

Led by prayer

Adrian man to become priest in August

By Mark Haney
The Catholic Times

ADRIAN — Go ahead. Ask Pat McDaid about the power of prayer.

The Adrian native will tell you about a nun he knew while in grade school. Sr. Faith, an Adrian Dominican, had a jar containing each student's name. Each student was to draw a name out of the jar and pray for that person. When she pulled a name, however, she pulled McDaid's name.

She told the son of Thomas and Nancy McDaid that she was going to pray for him to become a priest.

"I told her," McDaid said, "Oh, that is really wonderful, but really you should maybe pick another name because I'm not sure God will perform that much of a miracle because that is a long shot."

If Sr. Faith had money, she should have bet on the long shot because McDaid, 35, will be ordained a priest on Saturday, Aug. 23, at Our Lady of the Pillar in St. Louis, Mo., home of the Marianist provincialate.

The road to that ordination was winding, however.

"It started when I was growing up at St. Joseph Parish in Adrian," he said. "I think I was lucky to have many living saints around me. And I had this eagerness to learn about the faith growing up."

The biggest change came when he was in fourth grade, when he became an altar server.

"The transition from the pew to the altar was profound to me," he said.

"We could (see this coming)," said Nancy McDaid. "He mentioned it at confirmation time. The bishop always asked him, whenever he'd serve Mass for him, if he would consider becoming a priest. Every time he served for him. And every time he came to Adrian, Pat served for him. So he always had that in the back of his mind."

Pat came to enjoy the different liturgies and got support toward a vocation from both his family and from the parish, "and it was always something I thought of as a possibility," he said. "I knew I still had this deep calling to consider the priesthood, but at the time it wasn't something I'd verbalize with

my friends."

When he graduated from Adrian High School — where his dad has been a history teacher for 39 years — he considered only Catholic colleges and universities. He chose the

University of Dayton, where his older sister, Ann Marie, already was attending. He majored in political science and history, with an emphasis on education and a minor in theology.

"The entire time it was kind of funny, because in the early stages of my college career, while I was still discerning, an advisor told me the best teachers at the university were

the Marianists," Pat said. "I thought these guys are fantastic."

The Marianists also saw his potential and had been working to get him to a discernment retreat. That convinced him to try the Marianist's aspirant program, where fellow students lived together in a religious community.

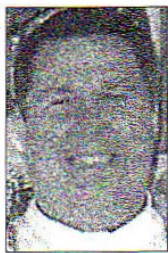
"The more and more I learned the more excitement I had," he said, "the excitement of religious life came alive for me."

"He wanted to be a teacher, like his father," said Nancy. "He went all the way through studying to be a teacher in political science, then, I think it was his junior year, he said, 'Do you see that yellow house over there' — we were at a softball game, our daughter played softball for UD, she was a pitcher — and we said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'I think I am going to live there next year.' 'Oh you are.' And he said, 'Yeah, I'm going to check out the Marianists.' We said, 'Go for it.' And so he lived there his senior year."

After graduating from U of D in 1995, he and a roommate drove to Alaska for one last adventure before entering the Marianist novitiate. After a year, he took his first vows and was assigned to teacher at Villa Angelus St. Joseph school in Cleveland.

"They gave me 150 intellectual orphans" at the inner-city school, Pat said. "Some were going there because they wanted to be there and some were there because their parents made them go. But I loved teaching the freshmen there because they were just becoming adults."

He spent five years teaching there and living at St. Aloysius, an African American parish, before making his



Pat McDaid



Patrick McDaid got to meet Pope Benedict XVI during one of his classes at the Angelicum — the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas. He kissed the pope's ring and received a blessing. *Courtesy photo*

final vows. Then came four years in Dayton, teaching American history to juniors at Chaminade Julian High School and taking philosophy courses each summer in Washington, D.C.

Then, just two days after the funeral of Pope John Paul II, he went to Rome to study at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, also known as the Angelicum. He was ordained a deacon on Saturday, Jan. 19. He will be one of six Marianists to be ordained this year. After that, he's not sure where the road will take him. He'd like to be a priest at a parish, so he can get pastoral experience. If that parish has a school, however, he

wants to continue to teach.

"One reason I decided to come to the seminary and become a priest," he said, "is the sacramental thirst our students have for the sacraments.

"I think that is where I am being called (in the schools) and that's where I want to turn my potential into reality. If I can show some young people what a joy it is to live as a religious and show them how wonderful life is as a priest, then I think I can be of great benefit."

He will leave Rome with many good memories. "By living in Rome," he said, "you realize how large the Church really is. I can see the wonder of God every day and it is not in a book, it is tangible."

He also achieved a goal during one of his canon law classes.

"At the last class the pope came and talked to them," Nancy said. "Patrick figured it all out, where he was going to stand, and when the pope came in he shook his hand. So when he went to leave, Patrick was once again in the right place. He asked the pope if he could have his blessing. And he knelt down and kissed the pope's ring and received the pope's blessing. He was the only one. He was just thrilled."

That, Pat said, is what has made the opportunity to study in Rome, so special for him.

"Rome has been the culmination of everything I ever wanted," he said, "as a history teacher and as a lover of the Church."

Looking back at the road he has taken, however, brings back memories of the people, like Sr. Faith, who helped him get here.

"I am just at a loss of thankfulness for all of the people who are and have been praying for me," he said. "One thing I'm tremendously thankful for was the sacrifices of my parents." †



Patrick McDaid was ordained a transitional deacon on Saturday, Jan. 19, at Holy Name of Mary Parish in Rome. Ordaining him is Cardinal Jean-Louis Turan. McDaid will be ordained a priest on Saturday, Aug. 23, at Our Lady of the Pillar Church in St. Louis, Mo. *Courtesy photo*