

Calling answered; priest returns home to say first Mass

By Wendy Lee

A Member of the Staff

Parishioners filed into Guardian Angels Church on Sunday just as they would have any other morning for Mass — in suits and dresses, on the arms of family members and friends.

Greeted by the harmony of the church choir perched high in a balcony, they filled rows of wooden pews adorned with white ribbons and bows. They sang hymns and said prayers facing a white marble altar next to tall ivory candles and chrysanthemums.

But when the silver-haired man with the square, tortoise-colored glasses stepped down from behind the altar, the service took on a special meaning. The newly ordained Rev. John J. Schutty, cloaked in maroon and off-white vestments, celebrated his first Mass of Thanksgiving at the church that he attended as a boy growing up in Kansas City.

"It seems that it's taken me 31 years of being a Christian Brother (a Roman Catholic teaching order) to become a Roman Catholic priest," Father Schutty, 51, told parishioners, many who came from out of town to

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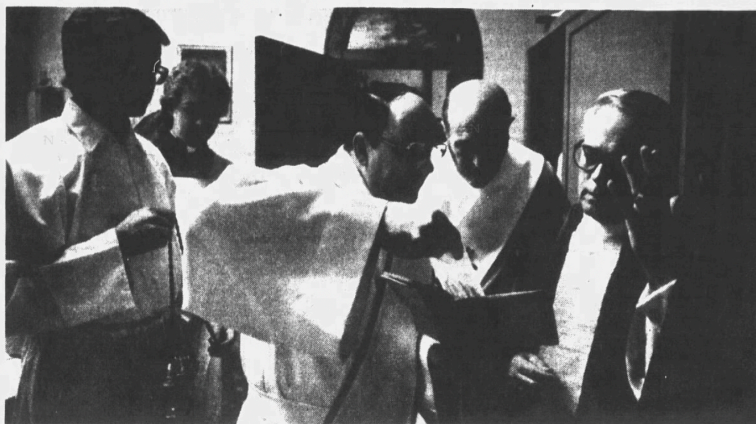
— the Rev. John J. Schutty, newly ordained priest

attend the Sunday service at 1310 Westport Road. "It is with such joy I see these people this morning."

Father Schutty was ordained Saturday at St. Peter's Church in Jefferson City. He attended Guardian Angels School and was a member of the Brothers of the Christian Schools for 31 years, teaching in Kansas City, Minneapolis, Chicago, St. Louis and St. Joseph, among other cities.

Among the courses he taught were speech and drama, religion and typing.

But Father Schutty said he believed it was God's calling that he eventually become a priest. In the



Fred Blocher/Bell

The Rev. John J. Schutty (right) goes over the order of the service for the 11:30 Mass on Sunday at Guardian Angels Church with Deacons Jerry Stoetzer and Paul Carson (second from right). At left is

Jim Bender, who holds the censer for the service. Father Schutty was a seventh-grader at Guardian Angels School in 1946, and after being ordained Saturday, said his first Mass at the church.

fall of 1980 he entered the Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wis., and completed his studies there in December 1982.

"There was always something in my life that said I should study for

the priesthood," Father Schutty said. "I had done everything as a brother I could do. I felt I could do more" as a priest, he said.

Father Schutty said he chose to have the service at Guardian Angels

Church because he considers it his "home church."

"I grew up in this parish," he said.

"My father lives in this parish."

The service was at times emotional for Father Schutty, who now lives

in Kirksville, Mo. As he acknowledged the presence of about a dozen of his former schoolmates and teachers from Guardian Angels School, he nearly burst into tears and could not

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finish his sentence.

"I was remembering . . . really everything we had done as kids," he said at a brunch at the school after the service. "The fact of my being ordained brought these people together. It's a great joy to know people can still come together no matter how far we move."

The reunion was organized by a handful of Father Schutty's former classmates — including Sheila Savidge of Raytown and Richard Hauber of Overland Park — who had contacted the rest of the group by telephone and planned the surprise.

Among the several hundred people attending were Dennis Noel of Minneapolis, who had been a student of Father Schutty. "He's been a good friend," Mr. Noel said. "He's lots of fun. I felt very happy for him."

Two of Father Schutty's former teachers, who are Benedictine Sisters in Atchison, Kan., also were there to congratulate him. Sister Theophane Reinecke taught Father Schutty during fourth through sixth grades.

Sister Beatrice Domann, who taught Father Schutty during second and third grades, said: "It was a joyful day . . . I enjoyed it immensely because I knew John so well. He was always very polite at the altar and very dependable."

After he finished at Guardian Angels School, Father Schutty began studying for the priesthood at Immaculate Conception Seminary in Con-

ception, Mo. But after a couple of months he left the seminary and enrolled in what was formerly the De La Salle Military Academy. He graduated in 1950 with the rank of captain.

"I just couldn't get the Latin," he said, explaining his reason for leaving the seminary. "It just didn't work."

Father Schutty attended the University of Missouri-Kansas City and graduated with a major in theater. On Saturday, he was ordained for the Diocese of Jefferson City, Mo., and plans to serve somewhere in central Missouri.