

NEWS FROM THE SOCIETY FOR THE INCREASE OF THE MINISTRY (SIM)

West Hartford CT 06107

Contact: Thomas Moore contactandinfo@simministry.org

(860) 233-1732

www.simministry.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jerry Carroon, the Society's scholarship director, retires

By Jerry Hames

A friend and confidant to hundreds of seminarians, who also developed and enhanced the relationship between the Society for the Increase of Ministry and deans, administrators and financial aid officers at Episcopal seminaries, retired on June 30.

The Rev. Canon Robert G. "Jerry" Carroon crossed the country twice yearly for the past four years as the Society's scholarship director, meeting with seminarians, offering advice and presenting checks to SIM scholars to assist them in their studies and preparation for ordination.

The greatest gift he received in this post-retirement ministry, he said in an interview, was the frequent contact with seminarians. "That was the wonderful thing, meeting these folks. What I say to anyone is that if there is anything that gives me hope for the Church, it's the quality of seminarians. I can't say how impressed I am with the younger people in holy orders, with what they have accomplished already," he said.

His greatest concern continues to be their well-being. "We must not drop the ball as a Church," he said, citing an overall lack of support. "Unlike the Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox and others, we don't support the seminaries and seminaries as a general part of the Church's operation. (He spoke before the General Convention approved in July a first-time grant of \$200,000 to aid seminarians over the next triennium.)

"As I spoke with [seminarians] on my visits, it was obvious that the present financial economic climate has had a dramatic downturn on their lives. It's difficult to concentrate on your studies when concerns about your support, or that of your family, intrude upon your academic life."

Carroon tells stories of tear-filled encounters as he handed the scholarship checks to recipients who are struggling with expenses as they prepare to become the Church's future leaders. He said many have no health insurance and receive limited financial aid from their parish and diocese. "The SIM check I personally delivered made the difference literally for enabling them to stay in seminary or not."

In 2004, Carroon had retired only months as the archivist, historiographer and assistant for administration in the Diocese of Connecticut when he learned that SIM was seeking a priest to direct its scholarship program. He realized immediately that it would be

something he would enjoy, and he was enthusiastic about building relationships between SIM and young seminarians and their families.

Preparing for and visiting all of the seminaries within a period of 10 weeks each fall and spring took up a major part of his time as SIM's scholarship director. "When I wasn't on the road, I was doing administrative work, receiving applications, gathering information for the scholarship committee that approves the grants and discussing with these members the process and how we might improve it," he said.

Thomas Moore III, appointed executive director of SIM last year, said Carroon was "the 'Ask Jeeves' for any question he had regarding any aspect of the Church. "It was a blessing that my first year at SIM provided me the opportunity to get to know Jerry and work with him," he said. "He is a treasure to the Church with his knowledge, understanding of its history, respect for its traditions, reason, worship and mission and his commitment to service. It has been an honor for SIM that Jerry ended his service to the Church here."

In each issue of "The Call," SIM's quarterly publication, Carroon wrote a column, drawing attention to particular needs of seminarians. In one issue he described how grant money was sometimes used not for tuition, books or clerical vestments but for making the transition from seminary to parish. "It seems strange, but many of our seniors have to provide for their own moving expenses, particularly if [their new parish] may not be in a position to cover all, or even some, of these expenses," he wrote.

When Carroon talks of the value of teamwork between SIM and recipients of the Society's grants to develop the Church's future ordained leaders, he speaks from experience. He discovered the value of teamwork when he was pressed into action as a backup goaltender for the Indianapolis Chiefs hockey team while he was a postulant for ordination at Nashota House, the Episcopal seminary at Racine, Wis. He played in one game, and the team won the championship and the Turner Cup.

"Some play their entire careers and they never win anything...I played a month and got a ring," he said. Of his four years with the Society, he says, "It has been, as we say in the hockey world, "a great season."

Jerry Hames was editor of Episcopal Life from 1990 to 2007.