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July 12, 2007

Cardinal Stritch opens St. Clare Center

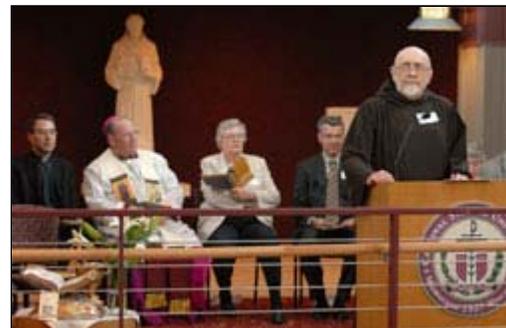
Formation center will prepare laity for church ministries

By Tom Jozwik

Special to your Catholic Herald

MILWAUKEE — Cardinal Stritch University's new lay ministry center is one of the few such centers in America to focus its student training on formation requirements outlined by the U.S. Catholic bishops.

The university's St.



Clare Center for Lay Ministry Formation officially opens in August. Laypersons wishing to serve the Catholic Church professionally will be able to work toward certification and degrees through the center. Planning for the center began in April 2006, and last month Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan presided at its dedication.

Capuchin Fr. Niles Kauffman, coordinator of human and spiritual formation at Cardinal Stritch University, offers a Franciscan proclamation during the dedication of the St. Clare Center for Ministry Formation, which is located at the Milwaukee Catholic university, June 12. Pictured behind Fr. Kauffman are Fr. Jerry Herda, left to right, Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, Franciscan Sr. Mary Lea Schneider, president of Cardinal Stritch, and Dan Scholz, chair of the religious studies department. (Catholic Herald photo by Sam Lucero)

In their 2005 document on lay ministries, “Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord,” the U.S. bishops state that, like ordained ministers, “lay ecclesial ministers ... need and deserve formation of high standards, effective methods and comprehensive goals.”

The St. Clare Center aims to address the bishops’ concerns as it prepares men and women to work as parish directors, youth ministers and business managers, among other ministries.

“We do have a core curriculum at all levels, in biblical studies, church history/theology, systematic theology and pastoral theology,” said Dan Scholz, program director and coordinator of academic formation for the center. “So, all students, regardless of the specific ministries they are pursuing, will have courses like ‘Introduction to the Old and New Testament,’ ‘Catholic social teaching,’ ‘Theology of church,’ ‘Introduction to ministry, liturgy and sacraments,’ etc.”

Jean Marie Weber and Franciscan Fr. Niles Kauffman are assisting Scholz, who also chairs the Stritch religious studies department. Weber is coordinator of pastoral formation and Fr. Kauffman is coordinator of human and spiritual formation.

The center’s instructors are from Stritch’s 26-member religious studies department and include several former Saint Francis Seminary professors. The seminary served as the archdiocese’s main lay ministry training ground before ending its academic programs last year. Scholz anticipates that the majority of area residents wishing to study for lay ministries will now do so at the St. Clare Center.

In conjunction with the center, the religious studies department is offering a formation certificate in lay ministry. Working toward this certificate, prospective lay ministers can specialize in urban ministry, youth ministry, and adult/family ministry.

The religious studies department also grants degrees: an associate of arts in religious studies/lay ministry, a bachelor’s in religious studies and master’s degrees in religious studies, ministry (MAM for Protestant students) and lay ministry (MALM for Catholic students).

The department counts approximately 55 graduate students; 15-20 new students are expected this fall. About 30 undergraduates are majoring in religious studies. Some 12-15 individuals are expected to comprise the charter formation certificate cohort group this fall, according to Scholz.

Another recently established formation center in the Milwaukee Archdiocese is the John Paul II Center, which offers several programs, including continuing education for lay ministers. Scholz noted that St. Clare personnel “have been working closely with (John Paul II Center director) Fr. Javier Bustos and Deacon John Ebel, discussing how both our centers can best serve the archdiocese ... We anticipate working together at the certificate level for the



laity. There may be other areas of collaboration, we hope.”

Scholz said the St. Clare Center’s “grand opening” will be on Friday, Aug. 10, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., in the form of a Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry. The event will “showcase the various lay ministries present and operating in the Milwaukee Archdiocese.” Auxiliary Bishop Richard J. Sklba will be keynote speaker.

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