



Rev. Frank Yacobi (Father Frank) talks to parishioners after Mass at St. Joseph's Church in York.

Meeting
'girls' at
school helped
to delay
Rev. Yacobi's
decision to
become a
priest

FATHER FRANK

By DEBORAH GRACE
Dispatch/Sunday News

The Rev. Frank Yacobi felt the call to the priesthood when he was just a six-or-seven-year-old boy.

But just to make sure the priesthood was for him, he asked his mother this question: "If I became a priest, could I still roller skate and tap dance?"

She assured him he could, so that cinched it for him, he said.

Still, it took "Father Frank"

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the seminary.

But he doesn't regret the long, and at times, wayward journey that brought him to the priesthood in 1990.

His experience as a wage-earner, businessman and single man in society, allowed him to make the decision to become a

as he is now called by parishioners at St. Joseph's Church in York, until the age of 32 to enter

priest "totally free" of any doubts, he said.

Half the men entering the Capuchin Order of St. Francis are older men, said the Rev. Gary Powell, communication director for the province of St. Augustine in Pittsburgh.

"It used to be if you thought about the priesthood, you would go to an all-boys prep (high) school, then on to seminary, but those days are over," Powell said.

Powell, a priest for 30 years,

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■ FATHER

Delayed plans to be a priest

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said he suspects those entering the priesthood late, have thought about it all along, like Yacobi, but didn't act on it for one reason or another.

'And there were girls': Yacobi planned to follow that plan exactly: go to an all-boys high school, then enter the seminary.

But his family moved into the south suburbs of Chicago and he ended up going to a co-ed high school "and there were girls," he said.

"And there were girls," he said again, smiling, delighting in the memory.

"It made me rethink my plans," he said.

By the time he entered college, all plans to enter the seminary had fallen to the wayside, he said.

He began at Northern Illinois University as an art major, then quickly switched to business. After college, he was drafted

into the Army, trained as an infantryman and then, because of his business education, was assigned to administrative work at Fort Hood, Texas.

After the Army, he started working as a bartender, "mostly to get back a social life," he said.

During that time, his attendance at Mass was irregular, he said.

A breakup with a longtime girlfriend prompted him to think about his future and where he wanted to be in 10 years, he said.

"I decided to get back to basics, and started going to church again. I would just go in and sit there for about 15 or 20 minutes. I would just sit there, and sit there and feel what it was like to be a Catholic in church again," he said.

He started going to Mass again regularly and became actively involved in the parish.

He mentioned his interest in the priesthood to the pastor, wrote for information and then met a Capuchin Friar at a retreat he attended.

Trying it on: In 1982 he entered the Capuchin postulancy — a period of time (usually a year) that a person becomes affiliated with a religious order on

an inquiry basis.

Yacobi studied theology at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. and was ordained a deacon in May 1989. He was ordained a priest June 2, 1990 in Pittsburgh.

Off to New Guinea: His first official assignment as a priest was in New Guinea, where the Capuchins, at the request of the Holy Father, established a mission in 1956. There he spent 15 months traveling in the bush country in the Southern Highlands Province, celebrating Mass, performing baptisms, weddings and confirmations in the 15 outlying villages.

All toll, he spent about three years in New Guinea, he said.

When he joined the staff at St. Joseph's Church in York in February, he found that fellow priests Ben Regotti and Victor Kriley had also worked in New Guinea.

Yacobi, who celebrates the 5:30 p.m. Mass on Saturday and 7:30 a.m. Mass Sunday, said the people of the parish have made him feel welcome and he loves the area.

As for his restaurant and management skills, well they're not going to waste, he said. "I'll be flipping sausages at the carnival this year."

About Capuchins:

■ Who they are: Capuchins are members of a religious order of men founded by St. Francis of Assisi in 1209.

Members take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The order now has three branches called Friars Minor, Friars Minor Conventuals and Friars Minor Capuchins.

■ What they believe: Capuchins follow the rule of St. Francis, which is to live a simple life of piety and poverty. Capuchins who are ordained priests are referred to as friars, while unordained Capuchins are called brothers.

■ Names: In England, friars were named after the colors of their habits. Franciscan friars were referred to as the gray friars, while Capuchin friars got their name from the pointed hoods they wore.

■ Friars vs. monks: The term friar was used to describe members of religious orders of men who originally lived only as beggars. Friars differ from monks who live in monasteries and strive to withdraw from the world.

The friar strives to be free of worldly goods and lives a life of service to others.

■ Numbers: There are 2,000 Capuchins in the United States and 15,000 worldwide.