

**Something greater to live for**

***CCHS graduate to be ordained Oratorian priest in May***

by MARY B. WORTHINGTON

correspondent

TORONTO — A couple of months after his graduation from Charlotte Catholic High School in 1999, Michael Eades found himself at the top of the Empire State Building in New York City.

From there, he looked down upon the people and cars below and realized he could not distinguish between who was wearing Abercrombie & Fitch or driving the nicest car — “things many teens care so much about,” he said.

“At that height, that really didn’t matter. I began to imagine what God could see from heaven,” he said, and he asked himself, “What am I living for?”

Although he had been a star high school athlete who aspired to play college basketball, Eades recalled attending Charlotte Hornets games and thinking about what an NBA player does at the end of the season.

“Somehow I used to think, once one reaches the height of the basketball world, then what does one do the next day?” he said. “Is what we are living for going to last forever or not? There has to be something greater to live for.”

Eades, a native of Oxford, Ohio, who grew up in Charlotte and attended St. Gabriel Church, called those reflective moments in his life a “tremendous grace” in his spiritual journey toward what he is living for today: the Catholic priesthood.

Ordained a transitional deacon July 14, Deacon Eades will be ordained to the priesthood for the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri in Toronto, Canada, May 26.

“A vocation is a gift for the whole church,” said Deacon Eades, referring to being ordained outside of the Diocese of Charlotte.

Deacon Eades attributes his spiritual growth and vocational call to the influence of his parents and priests — notably, Father Ray Williams, pastor of St. Mary, Mother of God Church in Sylva, who had served as chaplain at Charlotte Catholic.

While in high school, Deacon Eades considered becoming an investment banker, politician or lawyer, but soon realized he wanted to fulfill his desire to serve the church through the priesthood.

“I began to think there was nothing higher or more noble than the Catholic priesthood — without priests, there would be neither the Eucharist nor confession,” said Deacon Eades.

In college, his attitude toward the priesthood changed from “a glorious idea for others” to “it’s for me.”

After two years of studying philosophy and economics at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Ind., Deacon Eades became a seminarian for the Diocese of Charlotte and completed his studies — earning a licentiate in philosophy — from Catholic University of America

During his time at Catholic University, Deacon Eades discovered the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, a congregation of Catholic priests and lay brothers who live together in community and are bound together by no formal vows, but only by the bond of charity.

London-born Cardinal John Henry Newman founded the English community of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in 1848.

Having both an interest in St. Philip and Cardinal Newman, Deacon Eades entered the novitiate at the Toronto oratory in 2004 where he “found his home.”

The congregation has about 70 oratories around the world, but Deacon Eades was drawn to the Toronto oratory because of its founder, Oratorian Father Jonathan Robinson.

“His understanding of the principles of the spiritual life and his diagnosis of the current difficulties facing the church deeply impressed me,” said Deacon Eades.

“I wanted to be formed in the house he built with its care for the Latin liturgy, the seriousness of its life of prayer and the combination of parish work and teaching,” he said.

Deciding to pursue the priesthood in his early 20s was important to Deacon Eades.

“We only have so much time in our life — why put God off?” he said. “Those who enter when they are young ... can live for Christ more single mindedly.”

“God desires our happiness,” said Deacon Eades. “If God made you to do something, it’s in your best interest to do it. You don’t lose anything when you give your life to God ... much depends on when we respond or not.”

To young people considering calls to the priesthood or religious life, Deacon Eades recommends they “be generous with Jesus — in prayer, spiritual reading and confession. He cannot be outdone in generosity.”

After his priestly ordination May 26, Deacon Eades will celebrate his first public Mass — in the extraordinary form — at the Toronto oratory May 27.

He will return to the Diocese of Charlotte and celebrate Mass in the ordinary form at his home parish of St. Gabriel Church in Charlotte June 20.

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