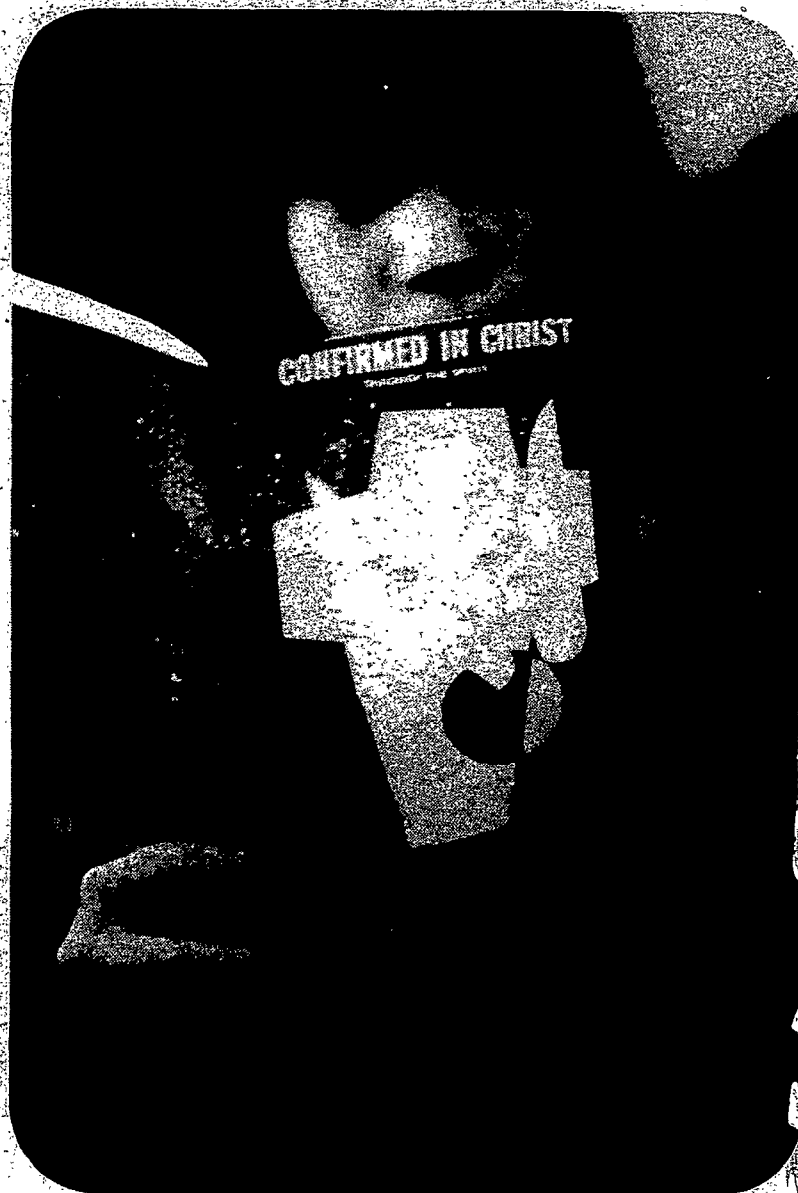


Teacher assistant Lisa Haun helps in the Saturday religion class with [l. to r.] Ricky and Bobby Crocetti and Elizabeth Dalberth.



"Confirmed in Christ" stimulated personal reflection.

# CONFIRMATION ... the Family Sacrament

TEXT BY PAT PETRASKE  
PHOTOS BY SUSAN MCKINNEY

"Cee, Dad, I didn't know you were so holy."

It was a remark probably made in jest but it was prompted by the home discussion groups that are a part of the new preparation for the sacrament of confirmation. Parents and their children are used to trooping off to Mass together but when a child hears his parents discuss topics such as "commitment" and "what it means to be a Christian today," it can be quite a surprise.

St. Margaret Mary's Church has taken confirmation out of the

classroom and placed it in the home where parents and their children "can melt together as part of a Christian community rather than remain as two separate groups," explained Anne Messare, director of religious education.

Candidates sent letters of request asking to be confirmed to the bishop and to their pastor, Father Raymond Heisel.

"I can better understand my relationship in our family. I think the communication gap has been mended in some way," commented one student.

Groundwork for the sacrament began last Spring with five preparation meetings to train

parents to become group leaders. The 108 candidates who are eighth, ninth and tenth graders were then divided into 14 home groups. Using the kit "With the Spirit" as a study guide, parents become facilitators of good discussion rather than teachers, according to Miss Messare.

The unique approach, now in its third year, combines discussions with a service project geared to broaden the confirmands' vision. "The kids found that they have something to contribute to the parish and to the community," Miss Messare said.

Group projects ranged from visiting nursing homes to teaching the children at St. Joseph's Villa how to bowl. Every

Saturday some of the candidates worked as teacher assistants in the parish religious program. Others assumed audio-visual duties and ran film strips for pre-school and Saturday classes.

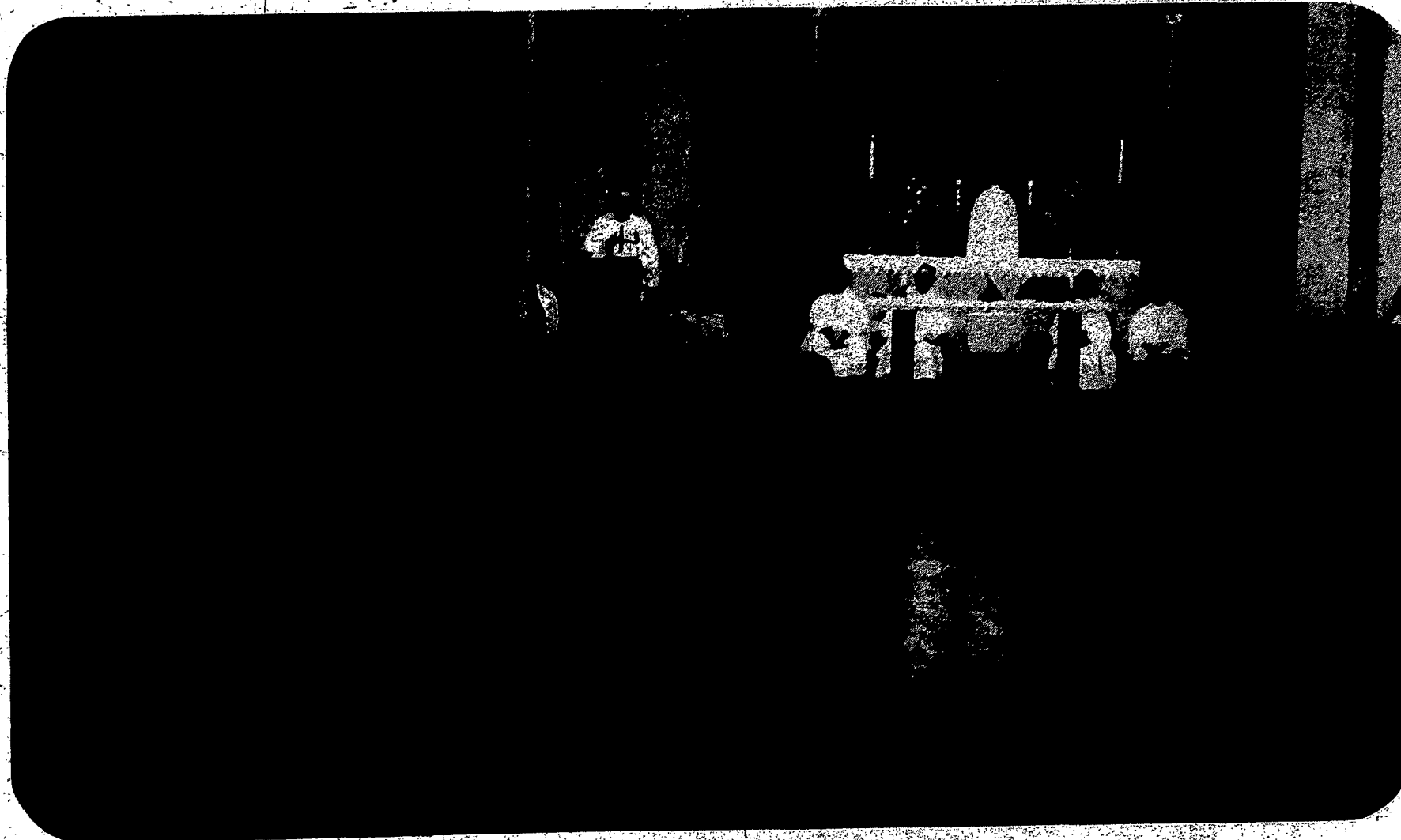
Visiting senior citizens "opened a new world" for the candidates. "They learned how people's days can be lonely," Miss Messare noted. Students "adopted" older persons and performed small chores as well as building continuing friendships.

The program urges that the projects become more than a "one shot deal" and that they become part of the confirmands' daily Christian life. Simple projects like becoming aware of what's happening in the homerooms or being more at-

tentive to grandparents helped the students "recommit themselves as Christians."

Confirmation for one eighth grader means that "the Church is expecting more of me which I think is very important." Confirmation also means expecting more from the parents, according to guidelines set forth by Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, who believes that parent involvement will lead to parent education.

Last Thursday evening climaxed the long months of preparation and study when Bishop Dennis W. Hickey confirmed the candidates. One young man said of his step into adulthood, "I was introduced through Baptism and now I speak for myself."



Delivering the homily at St. Margaret Mary's is Bishop Hickey.