

UNL students turn to new calling

By Terri Willson

Dave Bourek, 24, a native of Howells, Nebr., had an agricultural economics degree from UNL. In August, 1975, he left to enter a Catholic seminary rather than return to the family farm.

In August, 1976, after three years of accounting study at UNL, Gary Major, 21, Lexington, forfeited plans to enter the business world to study for the priesthood.

At UNL he had played raquet ball with the Rev. Leonard Kalin, vocational director for the Lincoln diocese, also chaplain at St. Thomas Aquinas Church on campus and the Newman Catholic Student Center.

"He (Father Kalin) always questioned my reasons for being in accounting, and I really didn't have any good answers for him."

Said another seminarian: "The seminary is not much like the university. You give up your freedom; like football, beer and girls."

Father Kalin said he is proud of the men he encourages

and Kentucky. Kalin boasts that 16 of the 18 entrants this year had been active at the Newman Center. "We have never had less than eight (each year) in the last six years," Kalin said. In 1975, 17 Lincoln men entered; 9 were from UNL.

College students are increasingly entering the priesthood today, he said.

It seems nationally the numbers entering religious vocations are down from 10 years ago, said the Rev. Michael Sheehan of Holy Trinity Seminary in Dallas. Locally, the Lincoln diocese is setting a record, he said.

At Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary in Overbrook, Pa., there are about half as many entrants as there were 10 or 20 years ago, according to the rector at the school. There are 190 men at St. Charles. However, the perseverance rate (numbers becoming ordained) is twice as good as 20 years ago, the rector said.

campuses. Holy Trinity seminarians take all courses at the University of Dallas; one may receive a B.A. in English, for example, while he continues religious study.

Recent high school graduates and men with an incomplete undergraduate education finish at a minor seminary. In a combination philosophy-liberal arts program, the men study such subjects as psychology, speech and accounting. They take physical education, practical courses such as speed reading and note taking. A study of the liturgy (the celebration of the mass) is also emphasized.

Electives are allowed in the graduate seminary. Some of the classes here include scripture (the study of the Old Testament), system theology (the story of creation vs. evolution) moral theology, church history, homilies (sermon giving), church music and an elective such as Hebrew.

Following the academic curriculum is only part of the total seminary picture. Brotherhood, counseling and working in suburb parishes or with handicapped children rated higher among the men as significant aspects of their religious training. The book-learning is complemented with "apostolate" activities. This is anything from directing a local church music group to visiting boys' homes, hospitals or nursing homes.

The activity of seminary life is tempered with quiet. "Days of Recollection" are days of complete silence for the seminarians. Similarly, annual retreats feature silence and prayer.

St. Charles in Overbrook consists of two medieval-looking grey stone buildings which house 190 men—100 in college; 90 working on theology master's degrees. It is nestled in a Philadelphia suburb on 130 acres of woods surrounded by ponds and meadows. There are tennis courts, baseball diamonds and swimming pools.

Jim Cooper, 28, is in his third year of studying for the priesthood. After graduation from Lincoln High School and three years of political science study at UNL, he nixed possible plans for law school or an insurance management career to enter St. Pius. He is now at St. Charles.

He said he talked to several priests during two years and finally decided to try the seminary, to see if he had a calling to the priesthood. Cooper said that people lack faith today because "we try to substitute God (and faith) with other things. For example, we trust pathology to tell us why Aunt Bertha died, but that won't tell us why such a marvelous thing as life ends or whether there is anything beyond it."

Bob Vacha, 25, is also at St. Charles. He graduated from Bishop Newman High School in Wahoo; attended Kearney State College for two years and UNL for two. He had planned to become a high school teacher. He entered the seminary out of "quiet desperation," he said.

Holy Trinity in Irving is in a modern plush, carpeted building. It has room for 100 students, and each has a private, completely-furnished room.

A movie projector, pool table, TV room and lounge complement it. On-campus recreation spots include a swimming pool, football and baseball fields and tennis and raquet ball courts.

Tony Jasnowski, 22, is an Aurora native. For one year he was a UNL anthropology major; he also had an interest in teaching high school English. Now, in his fourth year at Holy Trinity, he said Father Kalin originally encouraged him to think seriously about the priesthood. But, his mother's deep religious conviction and piety influenced him also. Of seminary life he said: "We have our parties too. But they are no longer the end-all of one's desires."

Mount Saint Mary in Emmitsburg is part of a good college of 12,000. The seminary of 180 men is apart from the regular campus against Blue Mountain, surrounded by a wooded rural area.

Some of the buildings are "old and distinguished," the seminarians said. Others, remnants of the school's



Photo by Kevin H'gley

Father Leonard Kalin: Recognizing the early signs of a calling.

to enter the seminary. He called them "gutsy."

By questioning a college man's lifestyle, Kalin said he tries to make a young man more aware of his own worth. A priest for 20 years and seven-year Newman chaplain, Kalin said he recognizes early signs of a religious calling as a doctor recognizes signs of a tumor before he tests for it.

He looks for men with a deep religious sense and a desire to help others, he said. They also must have self-discipline, high academics and Christian values.

Kalin said he turns away about 15 men a year who he does not think would make it through seminary.

The making of a priest takes eight years and between \$2,500 to \$4,500 a year in tuition. Seminaries contract loans with local banks to help educate seminarians. The Bishop's Lay Committee also collects parishoners' money for seminarian support. When a seminarian is ordained, his diocese pays the loan.

This fall, 18 young Lincoln men chose to become part of a group of 50 local men studying for the priesthood at four Catholic seminaries in Texas, Maryland, Pennsylvania

The following ideas on modern seminary life come from 12 young seminarians from Nebraska, one newly-ordained Lincoln priest and the priests already mentioned. Most seminarians questioned have attended UNL; some are recent graduates. When they entered, they surprised friends and family, whose feelings ranged from mild surprise to near shock. Why would anyone want to be a priest? they thought.

Questionnaires were sent out to the seminarians. The response was pages of flowery prose and philosophy.

There are two main levels of seminary study during the eight years—philosophy and theology. Philosophy, the study of principles of human nature and conduct, is studied at minor or undergraduate seminaries, such as Saint Pius X Seminary in Erlanger, Ky. Theology, the psychological study of God and religion, is studied at major, or graduate, seminaries, such as Mount Saint Mary Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md.

Some, such as Saint Charles Borromeo in Overbrook, Pa. have both a four-year college program and a four-year theology program. Others, like the minor Holy Trinity Seminary in Dallas, Texas are adjacent to secular