

Catholics may suggest priesthood candidates

By MONICA MASKE

Sunday morning churchgoers at the 242 parishes in the Archdiocese of Newark are going to be asked next month to write down the names of young men and women they think would make good priests and nuns.

Each person named will be phoned by a special parish committee member who will ask the young man or woman for permission to send their names on to Newark Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick.

The archbishop then will send off individual letters encouraging them to consider a vocation to the priesthood or religious life.

The overture, part of a new push endorsed by the nation's Catholic bishops to increase the numbers of priests, nuns and brothers, is entitled "Called By Name."

The Newark Archdiocese will implement the program at the beginning of Vocations Awareness Week on Oct. 9. The Trenton Diocese is in the process of planning for the program, which is expected to take place next year.

The program was developed by the Serra Club of St. Louis, a Catholic lay organization devoted to fostering vocations, under the original name, "I'm Waiting to be Asked."

When first done in 25 parishes in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Mo., in 1984, some 200 persons were named. Of those 25 persons accepted an invitation to a vocations information program and nine went on to take part in a more extensive vocation discernment program. According to the 80-page "Called By Name" guidebook published by the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) earlier this year, the vocation program "envisioned that the parish community would recommend individuals whom they would like to see serve them as a priest, brother or sister."

"This idea," the bishops wrote, is not new to the church. It is rooted in the early Christian community."

The parish priests at Sunday Masses will explain the program to churchgoers, ask their prayers for its success and distribute cards on which parishioners will be asked to name persons with "the qualities necessary" for celibate religious life.

The Rev. Edward J. Griswold, executive director of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors in Chicago, said the "Called By Name" program "asks parishioners to take some responsibility for calling forth church leaders for the future."

"The reason so many dioceses are plugging into this is that it makes fostering vocations a little more personal," said Griswold, vocations director in the Trenton Diocese for nine years before accepting the national post.

"There had been a sense (among lay Catholics) that the vocation crisis was the bishops', priests' or sisters' problem," he said.

So the church is turning around, saying we should all share the responsibility by asking the people in the pews to tell us who is good, to tap some shoulders," Griswold said.

The Newark Archdiocese's "Called By Name" program will be explained at a daylong conference at Felician College in Lodi tomorrow.

Guest speaker will be Bishop Donald W. Wuerl of Pittsburgh, Pa., who was invited by McCarrick.

Wuerl is most widely known for his papal appointment as an auxiliary bishop to Seattle Bishop Raymond Hunthausen when the Seattle prelate's administration of the diocese came under Vatican scrutiny in 1986.

From 1982 to 1985, Wuerl was executive secretary to the papal representative for the study of seminaries in the United States.

The vocations conference is expected to draw some 600 persons—vocation directors from the various dioceses in the state, vocation directors at the state's Catholic high schools and colleges, pastors, directors of religious education, parish leaders and Serra Club members.

During the afternoon session, the Rev. Donald Guenther and Sister Antonelle Chunks, director and associate director respectively, of the archdiocese's vocations office, will explain the "Called By Name" program.

Some dioceses, including the Dioceses of Buffalo and Galveston-Houston have had a resounding success with the program, drawing a list of 150 to 200 names from parishioners' suggestions.

But not all dioceses have had that high a number of names returned. In

Churchgoers will submit names of potential clergymen and nuns

the Metuchen Diocese, which held "Called By Name" a year ago this fall, the program drew a much more modest number of potential candidates.

The Rev. Terrance Lawler, vocations director in Metuchen, said "the names we received were not many."

He said a quarter of the diocese's 108 parishes didn't submit any names. The remaining parishes returned at least two to three names. The highest number of names from any one parish was six.

"We had a taped message from (Metuchen) Bishop (Edward T.) Hughes played at every Mass through the diocese. In that Sunday's church bulletin, we had a card on which parishioners were asked to write the names of young men and women in their parish, neighborhood or in school with their children who, to them, would make good priests and nuns," Lawler said.

The majority of names were of

youth in elementary and high school and in college. The college-aged men were invited to a weekend retreat held by the diocese every January for men considering the priesthood.

"Three of the men we invited to the January retreat are still seeing me and discerning whether they have a vocation," said Lawler. "In that sense, even if we only had one person considering the priesthood, our program would have been a great success."

Lawler attributed the low response rate to the lack of pre-publicity for the program in the diocese.

While he predicted "Called By Name" could be successful with increased publicity, Lawler said that for fostering vocations, "nothing beats the one-on-one contact of a young man with a priest he admires or a young woman with a nun she admires."

The Paterson Diocese has its "own variation" of the program, said the

Rev. Stan Barron, vocations director.

Barron said diocesan priests are regularly asked, "Who will replace you," in a bid to encourage the clergy to pay attention to budding vocations among the young with whom they come in contact in their parishes.

"We started this last year," said Barron. "And now we have 10 candidates for the priesthood starting seminary studies this fall, which will bring to 25 the number of seminarians from our diocese."

What the Paterson vocation effort has in common with "Called By Name," Barron said, is that both are based on the principle that "sometimes people need to have someone tell them they might have a vocation."

"Our approach is to encourage priests and sisters to look to young men and women," said Barron.

He envisions the priests and nuns telling a potential candidate for religious life, "You've got what it takes." Barron said that coming from someone in religious life, the message will have the strongest impact.

But, ultimately, the vocations director said, "there is only one recruiter and that's God. He's the one who calls people."

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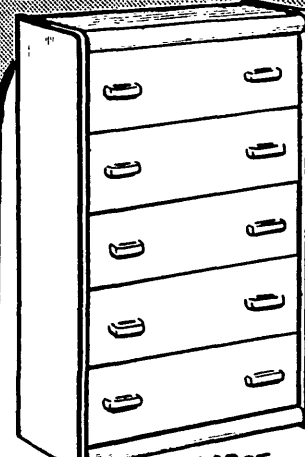
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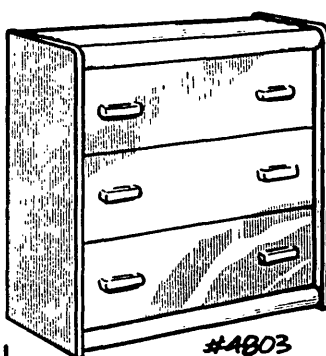
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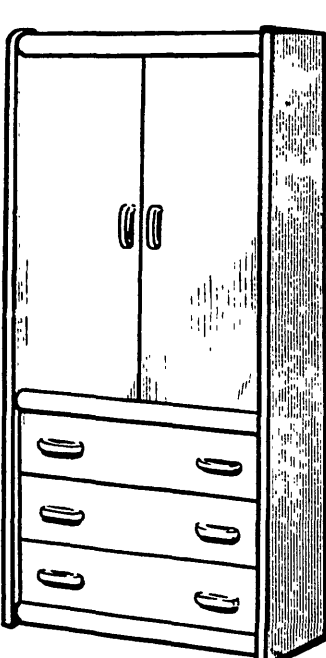
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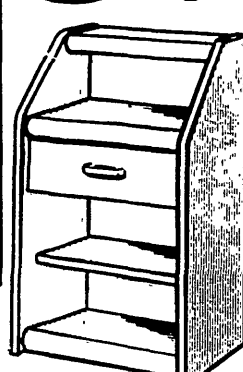
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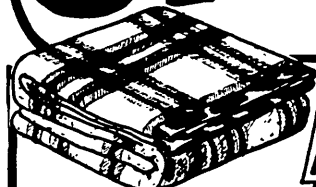
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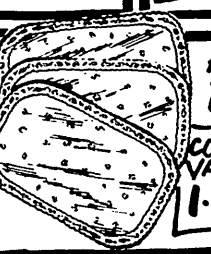


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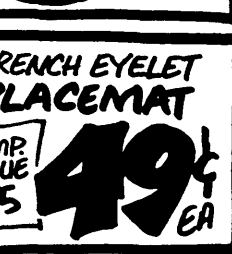
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Orange police have arrested an East Orange man who was entering residences with a bogus Public Service Electric & Gas Co. identification card and trying to swindle residents, police said.

Larry Williams of South Harrison Street was arrested at Reynolds Terrace and South Center Street about 4 p.m. Friday after a woman whom he had approached thought he looked "suspicious" and alerted police, Orange Police Director Charles Cobbett said.

The bogus identification card was found in his possession. He was charged with possession of cocaine, and other charges are pending, the director said.

Armed with the false card and a pipe wrench, Williams would "knock on doors and tell people they were late in making payments and that he was there to cut off their gas," Cobbett said. He would tell the customers to pay him cash and he would not cut off the gas.

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