

Men learn about daily lives of priests, seminarians

Chris Cook's grandfather and uncle both thought about becoming priests. Each joined the seminary before falling in love and getting married. Now at the age of 13, Chris feels a calling to the priesthood and he thinks the third time could be a charm.

On April 2, Father Gerard Francik, director of vocations for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and Andrew Veveiros, associate director, took seven men, ages 13 to 23, on a journey into the lives of priests and seminarians during the sixth annual V.I.P. Day (vocations in progress).

"I've learned a lot about the priesthood, and I enjoyed hearing stories from the seminarians," said Chris, a parishioner of Our Lady of the Fields, Millersville. "It's nice to see that God has a plan for all of us."

Father Francik took the men on a tour of Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Emmitsburg; St. Mary's Seminary and University, Roland Park; and the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Homeland. The men were given time to have lunch and talk with some of the seminarians at Mount St. Mary's Seminary.

"We have seen how seminarians live and spend their days," said Kevin Ewing, a parishioner of St. John the Evangelist, Hydes. "I learned what it takes to get through the training process."

The men attended the Archdiocesan Chrism Mass at the cathedral and afterward were greeted by Cardinal William H. Keeler.

"When you see the church packed at the Mass it opens your eyes to the richness of the church," said Father Francik. "I hope that they are open to discernment and that they open themselves to God's purpose."

Kevin, 19, and Chris, 13, said they enjoyed praying at the grotto at Mount St. Mary's Seminary, and Kevin said he felt honored to be standing where Pope John Paul II knelt down to pray when he visited St. Mary's Seminary.

"I decided to come because I have been feeling that God has been calling me to the priesthood, and I wanted to learn more," said Kevin, a freshman at the University of Maryland, College Park. "This prepares me for what lies ahead if I make this decision."

Kevin said he thinks there is a misunderstanding of how priests live since parishioners normally only see their parish priests for an hour each week. This day helped him to see how priests fill their days and "what goes on behind the scenes."

"We have planted the seeds," said Father Francik. "This experience will only make them better Catholic men."