

16 men recall milestones of their spiritual journeys A pledge to 'share priesthood with people of God'

BY WARD MIELE
Managing Editor

Representing well the diversity that is a proud strength of the Archdiocese of Newark, Archbishop John J. Myers will ordain 16 men into the holy priesthood on Saturday, May 26 at 10 a.m. in the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart.

This local Church of Newark is again among the national leaders with the number of ordinandi. Last year 18 men were ordained, while there were 13 priests in the Class of 2010.

FATHER CARLOS EDUARDO BRICÉNO

His journey to the priesthood, Father Carlos Eduardo Bricéno explains, was fostered by many priests starting with the pastor of his home parish in Colombia. Fr. Bricéno, 29, attended the seminary in his native country and Immaculate Conception Seminary at Seton Hall University, South Orange. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Philosophy and Masters in Divinity. The new priest served his diaconate at Church of the Nativity in Midland Park.

His pastor in Colombia, Fr. Bricéno remembers, "opened the doors for me" by having him as an altar server. "In a certain way he promoted my vocation by giving me a lot of responsibility in the parish. He asked me to be a catechist, to direct the altar servers' group and to be the sacristan for the parish."

Another influence was his first spiritual director "who with his testimony and dedication to the priesthood motivated me to keep following in Jesus' footsteps." A factor too was the priests at the seminary "who helped me realize how God works in ways that, at times, I did not even realize."

Following up on that point, Fr. Bricéno says "I am always amazed at the presence of God in my life and how He keeps calling me to remain united with Him in every circumstance of my life, good or bad."

Because of the roots of his vocation, Fr. Bricéno sees himself "working with the community, visiting families, helping and advising them which will help me understand my ministry."

He sees the priesthood as "a way of life that will allow me to become closer to Jesus through my ministry to the people of God. It is a commitment of love that we make to the Lord with our whole heart and mind which allows us to love and be loved by God." At the same time Fr. Bricéno expects the priesthood to be a challenge. "I think that to remain in the Lord is the most difficult challenge that a Christian is called to face. I hope and pray I will be a faithful, faith-filled priest always visible and available to those I am called to serve."

Fr. Bricéno received his field education and summer work at Saint Margaret of Cortona Parish, Little Ferry; Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, West Orange; Saint Genevieve Parish, Elizabeth and Church of the Nativity, Midland Park.

Rev. Msgr. Thomas P. Nydegger, former vice rector and business manager of Immaculate Conception Seminary, will be the homilist at Fr. Bricéno's first Mass on Sunday, May 27 at noon at Saint Margaret of Cortona Parish. A second Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated the following Sunday, June 3, by Fr. Bricéno at Church of the Nativity also at noon. The pastor, Father Peter Funesti, will be the homilist.



FATHER TRINIDAD JOSÉ CUEVAS

As he contemplates his path to the priesthood, Father Trinidad José Cuevas is confident that "everything will be in the hands of the saints" adding that his hope and aspiration is to become "a holy priest for the salvation of souls."

Fr. Cuevas, 33 is the eldest of 18 brothers and sisters all of whom were born in Southern California. His parents immigrated from Jalisco, Mexico, more than 35 years ago. Fr. Cuevas says that such a large family is "the biggest sign of God's love" for him and that he is "indebted with gratitude" for his parents' "openness to life."

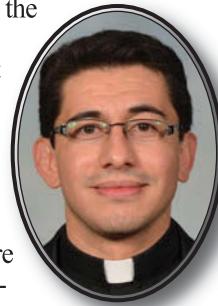
He is especially grateful for the fostering of his vocation by Our Lady, "the most loving of mothers" and the one to whom he has entrusted his celibacy. His "hero" is Saint Joseph. The new priest also prays for the intercession of Blessed John Paul II and to Saint Faustina Kowalski, both of whom remind him "every day of the Lord's great mercy for souls." Also influential has been Saint Francis Cabrini, patron saint of Redemptoris Mater Seminary. His mentors have been his catechists in the Neocatechumenal Way "who have guided me and continue to guide me in my itinerary of Christian formation." Equally important has been his own community in the Neocatechumenal Way where his vocation "was born and continues to be nourished."

Fr. Cuevas entered the seminary when he was 21 but initially never thought of doing so. He had planned to become a history professor and to get married and have many children like his parents. Following a time of "deep crisis and many questions about life," he eventually realized that "the answer was to simply trust in the Lord."

Reflecting on seminary life, Fr. Cuevas describes it as "being on a 24/7 spiritual workout." The seminary, he continues, is an "oasis where one is nourished and refreshed by the Lord." It was at Redemptoris Mater where he has felt "the most loved by God." He is especially grateful for the rector, Rev. Msgr. Renato Grasselli, spiritual director Father Robert Santamaria and all the priests at the seminary.

In addition to schooling in his home state, Fr. Cuevas attended Seton Hall University. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Education and a Master of Arts in Systematic Theology.

Within the Archdiocese of Newark, Fr. Cuevas' field education and summers were spent at Saint Mary Parish, Plainfield; Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, Union City; Saint Columba Parish, Newark; Hackensack University Medical Center and Saint Michael's Medical Center, Newark. He was a deacon at Saint Benedict Parish in Newark where he will celebrate his first Mass on Sunday, May 27, 12:30 p.m. He will be the homilist.



The Class of 2012 is marked by intriguing and divergent paths to a lifetime of service to God, His Church and Her people. Among the careers the new priests had before entering the seminary were accountant, small-business owner, actor, restaurant manager, public school teacher and Iraq War veteran.

Mentioned by the new priests as factors in their decision to heed God's call were trust in their devotion to Our Lady, intense and persistent prayer, the Blessed Sacrament, love of the Eucharist, the Neocatechumenal Way, Pope John Paul II, World Youth Day, a strong faith provided by parents, the influence early in life of the local parish and, most significant of all, life in the seminary nourished by classmates, priest mentors and the spiritual director.

The 16 men are profiled in the following biographies.

FATHER JOSÉ CARLOS GARZÓN

Involvement with the Neocatechumenal Way since 1994 has been how God helped him discover "more and more His love for me" in responding to the priesthood's call explains Father José Carlos Garzón.

A member of Redemptoris Mater Seminary, the 34-year-old priest is from Puebla, Mexico. His diaconate was served at Saint John Nepomucene Parish and Holy Redeemer Parish in West New York. He previously attended Saint Jose Seminary in Guadalajara, Mexico and has earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Seton Hall University where he is now pursuing a Master of Arts in Systematic Theology.

The "most exciting thing" about seminary life, he points out, was visiting the sick in the hospital. "I was struck by the way people live illness with God or without Him. So many times I wondered what I would say to them. It was not necessary to say anything. Sometimes the sick taught me how I should listen to them and it has helped me in my ministry."

Equally inspiring, he continues, was the opportunity to visit the faithful in their homes. Fr. Garzón sees doing so as the chance to "as the apostles did, announce the Gospel." At times, he adds, "we were well received and other times there was some rejection" which he views as helping him share the same experiences of the apostles when they went out and preached the Gospel.

He candidly admits the "most difficult" aspect of seminary life is "the temptations of denying the Lord's call. I am really grateful to God, my rector and all those who have intervened in my formation by helping me overcome those temptations." A "great help" too, he stresses, has been and is "personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament... in the silence of my life is where the Lord has spoken, unbelievable but true."

With ordination days away, Fr. Garzón's hope is that "the Lord will help me to show always to the people of God that Jesus is alive. I hope to believe and act, God willing, as a priest as if Jesus Christ is living in me." He believes a priest is and acts in the name of the person of Christ '*persona christi*'."

Before entering the seminary, the new priest started a small business selling, assembling and providing technical support for computers. While on the surface matters seemed to be going well, he explains, "in my interior life there was a void."

During a time in which he says he left the sacraments and was not living a life of grace, the future priest accepted an invitation to a vocational pilgrimage. The most important result, he recalls, was that even after having drifted away from the sacraments "no one pointed fingers at me. God loved me so much that he respected me and did not

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