

OUR NEW PRIESTS



**Archbishop Dolan
will ordain 10 men
to the priesthood at
a Mass at St. Patrick's
Cathedral Saturday,
May 15, at 9 a.m.**

Seven will be ordained for the archdiocese. Three will be ordained for the Community of Franciscans of the Renewal, who are based in the Bronx and serve in the archdiocese, in other U.S. dioceses and overseas.

The archdiocesan candidates are Fathers James Ferreira, George La Grutta, Steven Markantonis, Fredy Patiño Montoya, Thomas A. Roslak, Enrique Salvo and Daniel Tuite. The Franciscan candidates are Fathers Albert Karol Maria Osewski, C.F.R., Charles-Benoît Rèche, C.F.R., and Isaac Mary Spinharney, C.F.R. All studied at St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, and participated in various ministries during their preparation for priesthood.

The public is invited to the Mass.

*Profiles were written by Claudia McDonnell, Juliann DosSantos and Ron Lajoie;
photos by Chris Sheridan; section design by Molly Gallegos.*

FATHER JAMES FERREIRA

His altar service showed 'God is worth giving everything for'

Father James Ferreira admits that when he first received his calling to the priesthood as a teenager, he didn't share it with friends or family.

"I was a freshman in high school. I went on retreat to Regina Pacis in Brooklyn and during that retreat I had a very powerful experience of God's presence in the Eucharist and I felt like, not a voice or anything, but I felt him ask me if I wanted to be a priest," he recalled. "I said yes. But I didn't talk about it a lot. I didn't want to admit it to anybody.

"It's not cool for a kid to admit that to people."

Father Ferreira, 26, is the only child of Margaret and Henry Ferreira of Flemington, N.J. He grew up there

in a home that was casually Catholic. "My family weren't super churchgoers in the beginning," he said. "I got my sacraments but we didn't practice." During his spiritual journey, his parents were drawn to the faith as well. "We all came back together," he explained. "My parents were searching for God and they just drifted back to their roots."

Still, the idea that their son wanted to be a priest took them by surprise. "If you would have asked my mother 10 years ago what I wanted to be, she wouldn't have said a priest," he said. "She would have said, 'Oh, maybe a doctor.' They're happy about it. But they never would have foreseen it."

Father Ferreira's sense of vocation grew while volunteering as an altar server at a Carmelite monastery in Flemington. "Seeing the religious life and the chaplain there, but especially seeing the nuns and their dedication to God, cloistered, really jolts your mind," he said. "To think, wow, God is worth giving everything for."

By the time he went to college at the Franciscan University of Steubenville



he was pretty straightforward about telling friends and family about his desire to be a priest. But he left a little room for any creeping doubt. "I made a decision to study philosophy because I knew that was a prerequisite for the priesthood, but I also knew that I could do something else with that, if I didn't want to be a priest," he said.

In the end, the decision was not whether to become a priest, but what kind. He took two years off before entering the seminary to figure that out.

"I was discerning whether I was going into religious life or diocesan life

Father Ferreira will celebrate his first Mass at St. Magdalen de Pazzi Church in Flemington, N.J., on Sunday, May 16, at 1:30 p.m. Father John Barbella, pastor of St. Phillip and St. James parish, Phillipsburg, N.J., will deliver the homily.

and I took a job for two years while I was thinking that through," he explained. He worked with mentally disabled children for a while and for a year at a hedge fund firm. Working with the children, he learned more valuable lessons about himself. "It taught me a lot about service and sacrifice, especially the sacrifice their parents make," he said.

Father Ferreira doesn't spend much time thinking about what might have been had he not answered affirmatively the call he received as an adolescent.

"I just realized that God's grace and God's work is the most beautiful work that I could do, and I realized the inestimable value of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and confession and the amazing mysterious nature of the priesthood, that God works through us, that we do the work of Jesus himself," he said.

FATHER GEORGE LA GRUTTA

From a profession to a calling, aided by grace

Father George La Grutta's first career was connected to healing. His second career will involve him more directly in healing, although of a different kind. But it's not really a career; it's his vocation.

Father La Grutta, 61, was born in Brooklyn, the second of six children of Carmen and the late Dominic La Grutta, and grew up in Campbell Hall, Orange County. The thought of priesthood came when he was about 9, he said, but when the time came to make a choice, he didn't pursue it.

"As it says in the Gospels, I wanted to save my own life," he said. He earned a degree in pharmacy at Northeast Louisiana University and launched a successful career, but he wasn't satisfied.

"I looked around for fulfillment in

pharmacy and in the world, and I never found it," Father La Grutta said. That made him think, "Maybe I am called to priesthood." He entered St. John Neumann Residence in 1981 and St. Joseph's Seminary the following year, but withdrew in his fourth and final year.

"I think I was tempted to leave by the lure of the world, and the idea of perhaps starting a family," he said. He found "a fine job" with a large pharmaceutical company, Medco Health Solutions, and did some work in retail stores. He had money, a profession he enjoyed, a busy social life—and the lingering sense that he should have stayed in the seminary.

He remarked that he met "many fine women," but added, "I just never felt that 'this is the one.' Finally you reach a point where you're never going to find the right one, because what you're looking for is only going to be satisfied with God."

One reason he was able to return to the seminary, he said, was the grace he received through Eucharistic ado-

ration. One day when he was praying before the Blessed Sacrament—he thinks it was

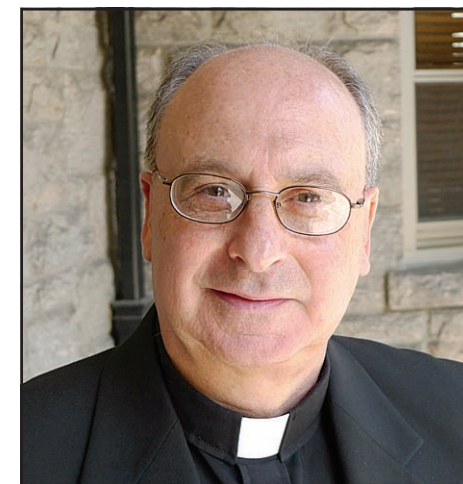
the feast of Corpus Christi—he told himself, "As crazy as it may sound, I'm going back." Then fear kicked in.

"I was thinking about all the things I had to do," he said, "and I heard a voice tell me, 'The only thing you have to do is trust Me.'" He reapplied to the seminary, and after a period of waiting he was accepted. He re-enrolled two years ago at age 59. "It hasn't been easy," he said, "but if you believe God is calling you, you get through it."

As a seminarian he visited patients at Rosary Hill Home in Hawthorne and instructed students at Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx who were preparing for baptism and confirmation. His summer assignment was at St. Eugene's in Yonkers.

He wants to encourage Catholics to

Father La Grutta will celebrate his first Mass at St. John the Evangelist in Goshen on Sunday, May 16, at 2:30 p.m. The homilist will be Father Leonard Villa, pastor of St. Eugene's in Yonkers.



go to confession more frequently, to see "the beauty of a large family" and have more children, and to be more aware of "the great gift we have in the real presence of Jesus" in the Eucharist. He's also deeply committed to promoting respect for life.

He looks forward to priesthood in the certainty that he is doing God's will, and he said, as though to himself, "George, you finally put the world behind you. You died to yourself. You're living the life you were meant to live."

FATHER STEVEN MARKANTONIS

The example of dedicated priests made an early impression

The career that Father Steven Markantonis first planned on was business management, and that's what he studied as a freshman at Fordham University. Odds are that he would have hit the top in business, because he seems to have a gift for analyzing information, spotting a trend and taking appropriate action—for example, when he picked up on all the signals that were pointing him toward priesthood.

Father Markantonis, 25, is the son of Cecilia Markantonis of Mamaroneck and Michael Markantonis. He attended his parish elementary school, St. Gregory the Great in Harrison, and was an altar server.

"There were always great priests there," he said. Among them was Msgr. Guy Vinci, who took a group of boys to

a Vocation Mass at St. Joseph's Seminary. Steven was an eighth-grader, and the experience made a strong impression on him.

"I was deeply inspired by the fraternity of the priesthood," he said. The celebrant was Cardinal O'Connor, and he was "very inspiring" and greeted each participant. "I got a very good vibe of the priesthood and the priestly life," Father Markantonis added.

In high school he began leaning toward business, but he continued to nourish his spiritual life. He joined the parish in which he was then living, Most Holy Trinity in Mamaroneck, and began working at the rectory desk on Sundays. He was impressed by the pastor, Father Joseph Irwin, and other priests there.

"I've always had great experiences of priesthood...of priests who loved their priesthood," he said. "I think that spoke more to me than anything else."

As a freshman at Fordham, he thought the business program and his professors were excellent.

"But I really felt there was something lacking, there was something more to which God was calling me," he said.

"One of the things I came to discover during that first year is that if we really want to be happy in life, if we really want to be fulfilled, we have to choose God's will. We have to discern it and do it."

While considering what he truly was called to, he also thought about marriage; he said that he has "great respect" for the vocation to married life.

"That was something I kind of had to struggle with: discerning whether I was called to...this supernatural vocation" of priesthood, he said.

He began participating in Eucharistic adoration at his parish for an hour each Friday. "That time of prayer, silence and just listening to God's voice, asking the Lord for his purpose in my life...was not just the confirmation of my vocation," he said. "It gave me the grace to pursue it."

He entered St. John Neumann Residence and earned a degree in philosophy at Fordham. As a seminarian, he

Father Markantonis will celebrate his first Mass at Most Holy Trinity Church in Mamaroneck on Sunday, May 16, at noon. The homilist will be Father John Higgins, pastor of Assumption parish in Peekskill.



served for two summers at Assumption parish in Peekskill—"a wonderful experience," he said. He was a catechist at Most Holy Trinity, Mamaroneck, and Our Lady of Fatima, Scarsdale, and did visitation at Blessed Kateri Nursing Home in Manhattan and Westchester County Jail in Valhalla.

He said the Church needs "priests who will discern and detect pastoral needs, who will be proactive" in drawing people to the sacraments. He looks forward to that, but most of all, he said with obvious joy, to "hearing confessions and offering Holy Mass—the two things that a priest and only a priest can do."

FATHER FREDY PATIÑO MONTOYA

Dream of priesthood began in Colombia, came to fruition in new land

For Father Fredy Patiño Montoya, the idea of becoming a priest was planted into his soul early on, but it wasn't until Catholic missionaries visited his home in a rural village in Colombia when he was a teenager that the idea really began to grow.

Born in the small village of Piamonte outside of the town of Yolombó, to the late Guillermo Patiño and Maria de los Angeles Montoya, Father Patiño described his family as "a very Catholic family." The family would gather each night to pray together. He noted that even as a small child, he had religious images in his room and a small altar to the Blessed Mother.

"The desire, the vocation, the call to the priesthood was always there,"

said Father Patiño, 28. It was not until a group of seminarians serving as missionaries visited his village in the winter of 1996 that he began to seriously consider the priesthood. "They were so happy," he said.

To continue his studies, Father Patiño moved to a boarding high school in Yolombó, the closest town. He then enrolled in the diocesan seminary of Girardota and attended classes at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. In 2004, he traveled to the United States and enrolled in Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wis., run by the Priests of the Sacred Heart, and began taking English as a second language classes. Early in his English studies, he attended an ecumenical conference in which Archbishop Dolan, who was then Archbishop of Milwaukee, was the speaker. At the time, Father Patiño could only say in English, "How are you?"

Father Patiño noted with a smile, "Every one of us is part of a bigger plan." He said, "The first bishop I met in this country is the one who is going

Father Patiño will celebrate his first Mass at St. Peter's Church in Haverstraw on Sunday, May 16, at 2 p.m. The homilist will be Father Thomas Madden, pastor of St. Peter's.

to lay his hands upon me and ordain me. These are not coincidences."

During his time at Sacred Heart, Father Patiño realized he was not called to serve in a religious community. He planned to move back home to finish his seminary studies. However, a trip to Manhattan changed that course. "I fell in love with New York City," he said. "I felt connected to the city because it was very diverse." After praying about it, he realized he was called to serve in New York. "There is a great need for bilingual priests here," he said. "I think I'll be doing something that is needed."

Father Patiño's mother and grandmother will be attending his ordination. When he was 13, his father died of pancreatic cancer never knowing that his son wanted to be a priest. His



father thought he would become a doctor. His mother told him that his father was right because as a priest he will be a "doctor of souls," he said.

Father Patiño said he is "looking forward to the moment of ordination." He said, "I've been saying yes to God all these years" even with the difficulties of "being away from home in a place where the language, the culture and the weather are different" and looks forward to "being able to perform the biggest miracle every day in the Eucharist."

FATHER THOMAS A. ROSLAK

A bus ride took him to a different destination

Before he entered the seminary, Father Thomas A. Roslak worked in administration with media companies in Manhattan, but he always knew there was something else he was meant to be doing.

One day, sitting on an express bus en route to work, he thought, "You're not happy with your life, and you know why, because you know what's missing." He called the archdiocesan vocation director and began attending discernment weekends and other events. A year later he entered St. John Neumann Residence.

Father Roslak, 44, was born in Brooklyn, the son of Gertrude and the late Frank Roslak. The family later moved to Staten Island. His parents were deeply devout and prayerful. Father Roslak said that attending Mass as a boy, he found it "fascinating" that

"Christ was present with us, and the priest had something to do with that." He admired the priests in his parish.

"I knew as a very young boy that that was what I wanted," he said. But he took a detour: he started working in his teens in a family business, earned a degree in liberal arts at the College of Staten Island and then went into media work. He socialized with friends, traveled and dated—casually, he said, because he knew in his heart that he wanted to enter the seminary. He fulfilled family responsibilities that had to be attended to before he could make a commitment to a vocation.

"Even though I wasn't actively at some point in my life pursuing the priesthood, it was always there," he said. "It was always gnawing at me."

Through the years he attended daily Mass, went to confession regularly and received spiritual direction. When he experienced that decisive moment on the express bus, he was spiritually prepared, but even then he hesitated. Priesthood seemed like "an unreachable goal," he said, and he told himself, "You've missed your window of oppor-

tunity."

"Then I got mad at myself for thinking in such a defeatist fashion," he continued, "and I said, 'No, if you're going to do this, actively pursue it, because it's possible.'" He thought about the years of hard work he'd have to put in, but he told himself, "This is what I want, and I'll do whatever it takes to get there."

In 2004 he left his job to attend St. John's University full time. He entered the Neumann Residence the following year and received a degree in philosophy in 2006.

As a seminarian, he served as a parish catechist, visited patients at Calvary Hospital, coordinated teen retreats at the seminary and gave retreats at Archbishop Stepinac High School. He served summer assignments at St. Philip Neri parish in the Bronx.

He's looking forward to being able to do what drew him to priesthood in the first place: celebrating Mass. He'd

Father Roslak will celebrate his first Mass at Holy Rosary Church on Staten Island on Sunday, May 16, at 2 p.m. The homilist will be the pastor, Father Robert Aufieri.



also like to be involved in ministry to homeless persons.

"I have a special feeling for people in that kind of suffering," he said.

Reflecting on his decision to enter the seminary, he said, "I wish I did this sooner." At the same time, he believes it was "no accident" but rather God's will that put him in the class he's in, with the seminarians he has studied and prayed with.

But he has a message for any man who believes he has a vocation: "God is giving you an invitation, and he's willing to wait, but don't make him wait."

FATHER ENRIQUE SALVO

Native Nicaraguan found what was missing in New York

Father Enrique Salvo, a native Nicaraguan, moved to New York City hoping to find what he felt was missing from his life. After he had settled into his lower Manhattan apartment in the summer of 2004, the first thing he did was to visit the nearby parish, St. Patrick's Old Cathedral. Many miles from his homeland, he found what he had been searching for.

"That homesickness you get" disappeared in the universally familiar setting of the church, he said. "I felt at home. It was beautiful." Gradually, Father Salvo began to attend daily Mass at the church.

As he discerned a call to the priesthood, Father Salvo participated in the "God in the Streets of New York" walk,

in which pilgrims traversed the streets of Manhattan with a monstrance holding the Eucharist. "That weekend did it," he said, adding, "It was really like walking through the streets with the Lord." That same year, he entered St. John Neumann Residence and Hall, now St. John Neumann Seminary College. A year later, he entered St. Joseph's Seminary in Dunwoodie.

Father Salvo, 37, left Nicaragua after working five years at a financial company he founded with his brother. "You get lost in the world. To me, it was an empty time," he said. "The things of the world do not bring you happiness."

"When I heard that call and answered it, I felt fulfilled," he said. He explained that leaving his native country was a difficult decision. "If God asks us to leave our family and our home, it's a beautiful invitation that we have right there in the Gospel," he said. He noted that his decision to move and remain in New York



was "part of saying yes."

"The most important decision that we make in our life is to find God's plan for us and to say yes to it. We should always trust God and his loving design more than ourselves and more than what the world tells us," he said.

Father Salvo's family—his parents, Enrique Salvo and Daisy Mendieta, and his three siblings—have been supportive of his decision. Father Salvo is especially grateful for his mother's devotion to Mary. "I do believe that

Father Salvo will celebrate his first Mass on Sunday, May 16, 2 p.m. at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church in Manhattan. Father Charles Szivov, spiritual director of St. Joseph's Seminary, will be the homilist.

the beautiful prayer of my mom is one of the reasons I'm being ordained."

Throughout his life, Father Salvo steadfastly prayed the Rosary. He explained, "Mary is such a gift to us and really is our loving mother. It's important to cultivate our relationship with her to help our most important relationship with Jesus."

"I plan to give my whole priesthood to Mary so she will give it to Jesus," he said. At his first Mass, his mother will present him to the Blessed Mother in the consecration to Mary of St. Louis de Montfort.

Looking ahead to his life as a priest, he said, "Mary tells us, 'Do as he tells you.' The priesthood is a not a life you can plan. It's a daily listening to God's will and conforming ourselves to it. I'm his now for whatever he has planned."

FATHER DANIEL TUIITE

A pope's passing brought priesthood back into focus

It is not surprising that a young man who was nicknamed "Pope St. Daniel" as a child selected the priesthood as a career path. But it was not a direct road to the seminary for Father Daniel Tuite.

He always had an interest in the priesthood, and he was once stopped in the hallway at St. Joseph by-the-Sea High School by the principal, Msgr. Joseph Ansaldi, who asked, "When are you going to come and take my job?" But Father Tuite, for a time, actually had his eye on a career in diplomacy.

Father Tuite, 26, is the son of Richard and Deborah Tuite of Staten Island. He has one brother, Sean. His home parish is Our Lady Queen of Peace.

"I guess I began to think about (the priesthood) as a possibility a bit in high school," he said. "I worked in my home

parish in the rectory and you kind of get to see all sides of the priesthood, and I mean in a very good way. But I went to college and forgot about it for a while, and then seriously began to think about it in my senior year."

He studied politics and history at Stony Brook University, spent a year at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom, and received his bachelor's degree in 2005. He applied to graduate school to get a master's in international relations but he always kept the priesthood in the back of his mind. He had served in the university apostolate at Stony Brook.

One event during senior year dramatically brought the priesthood back into focus for him: the death of Pope John Paul II on April 2, 2005. The Pope's death and funeral and the conclave that followed dominated the news for weeks. "On every news station it was John Paul II all the time. I had never seen anything like it," he recalled. "It was just amazing to see the whole world stop. I watched all the coverage and I thought, 'What an incredible life.'



I thought, 'I'll never aspire to that but, why not give it a shot?'"

He had been accepted at the School of Diplomacy at Seton Hall University, but he deferred Seton Hall and entered St. John Neumann Residence for a year of reflection.

"In the end I figured out this is where I should be," he said. "My parents knew before I graduated. It kind of surprised them because I'd been selected at Seton Hall and so I was all gung-ho, but they were very supportive."

So were his friends, although some found his decision hard to understand.

Father Tuite will celebrate his first Mass at Our Lady Queen of Peace Church, Staten Island, on Sunday, May 16, at 3 p.m. Msgr. Edward Barry, pastor of St. Barnabas parish in the Bronx, will be the homilist.

"I have three friends that I have been with since high school," he said. "They wouldn't proclaim themselves atheists, but they are kind of that ilk. My first Mass as deacon, I preached in my own parish, and they all came. I walked in before Mass and there they were... It was great! I said, 'My first miracle, there it is!'"

Most of his apostolic assignments in seminary involved working with high school and college students. Recalling his old principal's invitation, he acknowledged, "I would love to teach in the high school setting. Some people are definitely afraid of teenagers. But I think it would be an absolute blast." Father Tuite knows it is not up to him, of course. He is entering the priesthood when numbers are few.

"I'm ready for it," he said. "Wherever the Lord wants me, he'll show me. Whatever he'll send my way, he'll give me the strength to deal with it. What else can I do but respond?"

FATHER ALBERT KAROL MARIA OSEWSKI, C.F.R.

Ordination as priest will complete his commitment to Jesus

At 19, Father Albert Karol Maria Osewski, C.F.R., decided to give his life to Christ. In a matter of days he will make that commitment complete when he is ordained.

"I grew up in a Catholic family. My uncle was a priest. So as a kid I had access to the priesthood even though as a teenager I left the Church, in a sense," he explained. "But then I had a conversion, or a spiritual reawakening, when I was 19. I went from non-practice to fervent practice. And since then the only thing I could think of was I wanted to belong to Jesus."

Father Albert, 33, is the son of Teresa and Zenon Osewski of Queens. The family immigrated to the United States from Poland when he was 17. His later teen years were spent in Brooklyn, a world vastly different from Elk, the small lakeside town in Poland where he grew up.

"It was not easy, that's for sure," he recalled of his adolescence in a new world. "Because none of us spoke English—new culture, new everything. For my brother and me it was like landing on the moon, lots of people, subway trains. But people were very generous and very open, especially to newcomers."

He said that his spiritual journey began at St. Stanislaus Kostka parish in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, and that his conversion experience was profound.

"After my conversion I was going to different retreats, and all my free time I would spend doing Jesus things," he said. "But at a certain point I realized I wanted to do it full time, give myself to it completely." He entered the Franciscans when he was 22 and professed final vows five years ago. But he felt a calling to go further.

"After my conversion, I felt in my heart I wanted to belong completely to Jesus. But there is a distinction between religious life, which is to live the way Jesus lived, and the priesthood, which is to do the things Jesus did. So for me it was obvious. I wanted to be a religious priest."



As a Franciscan, he has spent much of his ministry working among the poor and marginalized in the United States and on assignment in Honduras. He also has worked extensively in youth ministry, and plays drums in a Franciscan rock band. He expects youth and the poor to remain the focus of his ministry as a Franciscan priest.

"I was involved in a youth group in Brooklyn, and I've worked with the homeless and the poor. That's what

Father Albert will celebrate his first Mass at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, Greenpoint, Brooklyn, on Sunday, May 30, at 3 p.m. Father Mariusz Koch, C.F.R., will be the homilist.

our community does," he explained. "So for me it is a very easy fit, especially youth ministry. I love young people's enthusiasm. They are very idealistic, which is great. And working with the poor, they're very honest and challenging, and they're often very religious. Somehow in their poverty, they're very joyful."

As the day of his ordination approaches, he admits to a certain degree of apprehension. But he says he is ready.

"Life is all about love," he said. "Love is all about self-gift and surely the priesthood is all about love and self-gift. Is it challenging? Yes, of course it is challenging. Is it tough? Yes, it is tough. But you have to take that step in faith. God has blessed me in so many ways, in people I've met, prayers I've seen answered—and now the priesthood waiting. I'm very grateful."

FATHER CHARLES-BENOÎT RÈCHE, C.F.R.

He traveled far and found what he was seeking

Father Charles-Benoît Rèche, C.F.R., recalls that when he was about 14, he slipped into an emotional darkness so deep that he considered suicide. Two things stopped him: his dislike for suffering, and the realization that “I was loved more than I was ready to admit—by my parents and by somebody else,” he said. The somebody else was God, and the realization profoundly affected him.

“I switched from a faith of tradition to a faith of conviction,” he said, and he wanted to bring others to know God’s great love. He thought about priesthood in high school, but instead went on to technical studies and a career as a draftsman. He also enjoyed partying, and in his 20s he felt unworthy of priesthood.

He said he resolved the conflict with help from St. Thérèse of Lisieux—fittingly, because like him she is French, and his twin sister, a nun, bears her

name.

Father Charles-Benoît, 39, was born in St. Germain en Laye and grew up in Argentan, in Normandy. His twin is Sister Thérèse-Isabelle, a cloistered Benedictine in France. They and their two younger sisters are the children of Marie-Claude and René Rèche, fifth-generation bakers.

Father Charles-Benoît is fluent in English and has a laugh as rich and hearty as a bowl of beef bourguignon. During the years when he’d put thoughts of priesthood aside, he “re-discovered God’s mercy,” and realized that he was forgiven and must also forgive himself. But he still felt unworthy.

He found the solution in these words of St. Thérèse: “God doesn’t call those who are worthy. He makes worthy the ones whom he has called.”

He entered a house of discernment run by his home diocese and went on to a preseminary program. Along the way he read a book about the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal; it made him realize that he strongly desired to be part of a fraternal community and to live among the poor.

Shortly before he was to enter the major seminary, he spent a weekend



Father Rèche will celebrate his first Mass at Most Holy Trinity Church in Yonkers on Sunday, May 16, at 1 p.m. The homilist will be Father Stan Fortuna, C.F.R., founding member of the congregation, musician and author.

engineering from a French technical institute and a degree in philosophy from Seminaire St. John Eudes in Caen, France.

Father Charles-Benoît said that living and serving here has made him appreciate the richness of his own culture—and has made him see that his ways are not the only ways of doing things. “It takes patience and humility to accept that,” he said, laughing. “What I love in America,” he added, “is the freedom of expressing myself, especially on the faith.”

As a priest he wants to bring the Gospel to those who have never heard of Jesus. His religious habit draws many people to ask questions, and he is only too ready to talk with them.

“I never take public transportation without having one conversation, at least,” he said.

with the Renewal Friars in London and found it hard to leave.

“I felt already I was among my brothers,” he said. Weeks later he visited the congregation in New York. “After three days,” he said, “I was, like, ‘This is it.’” He entered the congregation in New York the following month, September 2002.

He has served in the congregation’s apostolates at St. Francis Youth Center and St. Padre Pio Shelter in the Bronx, and in young adult ministry. He holds a degree in mechanical and production

FATHER ISAAC MARY SPINHARNEY, C.F.R.

Role as spiritual father fills him with joy and peace

When Father Isaac Mary Spinharney, C.F.R., pictured his life, he imagined it would include a wife and a family—the idea of priesthood never entered his mind. Along the way, however, he realized that “there are many people out there who don’t know God, who need young men willing to take up the role of spiritual father—that’s the role of a priest.”

The road toward ordination for Father Isaac included a detour through Mexico. After earning a bachelor’s degree in history from Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio, Father Isaac realized that he was living a “wild” lifestyle and “needed to get away.” A friend of his was serving in Mexico as a Catholic missionary with the Family Missions Company, a

group he later joined for eight months to preach to the poor. “When I was in Mexico, I learned I wanted to work with the poor,” he said. He returned to the states in May of 2000, and that September he entered the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.

Father Isaac, 34, was born in Omaha, Neb., and grew up in Eden Prairie, Minn. His parents, Sharon and Robert, raised their five children with Catholic values. He remarked that his family has been “tremendously supportive” and proudly noted that three years ago, one of his sisters entered the Franciscans of the Renewal as well—Sister John Paul Marie of Jesus Light of the World, C.F.R.

The idea to enter religious life and the priesthood was the result of Father Isaac’s “profound” experiences after college. “I can say this,” he said, “God was persistent. I kept hearing him say, ‘I want you for myself.’” A major hurdle Father Isaac overcame in his decision to serve God as a priest was the idea of celibacy. “The way we are built does not change just because I’m



Father Spinharney’s first Mass will be celebrated at Holy Family Church in St. Louis Park, Minn., on Sunday, May 23, at 11 a.m. Father Eugene Fulton, director of Trinity Retreat House in Larchmont, will be the homilist.

appreciation for the early Church.” His apostolic assignment at Casa Juan Diego in Yonkers, a soup kitchen largely for Hispanic day laborers, allowed him to serve the poor, and even though it was “heartbreaking” at times, it reaffirmed in him “the dignity of each person.”

Assisting at the Mass for his diaconate ordination at Most Blessed Sacrament Friary in Newark, N.J., Father Isaac explained that he “felt comfortable, at home, behind the altar.” As a priest, he looks forward to celebrating the Mass and sharing the special relationship that Jesus has with his priests.

He said, “I feel that this is what I was created to do.”

called to be a priest,” he said. “God uses that sacrifice.”

“God takes that desire and makes you a spiritual father,” he said. “He promises us that we will find our joy, our peace and our happiness.”

At St. Joseph’s Seminary, he felt an “increased sense of gratitude” during each of his four years. In his dogma courses, he said, he saw “the beauty of the Church’s faith” and “gained a real