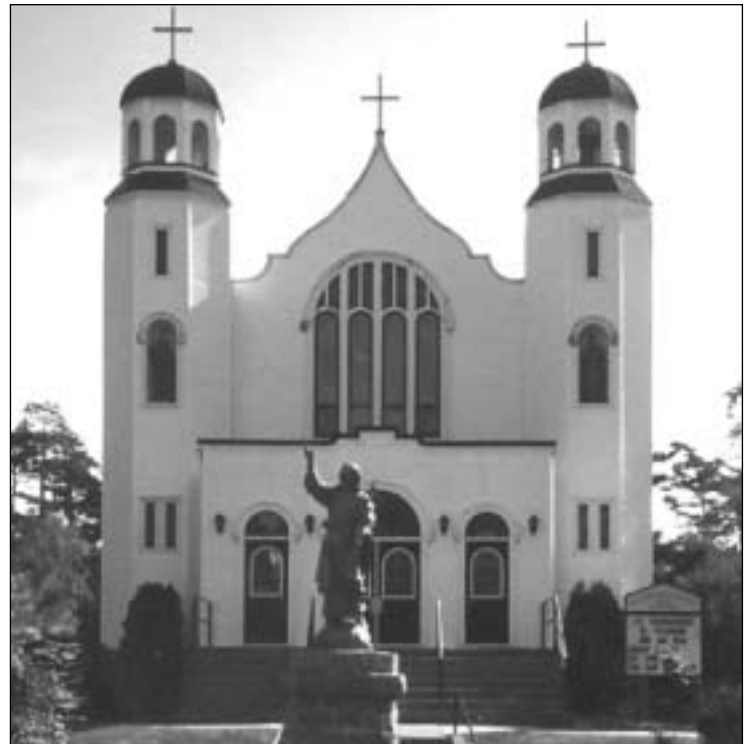
As of July 1, 2004, I was made pastor of three separate parishes on the outskirts of Halifax. Needless to say, this is a rather significant shift in my ministry as a priest and it is certainly something that I never would have expected to happen to little

ol' me, at least not for another three or four years. It is here where I will learn not only how to walk as a priest but how to skip, run, dance, duck, weave and dodge too!

And so now I find myself writing this article in the pastor's office, which by the way, also happens to be my office! On July 18th, Halifax Archbishop Terrence Prendergast formally installed me at three separate ceremonies as pastor; first at St. John the Baptist parish (where the Companions had been ministering already for the past two years), next at St. Peter's Parish and lastly at St. Paul's Parish. It was a moving experience to have the Archbishop entrust the well-being of three parishes to our community.

I am glad that I am not in this alone. During my installation, each parish promised to pray for me and to assist me in my responsibilities as pastor - this is something that I am counting on! As well, I have the privilege of having a very fine Associate Pastor in Fr. Tim Devine by my side, as well as weekend help from my replacement at Dalhousie as Chaplain, Fr. Ben St. Croix. So you see, the Lord does indeed provide.

Each of the three parishes is unique in their history and personality. St. Peter's is the smallest, both in terms of the church building as well as the number of parishioners, with approximately 130 families. The church itself is a quaint, old church with rich stained glass windows and is



New Halifax Parishes

located right across the street from the tip of Ketch Harbour (overlooking the Atlantic Ocean). St. Paul's is a ten minute drive away (toward Halifax), with around 236 families in this parish. Both churches are located in tiny fishing villages where everyone seems to know everyone. One of the major charms of Herring Cove, where St. Paul's is located, is that the ocean is only a few hundred meters away and the view is incredible. The rectory of St. Paul's is the new "home" to our Companions' household here (just three of us this year: myself, Fr. Tim, and Fr. Ben). The third parish is St. John the Baptist, which is another ten minute drive from St. Paul's (again, towards Halifax). This is the largest of the three parishes with close to 560 families. It has a beau-

tiful, old, country-style church with richly colored stained glass windows and fantastic wooden beams holding up the roof.

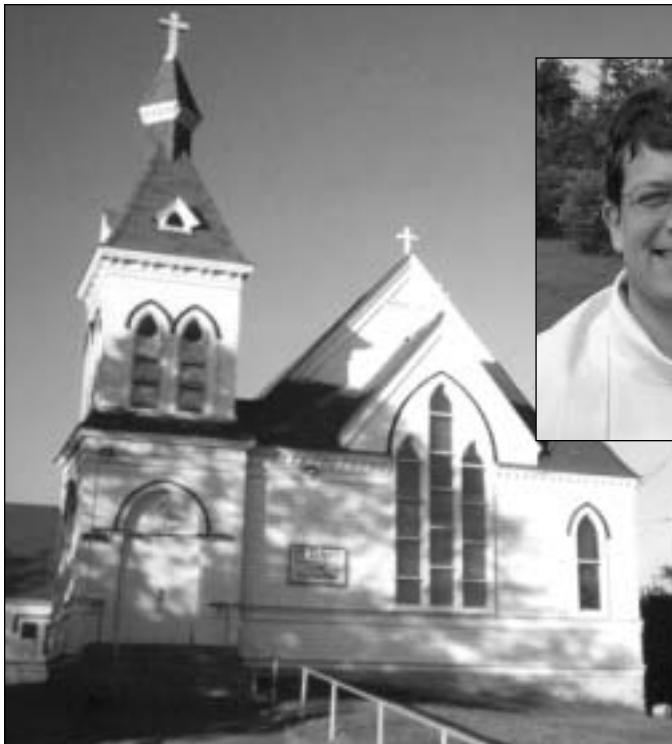
Needless to say, I and my fellow Companions have quite the challenge ahead of us. One of the more daunting ones is the prospect of having to learn the names of the parishioners of three parishes and sorting out which parish they belong to. To their credit, they all seem to understand this challenge and are quite patient with me as I fumble around (Fr. Tim seems much more adept at learning people's names than I!).

It has already been an exciting two months and I'm sure that even more excitement is just around the corner, as

*Photos left to right:
Fr. John, Archbishop Prendergast, and Fr. Tim outside St. Paul's; St. John the Baptist Parish; St. Peter's Parish, Ketch Harbour; Fr. Ben St. Croix, RC Chaplain at Dalhousie University; New CC Residence: St. Paul's Rectory Herring Cove; Fr. John installed as Pastor by Archbishop Prendergast*

each parish "ramps up to full speed" now that September is upon us. Lots of meetings await us: council meetings, staff meetings, finance meetings - there seems to be no shortage of meetings! But this is all part of being a parish priest and I know that the Lord is blessing our pastoral team. As well, Our Blessed Lady will certainly guide us Companions, and help us to grow in our understanding of what the gift of priesthood entails in the task of serving God's people in this corner of his vineyard. Please pray that we may be humble and effective instruments in the hands of Our Lord. ☺

Fr. John Fletcher was ordained in 2001 and is originally from Buffalo, New York.



LAY ASSOCIATES CORNER

School of Evangelization

In July 2004, the Companions of the Cross held the second annual School of Evangelization. Over 50 people participated in the week-long school, which included daily Mass and Holy Hour, teachings in theology of mission, Companions' spirituality, empowerment by the Holy Spirit, practical evangelistic tools and techniques, and workshops on evangelizing through drama and music, in the home, at the workplace, and door-to-door.

On the final day, we divided into teams to share the Gospel on the street, door-to-door, and in a nearby retirement home. Here are some pictures and feedback we received from participants.

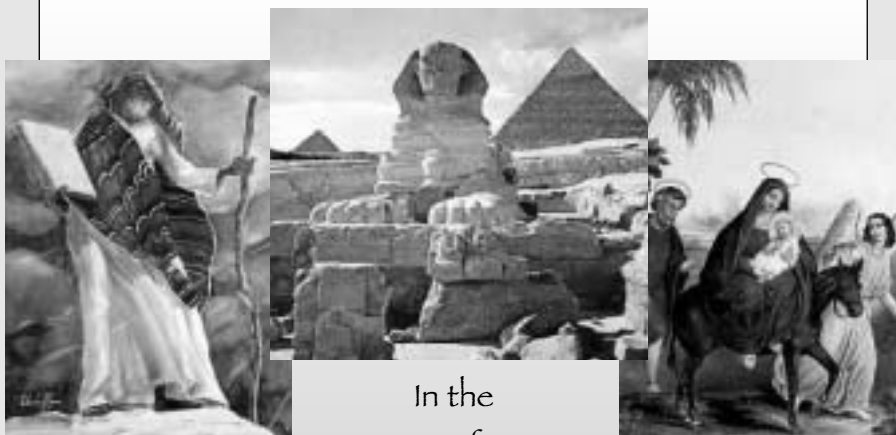
"It is very deep in my heart right now that God really loves every single one of us and God needs someone to tell people that they are loved. [In the past] I thought that I had to go to Africa or China to spread the Good News. But the evangelization field is right where I'm at right now, in the workplace, in my family – all the people I meet." - Peter

"All the workshops and all the teachings were wonderful. But to see the love for Christ and the zeal for Christ from all the participants, the seminarians and the Companions of the Cross priests was really a strong statement that we are mobilized and walking forth... As Catholics we are called to be missionaries and evangelists." - Chantal



"What I found so enriching was the methodology in which the course was laid out: the utilization of church documents, the Catechism, the encyclicals of Pope John Paul II... the New Evangelization... It's the fullness of the Church's teaching at this time." - Deacon Chuck

Pilgrimage to Egypt



In the
Footsteps of Moses...

Following the Flight of the Holy Family...

In the Land of the Desert Fathers.

"Out of Egypt I called My Son" (Mt. 2:15)

with

Fr. John Vandenakker

of the Companions of the Cross

April 15th-26th, 2005 (12 Days)

Join us on a fascinating spiritual journey. We will behold amazing sights of Egyptian antiquity as well as holy places revered by pilgrims of all ages. This is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy great fellowship and to deepen your appreciation of this land which has figured so prominently in the life of ancient Israel, the Holy Family, and the Early Church. Daily Mass & Rosary.

Highlights include:

The Pyramids of Giza
The Nile River & the Red Sea
The Monastery of St. Anthony in the Desert
The Apparitions of Our Lady at Zeitoun
Mount Sinai (Moses & the 10 Commandments)
& Much More!

(5-Day Nile River cruise to Upper Egypt also available as an extension)

Cost: \$2999.00 cdn. per person (dbl. occupancy).

Includes: all transportation, accommodation, tours, breakfast
& dinner daily, and all taxes, service charges, and tipping
(on the main tour). (Travel Insurance extra.)

Travel Agency: International Heritage Tours.

For Further Information Please Contact: Gail Goshko at (613) 744-1418

**Info Meeting: Sun. Jan. 23rd, 2:30 p.m., St. Mary's Hall
(100 Young St., Ottawa)**

To view the complete itinerary please visit our web site at
<http://www.companionscross.ca/> and click the "Upcoming Events" section

The Role of Distraction in Prayer

September 3rd is the feast day of Gregory the Great, who in 590 was elevated to chair of St. Peter. In one of his homilies he sounds very contemporary: “Since I assumed the burden of pastoral care, my mind can no longer be collected; it is concerned with so many matters. I am forced to consider the affairs of the Church and of the monasteries. I must weigh the lives and acts of individuals. I am responsible for the concerns of our citizens. I must worry about the invasions of roving bands of barbarians, and beware of the wolves who lie in wait for my flock. I must become an administrator lest the religious go in want. I must put up with certain robbers without losing patience and at times I must deal with them in all charity. With my mind divided and torn to pieces by so many problems, how can I meditate or preach wholeheartedly without neglecting the ministry of proclaiming the Gospel? ...So who am I to be a watchman, for I do not stand on the mountain of action but lie down in the valley of weakness?”

Unfortunately, for more than a few people, especially overburdened leaders, their prayer time will feel like a long string of distractions. For burdened and discouraged individuals who are painfully and constantly aware of their limitations, prayer might feel like one more task at



which they are failing. Rather than entering into prayer only to be beaten by a thousand distractions, they are all the more tempted to become absorbed in their work.

An encouraging source of instruction in these matters is Teresa of Avila’s *Interior Castle*, in particular the section on the fourth level, or dwelling place. Teresa recognizes that in prayer, there is a state in which the mind is in ‘rapid motion’ and we cannot stop it. When the prayer time is ended, she says, “We think we are lost and have wasted the time spent before God.” But this judgment may not be true. Teresa suggests that there may be more going on during this unique time of prayer than one may recognize. She makes a distinction between what is occurring in the mind and what is happening in the soul. She knows that this prayer may feel like the “mind is suffering from a thousand wild

and poisonous beasts.” However, “the soul is perhaps completely joined with him in the dwelling places very close to the centre.” The conscious experience is one of complete distraction, but the inner self is joined to God.

Teresa tells us that people in this state may become disturbed by the distractions, as she herself apparently did until her spiritual director helped her to understand the truth about her prayer. She also noted that people in this state may be tempted to abandon prayer. Of course, it is important to distinguish a completely distracted state of attempted prayer from the deeper experiences to which Teresa refers. Such persons should attempt to discern whether or not their distracted prayer is truly how God is calling them to pray. If they are indeed being called to this type of prayer, they will discern signs of grace resulting from the prayer time itself.

There are several important signs that one's prayer has been a fruitful time of nourishment. Some of these signs include leaving the prayer time feeling:

1) Energized

An unfruitful time of prayer will be dissipating and leave the person tired. On the other hand, if the person, in prayer feels refreshed and energized at the end, it is more than likely that the inner self has been united with God for at least part of the prayer period.

2) Filled with inner calm and peace

A completely distracted experience pulls apart the human spirit and leaves the person agitated. But when the deepest self is united with God, the person feels a sense of inner calm and peace, regardless of how the conscious mind is distracted. Ending prayer with a sense of inner rest and a feeling of being centered is a good indication that God has touched the person in a hidden part of the human spirit.

3) Positive

Without the presence of the Spirit, we can sometimes sink into discouragement. When we are united to the Spirit, we are filled with Christian optimism and hope. In prayer we are regenerated and renewed by God's presence.

4) Inspired

A true prayer will occasionally bring us inspired thoughts and feelings. We might have a desire to reach out to a hurting employee, or a new project might come to mind. We might have a spiritual insight or simply end the prayer with a feeling of

thanksgiving. In a fruitful time of prayer, God often inspires us.

These are a few examples of ways to discern that one's time of prayer, although thoroughly distracted, may actually be a time of grace. The assistance of an experienced spiritual director may be helpful in this discernment. Each person, it is hoped, will come to recognize his or her own signs that God's Spirit has been active during times of prayer.

For those struggling with conflicts and problems that surface during prayer, it is important to discern if God is calling them to bring those problems to prayer. While divinely inspired solutions may not be forthcoming, God sometimes inspires us to see problems from the divine perspective. At other times, God simply lets us know that we are not alone in the struggle. While the presence of distractions is sometimes God calling us to bring problems to prayer, some distracted persons deal with a flood of problems every day; they cannot all be brought to prayer.

Each day, when their time of prayer has ended, distracted persons may feel pleased to cease the apparent struggle and glad to resume their administrative duties. However, when they reflect on their experience of prayer over a long period of time, they may come to realize how central their daily prayer time is, despite its seeming aridity and uselessness. Many burdened individuals have a deep awareness that without it, they would lose their inner strength and direction. Obviously, such enlightenment does not happen overnight but it is a beautiful discovery! ☺

- Author Unknown

APOLOGY

As some of our readers, who receive our newsletter by mail, may have noticed, proper salutations have been missing on our address labels. We brought this concern to the attention of our printer, St. Joseph's Print Solutions and they have responded with an apology.

"Our present policy for lettershop specifications requires that we do not print salutation or country record fields unless specified. This is a procedure that best suited our organization when we dealt primarily with the Federal Government. The specifications for your publication have always dictated to lettershop to print 'all' fields. Unfortunately, the operator missed that instruction, thus the reason for the missing salutation and country fields. ...We cannot apologize enough for this human error. Effective immediately our procedure will be to print 'all' fields unless otherwise specified, not the reverse as it is now. This will eliminate the risk of future error for any mailing list. I do realize that you're distraught about the unfortunate lack of respect the missing salutation shows to your clergy. Rest assured, this is also a very serious concern for St. Joseph Print Solutions. That being said, we would like to do our best to ensure your reputation remains intact and there is no damage done to the Companions of the Cross. To that end, we would like to offer you a printed apology in the next newsletter, taking complete responsibility, fully exonerating the Companions of the Cross and ensuring the clergy and your subscribers that this error will not happen again. We hope you find this to be a satisfactory conclusion and we look forward to a continued relationship with you and your organization."



COMMUNITY NEWS & NOTES

by Fr. John Vandenakker

CC 'Community Days' Report

Every year all the priests and seminarians of the Companions of the Cross get together in late August to take part in our 'community days.' We gather at Camp Red Pine, which is located on Golden Lake near Eganville, Ont. The camp is fairly rustic, but it is beautifully situated. Here we pray together, recreate, and receive spiritual instruction and exhortation. This year a team of speakers (Fr. John Horn, sj, Fr. Mike Steber, Kathy Kanavy, and Trudy McCaffrey) from the Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF) in Omaha, Nebraska, spoke to us about prayer: how to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit, understanding spiritual consolation and desolation - seeing how they are different from mere psychological experiences of consolation and desolation, understanding how the 'heart' works, how to best 'listen' to God, learning from St. Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, and much more. They also ministered to individual seminarians and priests. All in all, they were a great blessing to the brothers! It was also great meeting all the new applicants to the community, seeing the guys from out of town (Halifax, Toronto, and Houston), and celebrating the reception into temporary commitment of six new men: Luc Filion; Andy McGorman; Christopher Murphy; Brian O'Neill; Richard Pilon; and Jaimie Utronkie. Earlier this summer two other seminarians made their first temporary commitments to the community: Mickey Dopp and Geoff Guitard. These latter men are studying at St. Augustine's seminary this year and had to miss our community days due to orientation week at the seminary. Please remember to keep all our priests and seminarians in your prayers!



IPF Team



Mickey Dopp, Geoff Guitard, Fr. Bob and Fr. Roger



CC Priests and New Members in Temporary Commitment



Paddleball at Camp Red Pine

Companions in Ministry Report

The following is a partial list of some of the more major “extra-curricular” ministry Companions’ priests have been engaged in this past year. This list does not reflect the great ministry happening in our own Companions’ parishes. It simply gives you an idea of how the community is responding to the wider call for evangelization in the Church today. This year’s winner of the most “on-the-go” CC speaker award is Fr. Francis Donnelly. Fr. Bob Bedard and Deacon Francis Ching both finished a close second!

1) Deacon Francis Ching: led a weekend retreat for the Joint University Chinese Catholic Community (Jan 2-4, 2004); led a 15-Hour “Famine Retreat” at Chinese Martyrs Catholic Church, Markham ON (April 3, 2004); ministered at several venues in Hong Kong and other regions of South East Asia (May, 2004); spoke at a weekend Life in the Spirit seminar at Our Lady of Mount Virgin, Seattle WA (June 4-6, 2004); spoke and ministered at a Praise and Worship night at Canadian Martyrs Catholic Church, Richmond BC (June 10, 2004); gave talks and led prayer ministry at Sts. Peter and Paul Church, San Francisco CA (June 11-12, 2004); gave a talk at a Praise and Worship night at St. Claire’s parish, Santa Clara CA (June 13, 2004); and gave a talk at a Praise and Worship night at St. Francis Xavier Church, Vancouver BC (June 15, 2004).

2) Fr. Jerry Gauvreau: Spiritual Director for the Archdiocese of Toronto’s Rosary Sunday pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Canadian Martyrs in Midland, ON (Sept. 2004); led a day of prayer on a pilgrimage with the Sisters of Our Lady Immaculate (from Cambridge ON) and about 30 youth at the Our Lady of Fatima Shrine in Lewiston NY (April 24th, 2004).

3) Fr. Bob Bedard: spoke at a Women’s Breakfast, Combermere, ON (Oct 4,



FIRE Rally Tanzania July 2004

2003); spoke at a Charismatic Conference, Columbia, SC (Oct 24-26, 2003); spoke at our Companions’ Mini-conference, St. Mary’s, Ottawa ON (Nov. 11, 2003); gave some talks at the Pope John Paul II Bible School, Radway, AB (Feb 16-20, 2004); main speaker at a Discipleship Conference, Edmonton, AB (Feb 20-21); led a retreat at St. Mary’s Seminary, Emmitsburg, MD (March 26-28, 2004); led two Priests’ retreats (with Fr. Francis Donnelly) for the Archdiocese of Vancouver, BC (May 17-21 & 24-28, 2004); spoke at the annual Priests, Deacons & Seminarians Conference, Steubenville, OH (June 7-11, 2004); and led a Priests’ retreat (with Msgr. Vincent Walsh) in Philadelphia, PA (June 21-25).

4) Fr. Dennis Hayes: gave talks and conducted prayer ministry with members of the Holy Family Centre Prayer Team at 3 different parish missions - St. Maurice’s parish, Ottawa, ON (March 8-10, 2004); Annunciation of the Lord parish, Ottawa, ON (March 22-23, 2004); and at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal parish in Russell, ON (April 17, 2004).

5) Fr. Scott McCaig: joined with Renewal Ministries on a Mission team to Ghana, Africa (June 21 - July 11, 2004). This involved animating a week-long retreat in Kumasi (central Ghana) for Catholic school teachers, as well as a priests’ retreat for the three dioceses near the Cape Coast. The retreat was given at the invitation of Peter Cardinal Turkson of Cape Coast and was attended by about 200 priests.

6) Fr. Roger Vandenakker: was the key note speaker at a Charismatic Conference, Cornwall, ON (April 24, 2004); and the key note speaker at a Pentecost Rally in Toronto, ON, organized by the Charismatic Renewal Service Committee of Toronto (May 29, 2004).

7) Fr. Yves Marchildon: was a part of the spiritual team for the 45th Halifax women’s Cursillo weekend (June 3-6th, 2004). Fr. Yves comments: “It was tough to be the only man among 50 women, but hey someone has to do it! Truth be known, the ladies were very good to me, and I was privileged to be among them. It was a powerful weekend. Now we always

say that after a Cursillo weekend because it is true. They are all powerful weekends, but they each have a distinctive grace. Our weekend seemed to be blessed with a lot of personal healing. The Lord's healing touch was upon many areas of past hurts. Needless to say that there were many tears shed throughout the weekend and beyond. I hope and pray that the healing and transformation that our awesome God began on that weekend will continue in the hearts and lives of these special ladies (aka 'princesses')."

8) Fr. Francis Donnelly: led a parish mission in Stanleyville, ON (Sept.6-10, 2003); spiritual director on a pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi, & Prague (Oct.16-27, 2003); led a parish mission in Stouffville, ON (Nov.8-12, 2003); M.O.R. Breakfast talk on Marriage and Sexuality (Nov.22, 2003); led a parish mission, Angus, ON (Dec.15-17, 2003); personal ministry to Fr. Bob and Ed Noah in Key West, FL (Jan. 2004) - oooooops!; led a retreat for a community in Oswego, NY (Feb.13-15, 2004); spoke at an ecumenical Summit Retreat (Feb.16-18, 2004); led a parish mission, Coburg, ON. (Feb.21-24, 2004); led a parish mission, Flemington, NJ (Feb.28-Mar.4, 2004); led a parish mission, Selkirk, MB (Mar.13-18, 2004); led a Lenten Day of Reflection at St. Ignatius parish, Ottawa, ON (Mar. 20, 2004); led a parish mission, Etobicoke, ON (Mar.27-31, 2004); led a May Day retreat Thorold, ON (May 1, 2004); spoke at the CHRI retreat (a Christian Radio Station), Ottawa, ON (May 11, 2004); spoke at the BLD community retreat, Toronto, ON (May 15, 2004); spoke at two Priests' retreats (with Fr. Bob Bedard) for the Archdiocese of Vancouver, BC (May 17-21 & 24-28, 2004); participated in and gave spiritual direction to seminarians at the summer Institute for Priestly Formation, Omaha, NB (June 3-Aug5, 2004); and spoke and played at a Golfers' retreat, Malone, NY (Aug. 20-22, 2004).

9) Fr. Allan MacDonald: was chaplain to NET during their training days in September 2003 and their wrap-up in June 2004; helped out with Masses and

confessions during the academic year at Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Academy in Barry's Bay, ON; and served as a spiritual director on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje (April 26 - May 7, 2004)

10) Fr. John Vandenaeker: spoke at our Companions' Mini-conference, St. Mary's, Ottawa ON (Nov. 11, 2003); led a parish mission at Holy Family, Thunder Bay, ON (Dec. 13-17, 2003); led a parish mission at Christ the King, Madison, WI (Mar. 20-24, 2004); led a parish mission at St. John's in Guelph, ON (May 8-12, 2004); gave talks at a Life in the Spirit Seminar Day, Kingston, ON (May 29, 2004); and joined with Renewal Ministries on a Mission team to Tanzania, Africa (July 6-23, 2004). This involved animating a week-long priests' retreat in Mbeya (southwestern Tanzania), and speaking at FIRE rallies in Mbeya and Iringa.

11) Fr. Sean Wenger: led a parish mission at Immaculate Conception parish, Truro NS (Mar. 21-24, 2004). The theme was based on 1 Peter 1:7 - "*Your faith, more precious than gold that is tested by fire.*"

Fr. Bob Book Project

Mr. John Jerome of St. Mary's parish has volunteered to help compile and edit a book of testimonies about Fr. Bob Bedard. He would like to see this book published in time for next summer's festivities surrounding the celebration of Fr. Bob's 50th anniversary to the priesthood. This book will be a witness to what Fr. Bob has meant in the lives of so many people, and a testament to God's grace. Everyone is welcome to contribute anything they see fit, be it a short story, a funny anecdote, a homily/teaching remembered, an observation, etc... we would love to hear from you! The final draft will be scrutinized by the Companions of the Cross, to ensure it really is a good "portrait" of the man we all love, admire, and thank God for. So,

start thinking/praying about what it is you may feel led to contribute, and then send it anytime in the next 5 months to:
John Jerome, 207-1765 Cabaret Lane,
Ottawa (Orleans), ON, K4A 2H3
(613) 824-4967.

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Bids Farewell to Frs. Sean & Tim

The following is from Professor Edward McBride's 'Salute' to Fr. Sean Wenger and Fr. Tim Devine, who served as Pastor and Associate Pastor respectively at St. Thomas Aquinas parish in Halifax, Nova Scotia (June 27, 2004).

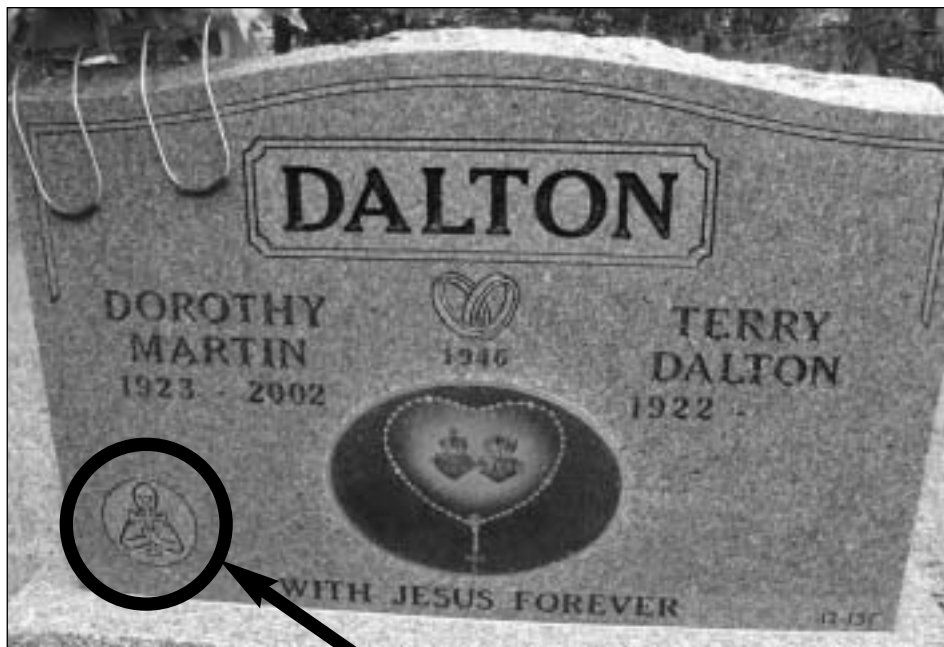
"I have the high honour and distinct privilege to salute both Fr. Sean and Fr. Tim. I salute Fr. Sean in two of his capacities - that of teacher and that of Pastor. For three years, Fr. Sean has been teaching a course from the pulpit of Saint Thomas Aquinas Church, and I have had the pleasure of being one of his students. To borrow a title from the renowned Franciscan Friar, Fr. Michael Scanlan, T.O.R., it could be called 'Dynamic Catholic Orthodoxy'. Or as the Companions' own brochure would put it, 'Authentic Catholic teaching...pertaining to faith and morals.' It has been simply the best theology course that I have ever taken and, for perspective, I might add that I have studied Catholic Theology under the Christian Brothers, the Jesuit Fathers, the Dominican Fathers and the Sulpician Fathers. If 'teaching from the pulpit' were an Olympic event, Fr. Sean would win the Gold Medal. He would stand atop the podium, with the Maple Leaf rising and 'O Canada' playing. I also salute Fr. Sean as Pastor. There is a saying that, 'The test of the metal is under the torch,' that such concentrated heat thus discloses the true quality of the object. As pastor, Fr. Sean has had the torch held to him, and he has proven to be pure gold. If 'Pastoring under Pressure' were an Olympic event, then Fr. Sean would win a second gold medal. He would again stand atop the podium, with the Maple Leaf rising and 'O Canada' playing. Therefore, I have a

message for that city in Texas with the famous space center: 'Houston...you have a Champion, a double Champion.' Finally, for Fr. Sean I have a message in the parlance of the American Southwest, 'VIYA CON DIOS, PADRE!'

"I shall now salute Fr. Tim – although he is probably hoping that I would forget. For his Ordination prayer card, Fr. Tim selected a passage from the aforementioned Father Michael Scanlan, T.O.R. It reads, in part, 'Let the Fire Fall; Let it fall on me! I need the power of the Holy Spirit... to pray, to praise, to adore, to love, to minister to others, to advance the Kingdom of God.' The fire of the Holy Spirit has, indeed, fallen on Fr. Tim. It has given him wisdom that belies his years, zeal in witnessing to Christ that defies containment, and a capacity, without limit, for loving service of others, in the service of the God who is Love. Saint Ignatius Loyola exhorted St. Francis Xavier, as he embarked for the Asian mission fields, 'Go and set all afire!' For Father Tim, this would be no mere exhortation. It would be simply a statement of fact. Wherever he goes, as he has so superlatively done here, Fr. Tim will 'Set All Afire!' For Fr. Tim, I also have a message: 'AVE ATQUE VALE!': HAIL AND FARE THEE WELL!"

Dorothy Dalton Remembered

Aug. 16th was the second anniversary of the death of Dorothy Dalton, beloved wife of Terry. Dorothy and Terry had been married 55 years. They have six sons, one daughter, 22 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren (to date). Dorothy was a longtime Lay Associate of the Companions of the Cross (along with Terry). Dorothy had a real heart for evangelization and the mission of the community. She always wore her CC Lay Associate's pin with pride. Terry even participated in our recent School of Evangelization here in Ottawa. On Dorothy's gravestone at Hope cemetery are found some beautiful inscriptions.



Companions of the Cross etched logo

One depicts a pair of wedding rings with the date 1946 below them. Another depicts the Sacred Heart of Jesus next to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, both encircled by a rosary. Below this image are the words "With Jesus Forever." And in the bottom left hand corner is the logo of the Companions of the Cross etched in a circle. This is the first time the logo of the community has ever appeared on a gravestone, and we are touched and honoured by this gesture of love! Terry asks that we continue to remember Dorothy in our prayers, as we shall do.

Personnel Update

Please pray for CC seminarian Dave Dobbelsteyn. He writes: "I will be going to help start the NET program in Ireland for 4 months. I start training August 17th and we fly to Belfast on Sept 17th and return Dec 21st. I am not completely sure as to what this will all entail. I will be on a team of 12 young adults, and we will be facilitating dozens of retreats for the young people of Ireland. We will also be starting up a NET program there so that the Irish will be able to do that on their own. I will return to my studies with the

Companions in January. Please pray for me."

Vocation Vacation Report

(by Sophia Neppel, age 18 – from Gatineau, Quebec)

"To the delight of all, Fr. Mark Goring of the Companions of the Cross organized a week of religious vocational discernment, which he called a 'Vocation Vacation.' This week (June 27th- July 3rd, 2004) was spent visiting different religious communities, living their everyday life and experiencing what life would be like if this was what God was calling us to. It was an educating week in that we 'vocationers' got a hands-on experience of what constitutes a typical religious order. This week provided a rainbow of excitement and experience.

The evening before the scheduled departure I had written in my journal what it was that I was looking for in the coming week. Including my wish to discern a call to the religious life, there was the desire to grow in relationship with Jesus, to form some permanent habits regarding my relationship with Him, and to make friends



Vocationers

who had the same faith and interests as me. Having chosen to do the will of God in my life, whatever it may turn out to be, I set off on this week of discernment.

From the beginning I was greatly blessed; all of my hopes being answered. The applicants, seven in total (all women – no men signed up!), with whom I was to spend the coming week were each amazing and beautiful of soul. By the time we finished sharing lunch after Sunday Mass we were off to a great start. Though we came from all walks of life, from farming families to city girls, and from Ottawa to the Greater Toronto Area, we got along as the best of friends. I could not have asked to be with a greater group of people. Visiting such a wide range of consecrated lifestyles, both religious and lay, was fascinating. It was truly an awesome experience to live out all these many different ways in which God is calling people to live. Never before had I known that there was such a diverse palette of religious vocations, all serving God faithfully in the fashion that He desired them to. Throughout the entire week, though we lived out such a variety of community life, there were many similarities that I noticed. At each place we visited, the schedule was basically the same. Waking up early in the morning, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, eating in community, and working hard at whatever task we

were given. There is nothing as freeing as doing what you are told, of humbly obeying those persons that God has placed in charge of you, even temporarily. Included in the Vocation Vacation were various talks given by the three leaders of our expedition: Fr. Mark Goring, Sister Elizabeth Marie, and Sister Bernadette. They spoke on various aspects of the religious life, discernment, vows, different religious communities, etc. It was an enlightening week, I cannot find adequate words to describe it!

When we set out on Sunday, our first stop was Madonna House. Here we spent Monday and Tuesday. We were fully enveloped in the community life of this lay apostolate. Monday morning was spent weeding part of a gigantic garden. In the evening we had a ‘potato bug bee,’ where we went up to the Madonna House farm and picked potato bugs off the potato plants and squashed their bright orange eggs with our bare fingers! Tuesday morning we were each assigned a different task, such as helping in the shop and sanding the outhouses. Tuesday afternoon we went up to the nearby Companions of the Cross’ Assumption Farm, where we pampered ourselves with warm showers and washing our laundry. Sister Bernadette gave a talk on vocations and Sister Elizabeth Marie a talk on vows. Following evening Mass was a delightful

dinner, after which we headed back to Madonna House. After leaving Madonna House we headed for Toronto, to Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity. We arrived in time to finish their holy hour, after which we had time to speak with one of the sisters. Following the Missionaries of Charity, we visited the ‘Heralds of the Gospel,’ a lay community stationed in Hamilton. We had a catered dinner followed by a tour of the house as well as a concert done by part of their choir. After the Heralds we headed to the convent of the Sisters of Our Lady Immaculate in Cambridge. It was there that we slept for the rest of the week. All of Thursday was spent in this convent, fully participating in the day-to-day life of the sisters. Friday found us at the Discalced Carmelites of St. Joseph in St. Agatha. We spent the entire day in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; praying the Liturgy of the Hours, visits with Sisters, and helping fold and pack novena cards. Back at the Cambridge convent we had a final talk, followed by an impromptu skit done by us vocationers, in which we staged our appreciation and thanks for the past week. We awoke early the next morning, quickly finishing any last minute packing. After breakfast we said our last good-byes and headed home.

The week of Vocation Vacation was both a vocation and a vacation. It was a vocation in the sense that the applicants felt that God was calling them to apply as well as that it was the first step taken in the discernment of our vocations. It was a vacation because we got to spend a week away from home, a week away and spending time with new friends, living out different religious charisms, and experiencing many different types of religious life. It was also a time to further investigate the vocation that God may be calling us to embrace. We all had a great time and went home with many happy and joyful memories.” ☺

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Fr. John Vandenakker teaches theology and serves as Academic Director for the Companions of the Cross. He also oversees the community’s public relations efforts.



Companions of the Cross

presents



RALLY

**Saturday,
November 6, 2004
Tudor Hall**

3750 Bowesville Rd., Ottawa

8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

(Doors open at 8:00 a.m.)

\$25.00 for adults

\$20.00 for clergy

\$10.00 for youth
(17 & under)

\$30 at the door



Calling all Youth!

Join us in the evening for the
YOUTHFEST!

The youthfest is open to all high
school aged youth and young adults.

Enjoy an evening of praise, worship
and celebration

with musician Garth Pereira
and featured FIRE speaker
Peter Herbeck.

Also at Tudor Hall
from 7:30 pm to 10:00 pm
Admission is Free!

"I pray that all of you who participate in the
2004 FIRE Rally will be open to all the many gifts that
the Holy Spirit will shower on you during this event.
My thoughts and prayers are with each and every one of you."

Ottawa Archbishop Marcel Gervais
Celebrant & Homilist of Closing Liturgy

GUEST SPEAKERS



Ralph Martin



Sr. Ann Shields



Fr. Michael Scanlan



Peter Herbeck

RALLY SCHEDULE:

- 8:00 a.m. - Doors Open & Bookstore Open
- 9:00 a.m. - FIRE Rally Begins/Worship Music
- 9:30 a.m. - Talk #1 - "Faith" (Ralph Martin)
- 10:30 a.m. - Break
- 11:00 a.m. - Talk #2 - "Intercession" (Sr. Ann Shields)
- 12:00 noon - Lunch (available off site only)
- 1:30 p.m. - Talk #3 - "Repentance" (Fr. Michael Scanlan)
- 2:30 p.m. - Break
- 3:00 p.m. - Talk #4 - "Evangelization" (Peter Herbeck)
- 4:00 p.m. - Break
- 4:30 p.m. - Closing Mass
(Celebrant & Homilist
Archbishop Marcel Gervais)
- 6:00 p.m. - Rally Ends

Directions to Tudor Hall:

From downtown Ottawa: Take Riverside Drive south. Exit left onto
Uplands Drive. The first street on the right is Bowesville (a cul de sac).

From Ottawa west: Take Hunt Club Road east. Turn left onto Riverside
Drive. Exit right onto Uplands Drive. The first street on the right is
Bowesville (a cul de sac).

**Don't miss this exciting day of anointed
preaching, teaching, and exhortation.
Bring a friend. Catch the FIRE!**

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR!

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Call (613) 728-3175 or (613) 297-0899
or email us at comp Cros@cyberus.ca