

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

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The Companions of Christ . . .

- Were established as a Public Association of the Faithful by Archbishop John Roach in 1992;
- Desire to respond to the Holy Father's call for a New Evangelization;
- Currently include 10 priests and 5 seminarians;
- Live in two households in St. Paul and one in Faribault, MN;
- Are tax-exempt and welcome your support;
- Invite young men interested in living diocesan priesthood in community to contact us:

The Companions of Christ
2137 Marshall Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104-5757

JON VANDER PLOEG ORDAINED



Some Companions of Christ pose after the ordination. Left to right, front: Fr. Jeff Huard, Fr. Tom Margevicius, Fr. James McConville, Fr. Will Pelant. Back: Fr. Bill Baer, David Blume, Fr. Jon Vander Ploeg, Jay Kythe, Archbishop Harry Flynn, Fr. Andrew Cozzens, Fr. Kevin Finnegan.

On Saturday May 26, 2001 at the Cathedral of St. Paul Archbishop Harry Flynn ordained to the priesthood four men for the Archdiocese of St. Paul, including Companion of Christ Fr. Jon Vander Ploeg

Fr. Jon is the first of the seven children of Steve and Mary Vander Ploeg of Grand Rapids, Michigan where Fr. Jon grew up.

The National Evangelization Teams (NET) recruited Jon, and upon graduating high school in 1988 he served with NET for two seasons (88-89; 89-90). Thereafter he enrolled in the Franciscan University of Steu-

benville, Ohio. He graduated in 1995 with a B.A. in Theology.

Fr. Vander Ploeg heard about the Companions of Christ during NET (one of his teammates was Companion Fr. Andrew Cozzens' sister Helen), and Steubenville classmates convinced him to join. He entered the Companions of Christ and enrolled in the St. Paul (MN) Seminary in Fall 1996.

"I am very happy to be ordained a priest as a member of the Companions of Christ," he said after ordination. "The fraternity and op-

portunity to face the joys and challenges of priesthood together is a benefit for me. Here other men deal with similar things and desire holiness in their priesthood, and this is a great support."

Fr. Jon will be Parochial Vicar at St. Dominic's parish in Northfield, MN, and will live in the Companions household in Faribault.

"I'm excited about the opportunities in Northfield, including Hispanic and college ministry. Plus, it's a beautiful town." Congratulations, Fr. Jon! Our prayers go with you. *Ad multos annos!*

¿HABLA ESPAÑOL?

One in seven Catholics in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis is Hispanic, many of whom speak only Spanish. By 2005 Latinos will surpass Blacks as the largest minority in the United States. About 2,000 Hispanics live in Faribault—ten percent of the population—including one of every four kindergarteners. The Companions of Christ are responding to the need for a New Evangelization in Spanish in Faribault's two parishes.

"People should be able to pray in their native language," noted Parochial Vicar Fr. Andrew Cozzens. "If we did not offer a Spanish Mass many Hispanics would go to one of three Protestant churches in town that does offer services in Spanish." Every Sunday he offers the Sacrament of Reconciliation in Spanish, followed by a 1:30 Spanish Mass. At least 200 attend weekly.

Following his previous assignment at the Cathedral of St. Paul, Fr. Cozzens studied in

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Mexico for a month to prepare for this ministry. "Writing a weekly homily in Spanish and listening to confessions was overwhelming at first," he confided, "but each week my skills get better." By now he prepares Hispanics to receive the sacraments, oversees religious education, and even evangelizes in Spanish.

Seminarian Thomas Joseph, a new Companion living in the Faribault household, is fully bilingual and visits Hispanic families regularly. Fr. Cozzens accompanies Thomas weekly to bless the homes and invite families to Church. They have found so many adults needing to receive First Communion, Confirmation, and Marriage that

Thomas and Fr. Cozzens have begun weekly Spanish sacramental preparation courses. "Many Hispanics are forced to move frequently to find work," lamented Fr. Cozzens. "We must catechize them, offer them the sacraments, and invite them into the Church so that they can know the peace of living in communion with God."

Companion Fr. Bill Baer, Rector of St. John Vianney Seminary, also speaks Spanish and fills in when Father Cozzens is not available. Two more Companions—Fr. Peter Richards and Michael Rudolph—are in a Spanish-immersion program in Cuernavaca, Mexico this summer, and Michael Marier is studying Spanish in Texas.

MICHAEL KEATING'S REFLECTIONS FROM ROME

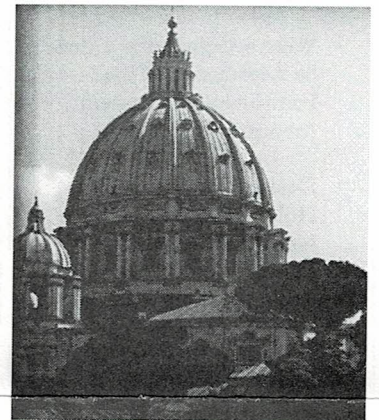
High on the Janiculum Hill overlooking St. Peter's in Rome is the North American College, where about 180 seminarians from around the U.S. (and a handful from Canada) pursue their training for priesthood. To live in Rome is an education in itself. It's a noisy, bustling place, a national capital as well as the center of the Catholic Church, thronged with pilgrims, inundated by motor scooters, where the fashionable and the flashy jostle with the holy and other-worldly. Rome is like the world in a microcosm. All that is best and worst in humanity seems to find its way there.

If I were to choose what I have found most moving during my stay in Rome it would be the opportunity to live in close proximity to the early martyrs. I always knew about them, but they seemed very distant. But after living near them, praying at their tombs, experiencing the long continuity of the eternal city, they begin to be close friends, and the

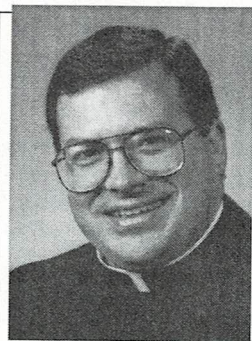
sense of belonging to the same Church as these glorious witnesses grows strong. Saints Peter and Paul have especially come alive for me, and maybe because I am a musician, so has St. Cecilia, patroness of music.

As good as the stay has been, as interesting and enriching, still I find that I will be happy to come back home. This is not just homesickness or longing for hamburgers. It has been one of the surprising experiences of being in Rome, but maybe I shouldn't have been surprised, that the more I have come to understand and love the universal Church, the more I want to be planted firmly in my corner of it. Seen from the perspective of the worldwide Catholic communion, what happens in our diocese, or parish, or household, has taken on more, not less, importance. As the saying goes, all roads lead to Rome. And some, I'm glad to say, lead us back again, but now

changed, with the light and unity that come from St. Peter a permanent possession of the heart.



*"Pray for us
Companions that we
might have the generosity
of St. Ignatius of
Loyola."*



Companions of Christ
Moderator Fr. Jeff Huard

The desire to live gener-

SUMMER MUSINGS FROM THE MODERATOR

ously and for the glory of God is the desire of each Companion. Our desire is to serve the people of God, everywhere reflecting the face of Christ.

One of my favorite saints is St. Ignatius of Loyola. This prayer for generosity I find very stirring:

Lord, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve;
To give and not to count the cost;
To fight and not to heed the wounds;
To toil and not to seek for rest;
To labor and not to ask for reward,
Save that of knowing that I do your will.

Pray for us that we might have the generosity and humility of St. Ignatius. Thank you for your support and rely always on our prayers. God bless.