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Three are ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Springfield



By Stephen Kiltonic

SPRINGFIELD – On Saturday, June 5, St. Michael’s Cathedral here was filled with the sights and sounds of the Rite of Ordination as three natives of Poland – Piotr Jacek Pawlus, Tomasz Parzynski and Tomasz Gorny – were ordained to the Order of Priest before a crowd of nearly 800.

It was a significant day not only in their lives, but also in the annals of the Springfield Diocese, which celebrated, perhaps for the first time, the ordination of three men together from the same foreign country.

Father Gary M. Dailey, vocations director for the Springfield Diocese, said that, while the ritual of the ordination ceremony itself doesn’t change, every ordination is different because each new candidate “brings a sense of themselves to the ordination - their family, their friends who are gathered.”

“I think the common thread that they bring is that missionary spirit,” said Father Dailey. “The fact that all three of them have given up family and friends, so to speak, left their native homeland, the place where they’re comfortable and have entered into a whole different culture here in the United States,” said Father Dailey. “I believe it’s that spirit that will really help them to develop their priesthood and will help them to serve the people of God in the best way possible.

Each of the new priests reflected on what their state of mind

was as they walked down the aisle and stood before Springfield Bishop Timothy A. McDonnell. “In a few minutes, you are going to become a priest of God who is going to serve his people in the church. It’s something great. Great joy. Also, the sense of responsibility and the things that I’m honored to be a priest,” said Father Pawlus.



“It was a very moving and beautiful celebration. But today, I realize this is not a finish of the way, but the beginning of a new way,” commented Father Parzynski. “I will be serving as a priest in this area, in Springfield. I will be suffering with people. I will be distributing the sacraments for them - bringing them to God. It’s a beginning of a new life. It’s the beginning of priestly life.”

Father Gorny added, “You feel this huge amount of love that filled the cathedral today and you look at the bishop and his smile and you realize you’re here and you are becoming a priest, for real. It’s a great joy of relief on one hand, but also the joy of self-giving to others. I can finally go into the diocese and work with people as a priest.”

Father Dailey said that in the year prior to the ordination, when the candidates served as transitional deacons, the bulk of their ministry was spent in “the area of service and familiarity around the altar, as well as the sacraments of the church, in preparation for the priesthood.” He stressed that although they come from Poland, they will serve the entire Catholic community.

“They have not come to serve just our Polish ethnic parishes but in fact their formation work centered on ministry to the entire Catholic community,” said Father Dailey.

As deacons, Fathers Gorny and Pawlus served in various parishes in the Archdiocese of Detroit and around Orchard Lake, Mich., where they attended Sts. Cyril and Methodius Seminary. Father Parzynski attended St. John’s Seminary in Brighton, Mass., and assisted primarily at Immaculate Conception Parish in Holyoke.

In an interview with The Catholic Observer before the ordination, each priest reflected back on the events that led to his vocation to the priesthood. An altar server since second grade, Father Pawlus said that growing up in Zwiec, Poland, which is in the mountainous region of the country, he was accustomed to having priests around the house.

A family of priests

"In my family, there are a lot of priests, one bishop even," said Father Pawlus. "When I was small, people were asking me what I was going to be and I would say, 'A priest.'"

"I wanted to be like the priest that I see every day. It was something that I dreamed about since I was a small kid," added Father Pawlus who went into the seminary right after high school.

Father Pawlus, 29, said he prepared for the priesthood his whole life. He learned to pray and was taught other spiritual "basics" from his parents and grandparents. In high school, religious education "deepened" his faith. Deacon Pawlus credits his mother and Father Theodore, a religious education teacher and altar boy supervisor, with serving as role models.

"He (Father Theodore) always had the time for me when I was asking those tricky questions about the priesthood. My mom, she was always supportive for me and always said, 'Whatever, son, you want to do, I am with you. If you would like to become a priest, I am praying for it,'" recalled Father Pawlus. He added that the "core" of his formation was achieved through interaction with his family, school and seminary, and as a transitional deacon.

Musical path to priesthood

Father Parzynski, 29, admits that for many years he was "a little bit far from church" because his family was not what he considered "devoted" Catholics. Growing up in Lublin, Poland, music played a major role in bringing him closer to his faith and in directing him toward the priesthood.

"I was brought to the Catholic Church by organ music," said Father Parzynski. "I was the organist for many, many years and this kind of ministry showed me that priesthood is my destination."

He added that, "In my life I met a lot of priests who showed me that priesthood is something very beautiful." He mentioned Father Skovronik, his pastor as a child, Father Dailey and James Grimes, his spiritual advisor at St. John's Seminary, for serving

as his mentors.

Led by family faith

Father Gorny, 29, grew up in a "very strong Catholic family" in a "very strong Catholic community" located in Kozy, in the southern part of Poland. His hometown is only about 12 miles from Wadowice, the birthplace of Pope John Paul II. An altar boy since age 7, Father Gorny said one of his uncles, a priest, was a role model along with his great-aunt and great-grandmother. His mother died when he was very young.



"They brought me to church and introduced me to the Catholic faith," said Father Gorny, along with Father Marek Warchinski, who "encouraged me to go follow Christ. On the way there were people who encouraged me to do it and in my life I've been blessed to have many of them."

Father Gorny also expressed gratitude to the Dominican Sisters and the Sisters of Visitation in Tyringham, who he said prayed constantly for the three deacons.

"I was privileged to go there before my ordination to say thank you to them," Father Gorny said. "They are like a charger for the priesthood. They are charges for my vocation. Through their prayers and their sacrifice, priests can sustain and be healthy priests."

Goals of priesthood

As far as what each ultimately would like to accomplish in his new role as a priest, Father Pawlus wishes to be more active in youth ministry, especially with the Boy Scouts, an area he had experienced while in Poland.

Father Parzynski said, "My goal serving as a priest should be proclaiming the good news about confession and the Eucharist, about the very presence of Jesus in the sacrament of the Eucharist, and about his forgiving power in the sacrament of reconciliation. People sometimes hide themselves thinking God is far away. But God is here on the altar. God is here in the confessional."



"The only goal I would love to accomplish is to be always mindful of this: In persona Christi, 'Be always in the person of God,'" said Father Gorny. "I'm not a priest for the Polish community. I'm not a priest for the Spanish community. I'm a priest for the Catholic Church. And wherever there will be a need, I'll be thankful to go."

Two members from each of the new priest's immediate family were able to see the ordination ceremony in person as the result of a special fund-raiser.

"These men and their families have very little resources in Poland and it's very expensive to fly a number of people from Poland here to the United States," said Father Dailey. "I reached out to some of our parishes, particularly our Polish parishes throughout the diocese. The people and the priests of those parishes were so generous."

Father Dailey said he believes that because the family members will attend, an "even greater spirit" will be present at the ordination itself.

In this, the Year for Priests, each deacon will attempt to follow in the footsteps of St. John Vianney, named the Universal Patron of Priests, by Pope Benedict XVI.

First assignments

As is the tradition at the Ordination Mass, Springfield Bishop Timothy A. McDonnell announced the newly-ordained priests' first assignments as parochial vicars. Father Parzynski will be serving at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish in Springfield;

Father Gorny is assigned to Holy Trinity Parish in Greenfield; and Father Pawlus will be serving with the new Catholic community in Easthampton, which will be established July 1.

Each will be saying his first Mass this weekend, Father Parzynski first, in Spanish, at the St. Jude Mission of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish in Indian Orchard on Saturday, June 5 at 6 p.m. and on Sunday, June 6, at 9 a.m. at Divine Mercy Parish in Three Rivers; Father Pawlus at 1 p.m. at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Springfield; and Father Gorny at 2 p.m. at Holy Trinity Parish in Greenfield.

A special segment on the ordination liturgy will be broadcast on the weekly newsmagazine "Real to Reel" on June 5, at 7 p.m. on WWLP-22NEWS.

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