

PRIEST PROFILE

# Pastor, chaplain says priesthood only career he ever considered

*This is one in an occasional series of profiles on priests, brothers and sisters of the Diocese of Orlando. Father Christopher A. Hoffmann answered questions for Christine Dore, an intern in the diocesan Communications Office.*



Father Christopher Hoffmann

**Q:** What did you do before becoming a priest?

**A:** I was in college at Marquette (Milwaukee), then I went to seminary.

**Q:** When did you know you wanted to be a priest?

**A:** I had thought about becoming a priest since I was 8 years old. I never seriously thought about other careers. I committed to the idea in college.

**Q:** Why did you become a priest?

Was it an easy decision?

**A:** It was not hard. I had been thinking about it my whole life. I have always wanted to serve God, to help his people. I knew there were different possibilities. The priesthood was more than what I saw on Sundays — priests as teachers, etc., different possibilities.

**Q:** What would you do if you had not become a priest?

**A:** I'd be a stockbroker. I'm good with numbers. I like business, investing.

FATHER HOFFMANN

**Assignment:** Pastor, Holy Redeemer Parish, Kissimmee, effective June 29. He has served as military chaplain for the U.S. Air Force Reserves for 22 years.

**Born:** July 6, 1960

**Birthplace:** Milwaukee

**Family:** Oldest of three boys. Parents reside in Deltona.

One brother remains in Wisconsin. The other brother lives in Atlanta.

**Schools:** Marquette, Milwaukee; St. Meinrad, St. Meinrad, Ind.; St. Mary's Seminary and University, Baltimore.

**Honors:** Awards, ribbons, and medals from the U.S. Air Force Reserves and Knight of the Year by the Knights of Columbus.

pect of being a priest?

**A:** Being a public person. Everything you are and do is available for people to observe. I am conscious of the fact that everything is possibly public.

**Q:** What is your greatest joy?

**A:** Seeing people, assisting them through counseling (whether for grief, personal issues, marriage prep, etc.) and seeing it work out. Just being able to bring God's mercy, grace and love to people and seeing them use it.

**Q:** What is your greatest disappointment?

**A:** Too many people and problems, but not enough of him (Christ).

**Q:** What is your description of the ideal priest?

**A:** Someone who loves God, has a love for the church, cares for people, has a sense of humor, willing to be flexible, caring and compassionate.

**Q:** What stereotypes do people have about priests that should be discarded?

**A:** Two types — negative view due to the sex scandals, trust issues. People put priests on a pedestal, expecting them to not have any problems, to be "super-human." Priests are human first and foremost, they have problems, too; they put theirs aside to help others. Maybe that is why people think they do not have any problems.

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SISTER PROFILE

# Faith-filled family inspires woman to sisterhood

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didn't have much, but we always had enough to give to someone else.

**Q:** What would you do if you had not become a nun?

**A:** I would have gone into business, financial work. I love to raise money for the poor. Would be a teacher in some way, probably would have gotten married and had kids — whatever God would have sent me to do.



Sister Teresa McElwee

**Q:** What did you do before becoming a sister?

**A:** I worked at Woolworth (discount store) in high school. I entered the convent after high school at 17 years old. But during the summer after graduation and before entering the convent, I worked as a secretary to the president of Lansdale Steel and Iron.

**Q:** When did you know you wanted to be a nun?

**A:** It was in me for a long time. I attended Mass daily, was involved in the Ladies Sodality on Tuesday nights. Inspiration to join the sisterhood came from my wonderful faith-filled family.

**Q:** Why did you become a nun? Was it an easy decision?

**A:** It was an easy decision. I came from an Irish Catholic family and was taught from a young age to reach out to the community. We

office has begun plans to replace me. I am excited because they are taking control of the office; the powerful board of directors will get changes made.

**Q:** What is your description of the ideal sister?

**A:** One who walks and talks with the people; one who delivers the Gospel in actions and words; one who understands and has a listening ear and one who has the same problems as the people.

**Q:** What stereotypes do people have about sisters that should be discarded?

**A:** Years ago people only saw nuns as people who prayed all day. The habit seemed preventive. People put us on a pedestal, when we were just like them. Today, with the lack of the habit, people seem more open and accepting of nuns as people just like them.

**Q:** Who was most surprised by your vocation?

**A:** My father John — he said no at first. He didn't want me to go. I was one of his favorite girls. We were very close and he couldn't see me becoming a nun. My mother,

Helena, was not surprised by my vocation. She was thrilled and delighted and was very supportive. It was hard for my father to let go. On the Feast of Corpus Christi he said "yes." When he was sure I was happy, so was he.

**Q:** What ministries do you most enjoy working with?

**A:** At the Justice and Peace office we have many different projects and ministries. I have been with them for more than 30 years. I saw great need. I want to empower the people we serve.

**Q:** What is your pet project? Can you tell us about it?

**A:** Kids in Motion. Every afternoon from 3 to 6 p.m., kids are taught by staff and volunteers. We offer English, creative writing, reading, poetry, story telling, math, language arts, dance and music. We go on field trips — Orlando Historical Museum, Sea World, Orlando Science Center, local parks, storytelling sessions in the library.

It promotes a love of learning through a fun atmosphere. If kids develop a love of learning and a genuine curiosity for the world at a young age that pattern will continue throughout their lives and will

SISTER MCELWEE

**Order:** Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

**Assignment:** Director, Justice and Peace Office, Apopka

**Born:** Oct. 22, 1929

**Birthplace:** Chester, Pa.

**Family:** One of five girls

**Schools:** St. Michael Catholic School, Chester; Notre Dame High School, Moyland, Penn.; Trinity University, Washington (then Trinity College); Columbia University, New York; Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.; and the University of Maryland.

**Honors:** Honorary degrees from Trinity University and Rollins College, Winter Park. McElwee believes helping found the Justice and Peace Office is a great honor as well as her upcoming 60th anniversary in October as a sister.

open up many doors to them.

**Q:** What do you do on your days off?

**A:** I love to read. I enjoy getting some peace and quiet in this crazy world we live in. I like traveling, seeing new places and learning from them, museums, colleges, culture. I like to go and see and learn. I also write poetry. ■