

# VERBUM

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Saint Thomas Aquinas Seminary  
209 Tackora Trail

Ridgefield, Connecticut  
06877 U.S.A.



## BISHOP LAYS HANDS AS WORKERS LAY FOOTINGS

*"NOT SERVANTS, BUT FRIENDS" BUILD ON A FIRM FOUNDATION*



As the choir sings the Litany of the Saints, Archbishop Lefebvre kneels and the three ordinands prostrate themselves before the altar during the ordination ceremonies on November 3.

(Photo courtesy of Keith Forrest, Virginia Beach, VA)

On November 3, 1982, **Archbishop Lefebvre** ordained **Rev. Messrs. Christopher Hunter, Thomas Zapp, and Martin Skierka** to the priesthood in a ceremony at Oyster Bay Cove, New York. This event marked a major milestone in the history of the Society of St. Pius X in the United States, for these three ordinands were the first to complete their studies entirely in the American major seminary located first in Armada, Michigan, and then in its permanent location in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

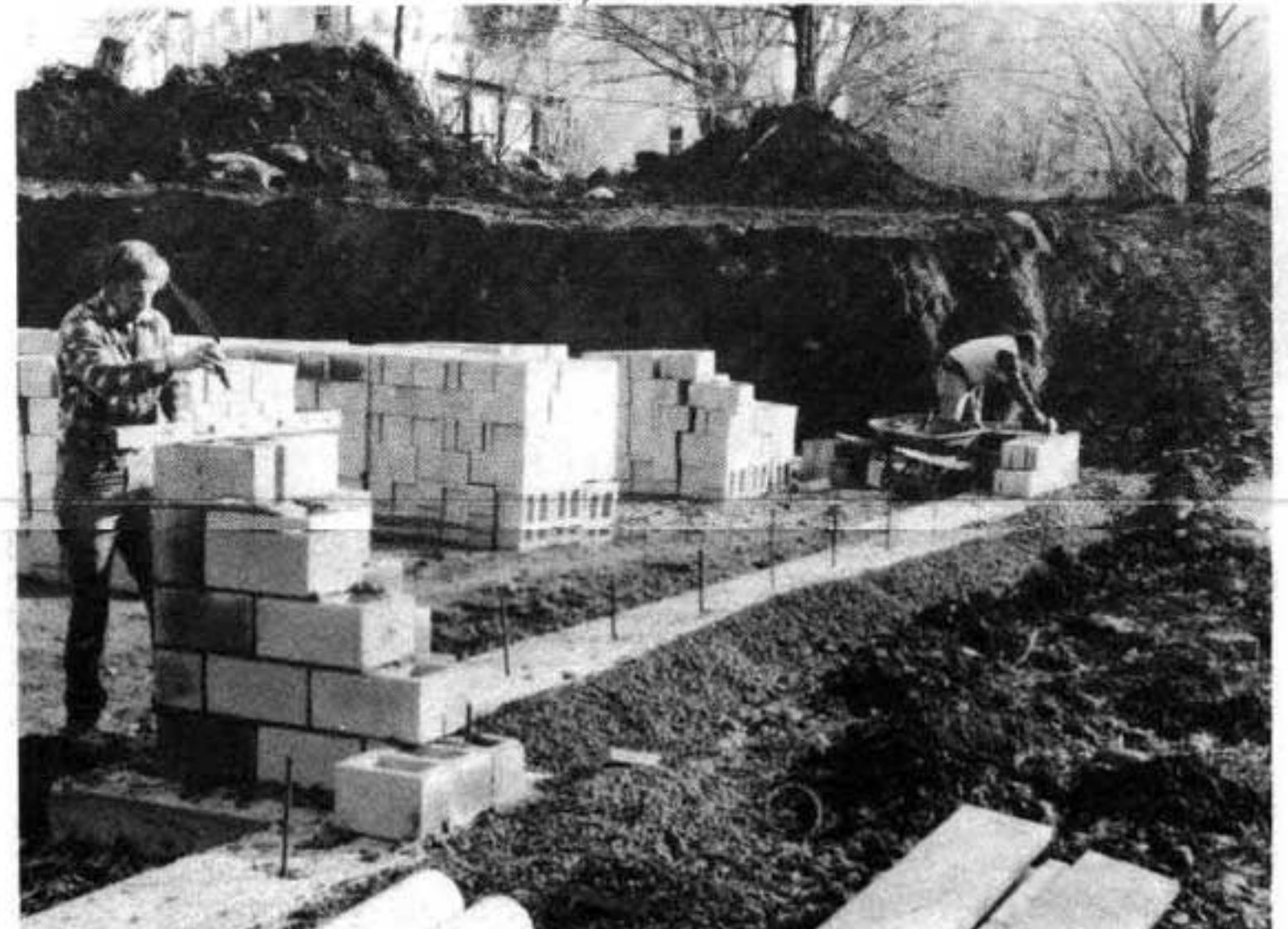
The Society has indeed come a long way from its inception in the United States in 1973, when **Father Clarence Kelly** began saying Mass for a small congregation in a Wantagh, New York, garage. In less than ten years the Society of St. Pius X has grown to be a national operation, comprising eighty-three missions served on a regular basis, and many others less regularly, in two districts. The ceremonies at Oyster Bay were of great significance to the seminary, for what these three men had begun in

Armada six years ago was coming to fruition. The work put in by the ordinands in their studies and in their spiritual lives, under the direction of **Father Donald Sanborn**, Rector of the seminary, and the professors who trained them and the spiritual directors who had guided them, was coming to its culmination. Thus the ceremonies at Oyster Bay marked an end and a beginning: an end, because this was their *finis*, their goal; a beginning, because on this day they would begin their priestly ministry, their labor in the vineyard of the Lord for the salvation of souls.

### Elaborate preparations

Bearing the importance of this occasion in mind, the seminarians took great pains to make the ceremonies on this day as well-executed as possible. Rev. Mr. Denis McMahon and Mr. Paul Riley, the masters of ceremonies, sacrificed many free hours to learn the intricate ceremonies of a Pontifical High Mass of ordina-

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Expert masons carefully cement concrete blocks on the chapel footings. Already the wall for the basement of the chapel has reached a height of seven feet in some places.

Anyone who has hiked a mountain trail knows the sensation of mounting hill after hill with the expectation of reaching the summit, only to be confronted by another hill. Similarly, seminarians kept expecting the construction of the new chapel and dormitory which would start "next week," but never seemed to come to pass, even after the building contract had been signed. We were "on the brink." Finally, on October 13, the anniversary of the miracle of the sun at Fatima, we had our own little miracle: the architect arrived with cans of spray paint and numerous stakes to mark the locations of the excavations. The following day a backhoe arrived and broke ground, at least for the electrical supply line.

The workmen had an unusual occupational hazard on their hands as they dug the utility trench: an apple tree whose roots were struck as the hoe dug down. With every jolt from the hoe, the tree showered apples on the gentleman who was shoveling sand into the ditch. At first he thought that the machine opera-

tor was deftly pelting him, but he then realized that he was experiencing a repeat of Sir Isaac Newton's apple tree episode.

**"There is a hole in the basement, dear Father"**

In the two following days the backhoe dug two deeper holes: one to hold the foundation of our new 300 kilowatt transformer (sufficient for the needs of over thirty ordinary homes), and the other to allow a hole to be put in the seminary basement for the entry of power and telephone lines. For the better part of a day a jackhammer and sledgehammer could be heard pounding at the cellar wall until a hoot of delight announced that they had broken through.

**"Tennis, nobody?"**

Meanwhile, Dennis Kosmicki and several seminarians had been hard at work tearing down the chain link fence around the tennis court. In addition, a crew of

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Archbishop Lefebvre imposes his hands on Rev. Christopher Hunter. Awaiting the imposition are Rev. Thomas Zapp and Rev. Martin Skierka, as Father Williamson (left) and Rev. Mr. Daniel Ahern, the deacon and subdeacon of the Mass, look on. (Photo courtesy of Keith Forrest, Virginia Beach, VA)

**(ordinations continued)**

tion. They spent this time researching, consulting, and distilling the knowledge contained in the various liturgical texts so that they knew every detail of the Mass, and were able to drill the copebearers (or *capellani*), the acolytes, the thurifer, the ordinands, and the ministers of the Mass in these movements. Their time was well-spent, for the priests in attendance at the Mass unanimously considered it to have been the best executed ordination Mass they had seen.

To the sacristans fell the task of preparing the "physical plant" of the ordinations. Directed by Robert Newman, sacristans John Rizzo, Anthony Tarantino, and Frederick Baldau ensured that all the vestments for the Mass were transported from the seminary to Oyster Bay and then set up properly. With the assistance of Peter Wick, the sacristans erected the throne in the sanctuary, and then, after all the ceremonies had been completed, returned the vestments and the canopy over the throne to Ridgefield.

The seminary florists, Daniel Leggin and Paul Baumberger, took great pains to arrange and set the flowers to be used in decorating the altar at Oyster Bay. This indeed was no small task, for an entirely new altar was being installed in the sanctuary, and until the night prior to the ordinations they had no idea as to how to decorate it. Aided by **Father Daniel Dolan**, they were able to put together beautiful arrangements and arrange them tastefully on the new altar.

With so many seminarians thus occupied in the ceremonies and the prepara-



Father Martin Skierka bestows his first priestly blessing on his mother, Mrs. Bernice Skierka, following the ceremonies of his ordination at Oyster Bay Cove.

tions, it was necessary for a large contingent of layfolk from choirs of missions in the East and Midwest to join the seminary schola in chanting the "Missa Brevis" of Palestrina. The Palestrina Choir, under the direction of Mr. Francis R. McGuirk, Jr., was specially selected for the occasion, and they performed admirably. Many hours of practice went into the preparation of the choir, and their diligent work paid off.

**"Tu es sacerdos in aeternum"**

At 9:00 am the ceremonies began with the procession into the chapel to the strains of the polyphonic *Lauda Sion*. After the prayers at the foot of the altar and the incensation of the altar, Archbishop Lefebvre went to the throne to recite the *Introit* of the Votive Mass of St. Joseph. After reciting the *Kyrie* alternately with the assistant deacons, Father Kelly and **Father Hector Bolduc**, and the assistant priest, Father Sanborn, the Archbishop intoned the *Gloria*, which the choir continued and concluded. Rising from the throne, His Grace sang the Collect of the Mass and the Votive Collect used in Masses of ordination. Rev. Mr. Daniel Ahern, subdeacon of the Mass, sang the Epistle, following which the choir of seminarians and **Father Joseph Collins** sang the *Gradual* and *Alleluia*.

At this point the Archbishop rose and delivered a short sermon from the Gospel side of the altar to the ordinands. In it he stressed the obligation of the priest as a pastor, or shepherd of souls, and the obligation of the priest therefore to be holy.

**(continued on page 3)**

(construction continued)

seminarians cleaned out the back porch which would be razed.

On October 18, the bulldozer arrived and set to work. Never before had such a raw display of power been demonstrated, as rocks, trees, and topsoil were crushed in the path of the mechanized marvel. Among the victims were three apple trees which had borne fruit for the first time in three years. Quick-moving seminarians removed the remaining apples from the downed trees, and Mrs. Johnston set to work turning them into applesauce and apple jelly, but not after several hours of manualia spent in peeling and coring them. Hour by hour the hole expanded and a huge pile of earth rose near the library. Mr. Jack Mueller told VERBUM that the topsoil had been over two feet deep, four times normal for this part of Connecticut. The 2,000 cubic yard stockpile will considerably reduce landscaping costs next spring and summer.

Life in the pits

Thursday, October 28, saw the demise of the service porch, where deliveries of food used to be dropped off en route to the kitchen. Seminarian John Rizzo got the surprise of his life when he looked out his window to find workmen tearing up shingles, cutting beams, and smashing plaster. While the porch was being dismantled, the cement truck arrived and began pouring the footings for the new church. As the hole was dug, so indeed would it be filled again.

The Solemn High Mass at 10:00 am on All Souls' Day had a touch of the primitive in that it was sung in a completely dark chapel. Due to the construction of the new transformer, the electricity had to be cut throughout that morning, necessitating the schola to stand in the back of the chapel and sing a capella by the light provided by the three small windows placed there. The sanctuary was completely enveloped in darkness, necessitating the use of a small hand-candle at the side of the Missal to enable Father Williamson to read the texts of the Mass.

"Shall we dance?"

That afternoon, while many seminarians were hurrying down to Oyster Bay Cove to put the final preparations of the ordinations in place, the workmen at the seminary entertained those who remained to a bizarre mechanical dance. At the area where the porch used to be, a hydraulic shovel dug the soil up and placed it where the bulldozer could push it down the hill. Deft maneuvering was called for in this two-headed ballet so that a swinging shovel would not collide with a backing bulldozer.

The seminarians, returning from Oyster Bay on November 3, beheld the concrete blocks for the basement walls of the chapel neatly stacked in the confines of the church foundation. Over the next two weeks the skilled masons cemented these huge blocks into place, and the structure rapidly began to rise. Within a few weeks this same story will be repeated for the dormitory and the classroom.

With every passing day the construction moves closer to its completion. The building of the new seminary chapel and dormitory is being captured on film by

Rev. Mr. Daniel Ahern and by Mr. Paul Baumberger. These slides and prints will be featured in each issue of VERBUM until the construction is completed. A slide show which will show in detail the progress of the building is currently being put together from the shots these intrepid photographers are taking.

The construction is going all in all quite smoothly, due primarily to the fact that the soil moved is uncommonly loose and soft. The town building inspector noted this in talking to Mr. Mueller when he said, "In Ridgefield it is difficult to dig without hitting either bog or rock ledge; you have encountered neither." In reply to this, the chief of the masonry crew stated, "It stands to reason perfectly, for we are building God's house."



READY... AIM... FIRE! Workmen direct the pouring of the concrete footings for the new seminary chapel.

St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary

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URGENT APPEAL

My dear friends in Christ,

No doubt you are spiritually enriched by the news that the Seminary has produced its first fruits in the three new priests recently ordained. You have no idea how much the entire faculty of Saint Thomas Aquinas has been fulfilled by this great event in the life of the Church.

VOCATION OUTLOOK EXCELLENT

What is more promising is that we are receiving many inquiries from young men in both the United States and Canada. At this writing, I can say that this seems to be our strongest year yet. Now our schools and parishes, by the grace of God and the fine work of many priests and religious, are producing their long awaited result: vocations.

NO ROOM FOR THEM

What will we do if we have no place for them? Our present facilities are filled. While we are in the process of building a new wing, we fall short, as yet, of the necessary funds to pay for it. If these funds do not come shortly, if I cannot have the assurance of meeting our debts by the Spring, it will be necessary for me to turn away many young men next year. I am sure that you will not have me do that.

VERY FEW HAVE ACTUALLY CONTRIBUTED

There are about 6,000 families who will read this VERBUM. So far, however, only about 350 families have contributed or pledged the \$1000 requested in the Building Fund Drive. Will all the others turn a deaf ear to the Archbishop's appeal? Will the United States and Canada be the only two countries in the world to fail to aid the Archbishop in his mission to save the Church? I doubt it.

THE TIME IS NOW

We are presently in a CRITICAL MOMENT. The Seminary must call upon all of the faithful. Please sign up for our pledge. If you cannot, please give something. We are in desperate need.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Ronald J. Sarbin

(ordinations continued)

The priest ought not to seek for happiness in the things of this world, but the true treasure which does not pass away, the reward which is eternal.

When the Archbishop had been seated on the faldstool before the altar, Father Sanborn called the ordinands to the center of the sanctuary and petitioned His Grace to ordain the three to the priesthood. "Do you know the candidates to be worthy?" asked Archbishop Lefebvre, to which Father Sanborn replied that "as far as could be judged" by human reason he knew the candidates to be worthy. His Grace, still seated, delivered a short exhortation to the candidates and another to the congregation. The candidates prostrated themselves and the Archbishop and the congregation knelt for the singing of the Litany of the Saints.

Matter . . .

Towards the end of the Litany, the Archbishop rose, took the crozier, and begged God to bless, consecrate, and sanctify in an especial manner *hos electos* — these chosen ones. After the Litany had been concluded, the ordinands rose and approached the Archbishop individually. In silence His Grace placed both of his gloved hands on the heads of each ordinand as they knelt before him. This action constitutes the *matter* of the Sacrament of Orders, and is one of the two essential parts necessary for the conferral of the Sacrament. The priests present then imposed their hands on the three as they knelt in the center of the sanctuary.

. . . and Form

His Grace then recited a prayer begging God to pour down upon the new priests the blessing of the Holy Ghost and the power of priestly grace, that they may enjoy His favor. Facing the ordinands, he sang a preface (similar to the one sung before the *Sanctus*) during which he recited the *form* of the Sacrament.

Once again the ordinands individually approached the faldstool, where the Archbishop performed the ceremony of the tradition of the vestments. The stole which the new priests had worn over the left shoulder while they were deacons was pulled over the right shoulder as well and the ends crossed above the breast. The chasubles, pinned in the back, were placed over their heads. As this was being done the choir sang *Tu es*

*sacerdos in aeternum, secundum ordinem Melchisedech — Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.*

His Grace, kneeling before the altar, intoned the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, then rose after the first verse to anoint the hands of the new priests. After each had had his hands anointed with the sacred chrism, the hands were bound together with a long piece of linen, and they approached the Archbishop once more to touch a chalice filled with water and wine and a paten with a host upon it.

After the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful, Archbishop Lefebvre intoned the *Jam non dico vos servos, sed amicos — I will not now call you servants, but friends*, the words of Our Lord to the Eleven after the Last Supper. The three new priests recited the Apostles' Creed with His Grace, and approached the faldstool again, this time to have the backs of their chasubles unpinned, and at that time they received the power to forgive sins.

The long ceremonies drew to a close, but much work remained to be done. Many of the seminarians in the ceremonies or in the choir had to rush back to Ridgefield, where Mrs. Johnston, our marvelous cook, assisted by Mrs. Elizabeth Bevillard and Miss Mary Sievers, had been preparing a meal for 158 guests, and the seminarians were to act as waiters for this banquet.

Father Sanborn spoke briefly at the end of the meal, recounting his first meetings with the newly ordained priests, and Father Kelly followed with another short address. His Grace then spoke briefly, recounting and reemphasizing the points he had made in his sermon that morning. Father Christopher Hunter spoke on behalf of the three new priests, citing the importance of good Catholic homes in the formation of priestly vocations.

All felt spiritually uplifted and thankful to God for the grace to have been part of the events of the day. For all English-speaking Catholics true to their Faith, the day was one of triumph, for behind the three new priests lay thirty-eight other seminarians in five years of study; behind these lay many more young men willing to be workers in the harvest Our Lord wishes to reap. The Faith Our Lord established will surely not die, but is certain to continue for all time, unto the salvation of many souls.

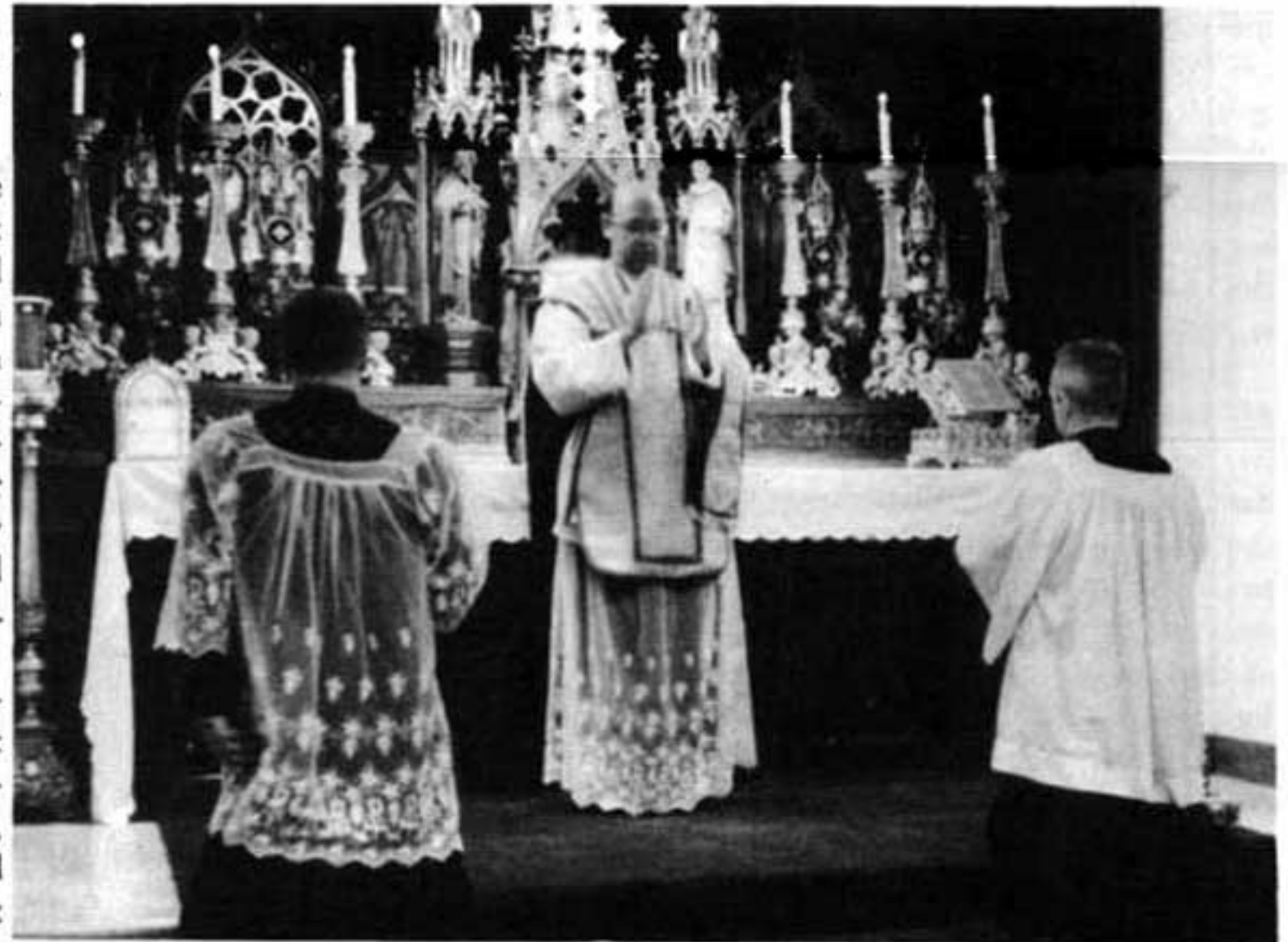
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## VOCATIONS

Anyone interested in vocations to the priesthood or the brotherhood is encouraged to contact the seminary for information. If possible, a visit to the seminary could be arranged, during which there will be opportunities to meet the seminarians and the professors, see the operations of the seminary, and to visit and pray before the Blessed Sacrament. Please write or call the seminary at the address and number given above for information on vocations to the priesthood or brotherhood in the Society of St. Pius X.



On November 4 and 5, the three new priests celebrated their first Masses. Rev. Christopher Hunter (above) and Rev. Martin Skierka (lower left) celebrated Low Masses at the main altar of the seminary chapel. Father Thomas Zapp celebrated a Solemn High Mass (lower right) on the feast of St. Charles Borromeo.

