

Oudenhoven eager for the Lord to work through him

By FRANZ KLEIN
Catholic Times Correspondent

MUNDELEIN, Ill. — Deacon Timothy Oudenhoven has felt a calling to the priesthood since at least fourth or fifth grade. On May 29, the 27-year-old will finally embark on his new life as a Catholic priest when Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI ordains him and Deacon Paul Hoffman to the priesthood during a special liturgy scheduled for 10:30 a.m. at the Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman in La Crosse.

"I look forward to seeing God at work in people's lives and to having Him work through my hands and my voice," Deacon Oudenhoven said. "That's huge for me."

Deacon Oudenhoven's family belongs to St. Bronislava Parish in Plover. His parents Gary and Amy are active there. His younger brother Daniel is two years behind him in seminary and his sister Tracey is a student at the University of Wisconsin-

Stevens Point. Deacon Oudenhoven also graduated from UW-SP in December 2004 with a degree in computer information systems.

Deacon Oudenhoven's desire to be a priest dates back years earlier, though, to when he began serving in fourth or fifth grade at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Peshtigo, Wis., in the Diocese of Green Bay. "I think I served almost every weekend," he said.

Later the family moved to De Pere, Wis., and joined St. Mary Parish, also in the Diocese of Green Bay. The pastor there would take the sixth-grader with him when he visited the local nursing homes. He also gave him a rosary, which he said he kept in his pocket all the way through high school to the present — and which he finally began praying regularly while he was a student at UW-SP.

"That's when I really began progressing in my vocation," Deacon Oudenhoven said. "I saw the way so many of my



Deacon Timothy Oudenhoven

classmates were living and so many people who needed God. I felt called to share the riches; I have to bring others to a relationship with Christ."

Deacon Oudenhoven also received help along the way from Father Jim Trempe at St. Bron's. When his family moved to Plover during his freshman year of high school, his mother had told Father Trempe that he had been thinking about the priesthood since he was little. Father

Trempe encouraged him to start e-mceeing for Masses at the parish and teased him incessantly about the priesthood — something for which Deacon Oudenhoven now says he is grateful.

He graduated from Stevens Point Area Senior High, and although he did not enter the seminary immediately, he was already in touch with Father Eric Berns, diocesan vocations director at the time. He said Father Berns — and later Father Joseph Hirsch, the current vocations director — provided him with opportunities to learn more about the priesthood during this time.

Deacon Oudenhoven lived with Father David Kunz, pastor at Mary Mother of the Church Parish in La Crosse, and did IT work at Holy Cross Diocesan Center before graduating from UW-SP and with Monsignor Robert Hundt at Blessed Sacrament Parish in La Crosse while working at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe before beginning his priestly studies at Mundelein Seminary in Chicago

in the fall of 2005.

For the past five years, Deacon Oudenhoven has been pursuing studies in philosophy and theology at Mundelein. He recently earned master's of divinity and bachelor's of sacred theology degrees, and has begun working on a licentiate degree in spiritual theology.

Following his ordination to the transitional diaconate at St. Bron's last April, Deacon Oudenhoven began preaching and assisting at baptisms and funerals at St. Celestine' Parish in Elmwood Park, Ill. The Chicago-area parish will be sending a busload of parishioners to La Crosse for his priestly ordination.

During the summers and other vacations, Deacon Oudenhoven also did internships or helped out at St. Matthew's in Wausau and Our Lady Queen of Heaven in Wisconsin Rapids.

He will celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Bron's on May 30 at 1:30 p.m. with a public reception to follow.

Hoffman wants to help people rediscover the faith

By FRANZ KLEIN
Catholic Times Correspondent

PORT EDWARDS — The Lord chased Deacon Paul Hoffman across the country for many years and now He has finally caught up with him. Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI will ordain the 62-year-old from St. Alexander Parish, Port Edwards, together with Deacon Timothy Oudenhoven on May 29 at 10:30 a.m. at the Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman in La Crosse.

Actually, Deacon Hoffman says the Lord first caught up with him several years ago when the then-Chrysler Corporation employee was on a business trip in San Francisco. Due to inclement weather, he found himself in a hotel room with nothing to do and picked up a Bible that the Gideons had placed there. "I opened it to the Beatitudes," he said. "I read them in their entirety — the instructional part too — and then continued on through Matthew. It started to wake me up."

Not long afterward, he found himself back in the Twin Cities at his favorite watering hole. He said he would ordinarily find someone there to shoot the breeze with, but this time was different and he found himself all alone.

"You know, it really puts a

crimp in your Friday night," he said. "So I started to think about life. I asked myself, 'What comes next?' And I thought, 'You idiot, of course you know what comes next: life after death, and you had better start working for it.'"

Deacon Hoffman was born into a Catholic family and grew up in the Twin Cities, graduating from Benilde-St. Margaret's High School in Minneapolis and earning his bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Minnesota.

He was married to a Catholic as well — and they had one son together, Ryan, before their marriage of 10 years fell apart. They later divorced, and their marriage was annulled.

Today, Deacon Hoffman says his son and ex-wife are among his biggest supporters. But at the time, he fell away from the Church completely and for 20 years "marched to the cultural drumbeat of the time." "I did a lot of things that I would not consider doing today," he said.

Although the Lord's whispering in his ear in San Francisco and the Twin Cities were far from being thunderbolts from heaven, they had a profound effect on Deacon Hoffman. He was received back into the Church at St. Louis King of France in downtown St. Paul — a church where he "feel(s) the



Deacon Paul Hoffman

Lord's presence."

Deacon Hoffman later moved to the Chicago area as a Chrysler warranty specialist and became increasingly involved at St. Mary Parish in Elgin, Ill. Then he took a similar position in Central Wisconsin and moved to Port Edwards, joining St. Alexander Parish.

Again Deacon Hoffman was involved in the parish. "But I started to wonder," he said, "if I could teach people how to run their service parts departments, if I could do that, then maybe I could teach people about their faith — especially adults who had fallen away."

This led him to consider the possibility of the priesthood. Sister Catherine Kaiser, pastoral associate at St. Alexander's, gave him Father Joseph

Hirsch's phone number and he talked it over with him. Then Father Alan Wierzba, pastor at Our Lady Queen of Heaven in Wisconsin Rapids, became his spiritual director, and soon he found himself in the seminary.

Deacon Hoffman has spent the last five years studying philosophy and theology at Blessed John XXIII National Seminary in Boston, an institution specially designed for second-career vocations like his. During breaks from seminary, he completed in-

ternships at St. Mary Parish in Tomah and St. Olaf Parish in Eau Claire, in addition to serving an assignment in Boston. Archbishop ListECKI ordained him to the transitional diaconate last year at St. Alexander's.

Deacon Hoffman will celebrate his first Mass of Thanksgiving and preach at Our Lady Queen of Heaven in Wisconsin Rapids at 6:30 p.m. on May 29, with a public reception to follow.



Father Francis Quansah

Thank you for your dedication to our parish family.

May God Bless you as you continue your ministry with us.

St. Joseph Parish - St Joseph's Ridge