

SOUTHEAST MISSOURIAN



f/8 and Be There | Fred Lynch

Fred Lynch retired in 2018 after capturing images for the Southeast Missourian since 1975, in that time moving from black-and-white to color, from film to digital and to video. The blog title is a nod to an earlier era of news photography and the 4x5 Speed Graphic: It's more important to be there for the shot than to worry about technical details.

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John Harth leaves KFVS-TV for priesthood

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Television/radio broadcaster John Harth is happy with his decision to prepare for the priesthood. His biggest worry is learning to let God direct his life, he says. (Fred Lynch photo)

From television broadcaster to priest

By Mary L. Spell, Family Living Editor

When school opens the first week of September at The Pontifical College Josephinum, near Columbus, Ohio, former Cape Girardeau television/radio broadcaster John Harth will be among the student body.

Harth, who has been involved in broadcasting since his sophomore year in high school in Mendota, Ill., will begin preparation to become a priest, just one week before his 31st birthday. He recently talked about this decision to leave a career of 16 years to enter a new one.

The decision to prepare for the priesthood was not a quick or easy one, Harth said.

"It began slowly, with the thought first flitting through my mind sometime during the summer of 1979. I flitted it right out, I thought, but a comment in a sermon, a line from a movie, lots of things, kept nagging at me. It was an accumulation of things that triggered my decision," Harth remarked.

"I was not where I thought I should be in broadcasting. You set certain goals for yourself. I planned to be in a much larger market by now. I spent seven years at KFVS, starting there in May of '74 and before then, I had worked as news and sports director at KGMU. Seven years prior to that I was employed at various stations in New Jersey and in Illinois, my home state.

He continued, "It was time for me to make some kind of change, and here was this thought staying with me that maybe I should become a priest. I gave myself a deadline of early this spring to make that decision. My deadline came and went and I still wasn't sure. I was really disturbed most of the time."

Questions that are consistently being asked of Harth by friends, are "why do you want to be a priest?" And, "how will you give up girls and dating?"

His consistent answer is: "I'm not absolutely sure I will be a priest. I have one and a half years of college where I must pick up 12 hours of college theology, 18 hours of philosophy, a course in modern language and a class in Latin. Then I will have four years at the graduate school of theology there.

"I have a while before I must take a final vow. They give you adequate time to prepare yourself for the commitment."

As for girls and dating, Harth said he still looks at girls, and he doesn't ever expect to give up having women as friends. "When and if I commit myself to being a priest, then I will be faithful to my vows, just as if I was

committing myself to a marriage," he remarked.

Talking with a number of local and area priests about his career change was helpful in some aspects and disturbing in others, Harth said.

"Some of them couldn't really take me seriously, I'm afraid, but others were very encouraging."

A telephone conference with Bishop Bernard Law of the Springfield-Cape Girardeau Diocese finally led to getting Harth started on his enrollment at the college.

I've tried to be practical about this lifestyle change," Harth said. "It's my nature to be a practical person. It's difficult though, for me to live solely by faith.

"I've quit my job. I don't have a paycheck coming in. I'm going back to school and I've never been real strong in academics. I made fairly good grades in high school, but just enough to get by with. I know I am older than most of the other students will be. I'm apprehensive about the future, but I'm comfortable with the knowledge that at this point, I am doing the right thing," he noted.

If Harth takes his final vows in the next five or six years, he hopes to be assigned somewhere in the Springfield-Cape Girardeau Catholic Diocese as a parish priest.

"There are those who keep saying I will miss a lot not having a wife and family if I decide to stick with becoming a priest. Well, I can see many other ways of being fulfilled. A parish priest has many families.

"Besides my worry about making grades, my other worry is that I've been so used to running my life for so long, making my own decisions, will I be able to let go and let God work?

"However, since I finally made the decision, my life has been falling into place pretty good," he said.

"It's God's show now," Harth commented, letting his well-known television smile spread across his face.



The Rev. John Harth is currently pastor of Immaculate Conception Catholic Parish in Jackson, Missouri. He is also a chaplain and serves the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the Cape Girardeau County Chaplains Unit,

the Bollinger and Scott County sheriff's offices, the Kelso and Oran, Missouri, police departments, Jackson Fire/Rescue and the Cape Girardeau County Emergency Management Agency.

Here is a photograph and interview with the Rev. John Harth published Jan. 24, 2010 in the Southeast Missourian:

[Broadcasting God's message](#)

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