



CALLINGS

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT VOCATIONS

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Jesuit Brother helps gang members find a way out

By Br. Jim Holub, SJ

As I look back over many years, the story of my call to religious life remains much the same, yet the mystery behind it startles me more than ever.

For each step in the journey there are more influences than I am conscious of. Surely my family is a major factor. My father, a farmer, and my mother, a teacher, were models for me of caring service to everyone, often with great personal sacrifice. Their true gentleness, warmth, the sight of their devotedness to people and children, and the ever-present sense of peace they encouraged inspired me.

I had thought several times about religious life. As I prayed, I felt that religious life encompassed all my dreams: the archaeologist whose research digs deep into the earth, the astronomer who

observes the eternal universe, the person who searches for beauty (something I became intensely interested in while in college!).

Once I had made up my mind, what had seemed unclear till then began to disappear, and I was able to begin to walk towards the deep heart of Christ. There have been many digressions along the way, but the goal I am aiming at continues to shine in the foreground.

After entering the Society of Jesus, and experiencing the Spiritual Exercises during my Long Retreat, I tasted a true happiness that continues to outweigh the sacrifices a vocation to religious life requires.

Why do I remain a Jesuit, and why have I chosen to be a Jesuit Brother? In short, voices. For years now I have been involved in an

inner city ministry that involves working with gang members. At HomeBoyz Interactive we help gang members give up the allure of street life in exchange for job training and spiritual nourishment. Our area of expertise has evolved over the years and now focuses on web site design, strategy, and technology. In the course of participating in this ministry I have helped bury 48 inner city youths whose lives were lost to violence. I still hear their voices and am called through my apostolic work to continue to speak for them to this day.

Why I've been called in this way I don't know. I don't know why they speak to me, why they come around like some lost brother and work upon my consciousness, why they select me to fling them back into some worldly orbit. All I know is that I have to →



BR. JIM HOLUB, SJ (above left) WORKS WITH A FORMER STREET GANG MEMBER AT THE OFFICE OF HOMEBOYZ INTERACTIVE ON MILWAUKEE'S SOUTH SIDE. BR. JIM SAYS HIS LIFE AS A JESUIT HAS BEEN ONE OF SURPRISE AND PERSONAL FULFILLMENT.

→ FROM PAGE 1 respond in a way that is a purely gratuitous, perfectly lavish, and absolutely unmerited gift - as God's love is for me - without self-righteous presumption and despair

The voices along with Spiritual Exercises have led me into a unique and puzzling life perhaps, but also a life that is teaching me what it means to be forgiven and to love.

I have been born again, this time through pardon and mercy, forgiveness and grace. I live not in the power of my own goodness, but in the power of a love that I could never merit and never repay, but can always receive gratefully. It is in taking this gift of my vocation to Jesuit Brotherhood to heart and letting it encourage God's people to develop their human potential and also support them in creating environments where justice, hope, peace, understanding and unity are signs of how people can live in harmony as brothers and sisters. I like to call this the work of forming a community of reconciliation.

About Br. Holub's

The training of former urban gang members at HomeBoyz Interactive has evolved into a successful program that starts with basic HTML training, followed by image manipulation, and then work on mock sites.

Students at the Milwaukee-based ministry next go to the production room, where they work on actual client websites. At this point they are paid for their work and also get a portfolio to take to potential employers. During this portion training, they also get a chance to deal with clients on the phone, take responsibility for projects, and feel confident with their new skills.

Upon completion, they are awarded a certificate of training and something even more important that can't be put on paper. These code warriors, as they refer to themselves, see a way out of their old lifestyle and feel greater self-esteem and hope. It doesn't take much to see that this is a better life than the one they left behind.

These young people know that I care about them, whether they screw up or not. They also know that I'm not about to let them off the hook, Br. Jim Holub, SJ says.

This tough love has proved to be very effective. In the past three years, 126 young men and women have come through Homeboyz and found full-time employment, with an average starting salary of \$38,000.

Brothers on the Brotherhood

BR. MIKE WILMOT, SJ

Br. Wilmot's many talents include his ability to build things, be it a library or school in Africa, or housing in the central city. He is currently directing a local home ownership project on Omaha's North Side.

My vocation as a brother allows me to have a relationship with Christ that I can live daily in service to others. Whether I'm teaching, coaching or building, I find peace and happiness as I live my vows working alongside people in the community. We help each other to know Christ better and find God in all things.

BR. BILL FOSTER, SJ

Originally from Omaha, Br. Foster's home for the past 35 years has been Holy Rosary Mission in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. He runs the carpenter shop and maintains mission buildings, including Red Cloud Indian School. Br. Foster helps students discover their talents and develop self-confidence by passing what he knows on to others. He is deeply appreciated and accepted by his community and the Lakota people.

I have always felt happiest when I was helping local people fix whatever they needed help with. I learned that you are never too busy to help those who need you. This makes the mission home to me.

see BROTHERHOOD back page →

ANSWERING THE CALL

Becoming a Brother - the less-

Fr. Warren Sazama, SJ

DIRECTOR OF VOCATIONS & WISCONSIN PROVINCE

any of our ministries that don't require ordination. For example, Jesuit brothers are, among other things, teachers, administrators, coaches, counselors, retreat directors, and missionaries. One brother in our province is director and curator at the Holy Rosary Mission's Heritage Center, a Lakota cultural center and museum in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Another, Br. Jim Holub SJ (featured on the front of this newsletter)

Born in the same small Wisconsin town within months of each other in 1924, James and John Zuercher are cousins. A little more than 20 years later, both became Jesuits - again within months of each other. Today these cousins are still Jesuits. The cousins have become brothers in a sense because Jesuits are brothers to each other. Jim, however, is a Jesuit brother in another sense; he is Br. Jim Zuercher, SJ. Jim decided early in formation that he'd like to be a Jesuit, but he did not want to be a priest. His cousin, on the other hand, John Zuercher, SJ, was ordained to the priesthood in 1959.

From the same family, they decided to take slightly different paths on the road to their vocations. Some may ask, "If you're called to be a Jesuit, why not also be a priest?" The answer is simply that it may be your vocation to be a Jesuit but not to do sacramental ministry as a priest.

As a priest, I celebrate the Eucharist with communities, hear confessions, witness marriages, bury the dead, and anoint the sick, and I love these opportunities for priestly ministry. Some of my fellow Jesuits, however, do not feel drawn to such sacramental ministry. Like Jim Zuercher, they opted for the brotherhood over priesthood.

Brothers are full Jesuits who can engage in

see SAZAMA back page →

→ SAZAMA FROM PAGE 3

separation between Brother Denny and the people. I believe that was not only because of his warm, caring, humorous personality, but also because of his being a brother.

At the same time, Br. Denny was very much a Jesuit, and people related to him as a spiritual man. He was a central member of our Jesuit community and, in fact, one of our informal leaders. People saw him very much as a Jesuit, a man of God, and experienced his caring nature as an expression of God's love for them.

The absolute essence of being a brother, however, as with all religious, is not so much in what they do as in who they are - in the witness of the Gospel values their lives profess. Like all members of religious congregations, brothers take perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Living these vows in our contemporary, materialistic American culture speaks volumes. These vows dismiss the American myth that money, sex, power, possessions, and status guarantee happiness and personal fulfillment. Their vows proclaim that true happiness is found in union with God, self-

giving, community, faith, hope, love, service, generosity, sharing our resources and talents with others, working for justice, and solidarity with the poor. These are the things that provide genuine satisfaction and ultimate meaning in life.

Religious life is a tremendous gift to God's people for it shows that God's riches are far greater than material wealth. And being a Jesuit brother - or brother or sister in other religious congregations - is certainly a beautiful gift to the world. ●

→ BROTHERHOOD FROM PAGE 3

BR. JERRY PELTZ, SJ

Br. Peltz became a Jesuit in 1981 following two years as a volunteer at Holy Rosary Mission in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Since then he has taught math at Holy Rosary and at Creighton Prep in Omaha, where he also served as assistant principal. He is currently assisting Br. Mike Wilmot, SJ on a low-income housing project in North Omaha.



"I like to think of my vocation as a brother like that of the 12 apostles and, most likely, of all the men and women who were the first disciples while Jesus was beginning His ministry to others. They were not ordained, but somehow heard a call from the Lord and tried to follow Him as best they could in their everyday lives. They tried to understand His truth, pass it along, and help others through example and deed, regardless of their differences. They were men and women who would stumble, fall, and get back up. They were confused and inspired, fearful and brave, weak and strong, sinners and saints. They were able to witness Jesus do extraordinary things for ordinary people and in turn, they became people who, on occasion, could do extraordinary things themselves."

Ongoing Vocation Discernment Groups

We have three discernment groups for men considering the Jesuits in Milwaukee, Omaha, and the Twin Cities. For information about the group in Milwaukee, contact Fr. Tim Lannon, SJ at Marquette University (414-288-6386, timothy.lannon@marquette.edu). For the group in Omaha, contact Fr. Dick Hauser, SJ at Creighton University (402-280-3010, hausersj@creighton.edu). For information about the Twin Cities group, contact Fr. Peter Etzel, SJ (651-644-9041, etzel@macalester.edu).

UP COMING EVENTS

FEB. 8

VOCATIONS DISCUSSION over pizza at Marquette University Jesuit Community, 1404 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, 8:00 p.m.

FEB. 16-19

(long Presidents' Day weekend)

DISCERNMENT RETREAT AT THE JESUIT RETREAT HOUSE NEAR DENVER.

We will begin at 5:00 p.m. on Friday and end after lunch on Monday. You will be individually directed in a silent discernment retreat by a young Jesuit in training.

MAR. 23-25

COME AND SEE WEEKEND at the Jesuit house of studies at Loyola U. in Chicago. We will begin at 5:00 p.m. on Friday and end with lunch on Sunday. This will be an opportunity for inquirers to learn more about the Jesuits and Jesuit formation in a community of young Jesuits in early formation.

MAY 31 - JUNE 9

DISCERNMENT RETREAT AT THE CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY RETREAT CENTER in Griswald, Iowa. This will be an 8-day individually directed, silent retreat based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

JUNE 23-27

COME AND SEE VOCATIONS DAYS at our Jesuit vacation spot on the Chain of Lakes near Waupaca, Wisconsin. You can travel to central Wisconsin via the Appleton airport or by driving. Either way arrive in the early evening on Saturday and travel back home on Wednesday morning. The days will be a chance to learn about Jesuit life from young Jesuits in training as well as a few more experienced Jesuits in the relaxed atmosphere of the beautiful lakes of central Wisconsin.

DISCERNMENT RETREATS

June 11-20
June 25 - July 4
July 16-25
August 2-11
September 2-7

All are 8-day retreats except for 4-day September retreat. They are individually directed, silent discernment retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius at our Jesuit Retreat House in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. These tend to fill up early, so let me know as soon as possible if you're interested.

PLEASE NOTE:

There is no charge for any of these events, and we are happy to help men with travel costs to and from these events if needed. Please contact Fr. Warren Szama, SJ, vocation director for the Wisconsin Province, if you are interested in any of these events.


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