

Diocese steps ahead in Hispanic ministry

By KATHRINE PATTON

JACKSON – Stu Palmer will bring his years of experience in Hispanic ministry to the Diocese of Cheyenne in a new capacity.

Bishop Ricken has asked Palmer, of Our Lady of the Mountains in Jackson, to serve as the contact person for the bishop and the Diocesan Pastoral Council in Region XIII.

Palmer has been involved with Hispanic ministry in his parish, which has helped many migrants.

Palmer said that as “we embrace our Catholic Hispanic community we can stay true to the Church and its teachings by reaching out to the marginalized, the disenfranchised and those who are being taken advantage of.”

“Jesus might just be that

person standing before us looking for help, and we, as Catholics are called to address the need and not to ignore it.”

Palmer’s first task will be to find a way to gather information in the diocese about Hispanic presence, what the Church is doing already, and what pastoral plans are in place at each location. He will then be responsible for planning a recommended strategy to present to the Bishop and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. This will also include networking in preparation for a strategic plan as part of the future Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

Palmer said this plan will allow the diocese “the ability to be in the loop of having effective Hispanic Ministry in the United States.” He will distribute a survey to the pastors of parishes to ascertain what

programs are in place right now for the Hispanic parishioner and to quantify how many parishioners may speak English, are bilingual or monolingual Spanish speaking. He will share the results of the survey with pastors to bring awareness of the needs of the parish community. Palmer said the survey should be coming out as soon as July. The council will determine how the diocese can meet Hispanic needs, whether it is through catechesis, liturgical ministry, adult formation or migrant ministry.

He said that four areas of focus will be ministry to youth and young adults and their vocation priesthood and religious life; developing finances to maintain and keep Hispanic ministries alive and viable; to maintain the presence of the bishop throughout the dia-

logue process; and to establish diocesan directors of Hispanic ministry much like the diocese has a stewardship director or youth director.

“We have aligned ourselves with a Salt Lake City Regional Director of Hispanic Ministry to develop some resources for our parish priests, including Spanish language books with lists of area immigration attorneys and a list of resources for individual parishes so that we can be more effective advocates for our Hispanic brothers and sisters,” he said. “As we welcome them into our parishes we need to provide ministry which will best serve their needs.”

Palmer said that Hispanics are adding to the parish in a positive way with their culture, their hard work, their strong faith and their strong fam-

ily values. The traditional Hispanic Catholic family is very pro-life and their roots are in the Catholic Church.

While some Protestant churches meet various social and some religious needs of Hispanic migrants, Palmer explained that these newcomers still have strong ties to the Catholic Church. He went on to illustrate this with a story of four brothers who had come to Jackson. One remained in the Catholic Church, and the others went to different denominational churches. Whenever they came together, the men always argued about their beliefs, but all of them would attend the Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration in the Catholic Church.

“It is something they can’t get that anywhere else,” Palmer said. Through the pastoral plan, he expected the diocese

will be able to not only meet the needs of immigrants by providing support and assistance for their lives, but will help them obtain the fullness of their faith tradition. This will allow Hispanic Catholics to remain strong to their faith while obtaining a higher quality of life.

Some Hispanics know how to speak English, they do not know how to read and write the language. They don’t have the time to learn because they are working so hard to provide for their families. Knowing English, he said, is essential to getting higher better paying jobs. He said that the Hispanic family has the same desires that everyone has - including a good education for their children and good meaningful jobs of which they can be proud.

Jackson fundraiser aids diaconate program

Enrollment at 35 men

By KELSEY DAYTON

JACKSON - It might have been a calling they have heard for years, echoing around them. Or, it might have been a whisper that only recently was spoken.

But almost 40 Wyoming men will be answering the summoning to be a deacon during the next five years and a Jackson couple decided they wanted to do what they could to make sure those called by God could answer his request.

Two life-long Catholics, Cherrie and Robin Siegfried of Jackson, decided to host a dinner at their Wilson Ranch on June 12 to help raise funds for the Wyoming diaconate program. Nani’s Italian restaurant donated all the food for the \$500 a plate affair that brought more than 30 people. All of the money raised will go the program which will allow deacons to train in Wyoming during the next five years.

“(A deacon) is really a member of the clergy, he really

lives his life among the laity,” said Father Joe Geders of Jackson. “I think it’s a tremendous witness and brings more people to Christ.”

Deacons do a lot of the pastoral outreach that priests aren’t able to fit into their schedules. They visit the sick and take on projects to help the poor.

Their role in the Catholic Church has become increasingly important as fewer men enter the priesthood.

“If they sent 20 new deacons, I could put them all to work today,” Father Geders said.

The Siegfrieds understood the need for deacons at Our Lady of the Mountains in Jackson where three deacons serve. When they heard about the program and four local men who wanted to join, they wanted to find a way to help.

“(Deacons) come out and are able to help the priests greatly and the communities they are serving,” Robin Siegfried said.

Cherrie Siegfried was

touched when she heard about the men willing to give up their weekends, pay their travel expenses, study hard and then give the rest of their lives to serving the church.

“I just thought we have got to do something,” she said.

Deacons are crucial because they know what it is like to be a regular person, struggling to balance family life, work and church.

“With deacons the word and faith can be shared more one-on-one,” she said.

“And the priests are extended beyond capacity.”

Normally, Wyoming Catholics who were training for the diaconate had to travel to Denver every other weekend for four years.

While the arduous commitment didn’t deter everyone, it did limit the number who took on commitment. In 2007, Bill Hill of Jackson, was the only person from Wyoming to complete the four year program. At his May ordination he joined two other deacons in the Jackson parish and 19 others in Wyoming. The year before, only two Wyoming men com-

pleted training, said Deacon Rolland Raboin of Torrington, who is coordinating the Wyoming program.

Offering a formation program more locally is something the Diocese has been exploring for about 10 years, said Father Ray Rodriguez, of Pine Bluffs, who also is the vocation director for the diocese.

Needs such as outreach to the poor and sick weren’t being met in Wyoming. The impact of even 20 new deacons in a few years will be felt throughout the Catholic community, he said.

Already 35 people have enrolled in the program and several others have expressed interest. There are a spectrum of ages and backgrounds, and all have already showed an extreme amount of commitment to the church, Rodriguez said.

The decline in distance will be the biggest factor, Raboin said. For some communities a trip to Denver and back can be 1,000 miles. The new program will be based in Casper, providing a smaller burden on people with families, jobs and other responsibilities, he said.

“Just look at the logistics,” Hill said. “From (Jackson) to Denver is a nine hour drive. From (Jackson) to Casper is five hours.”

There were many weekends during his training that Interstate 90 was closed and he had to find longer, alternate routes to get to Denver.

One time all the passes were closed and it took more than 16 hours, Hill said.

“Many men, who were good outstanding men, could not make it and sacrifice the time and expense,” Raboin said.

“As a consequence of going forward with the program here, we have a tremendous number of men - and very good men, entering into the formation.”

The program will be run by St. Meinard School of Theology based in St. Meinard, Ind. The school will send teachers to Casper once a month for a full weekend of studies.

“Instead of bringing the class to the teacher, we’re bringing the teacher to the class,” he said.

The entire program for five years is budgeted at more than \$400,000, but after grants, the

Diocese only had to raise about \$200,000. Before the Siegfried’s dinner, about \$147,000 had been raised.

“We’ve committed ourselves to coming up with the money,” Rodriguez said. “We have to do it somehow.”

He said the rest would most likely come from another collection, which is how the first chunk of money was raised.

In the mean time, training is already underway for Wyoming’s new deacons.

Potential deacons started the aspirancy program in January. They will spend the year focusing on spiritual development and growth, working to discern if moving forward in the process is the right path for them. In February of 2008, those who decide to continue in their training will come to Casper for their first class.

“That’s when they will be up to their eyeballs in seminary training,” Deacon Raboin said.

The program is a one time endeavor. After the class is ordained in 2012, Wyoming will return to relying on the Denver program, Raboin said.