

# Renewal Camping Made for Families

"This is great! Before we could never reach our kids. Now they're pushing us." Father Robert Hammond, originator of two diocesan programs which provide families with both camping and renewal experiences, was quoting a typical parental response to the results of a vacation at Camp Stella Maris or Family Campers week.

The program at Stella Maris grew out of a religious education family weekend at Notre Dame Retreat House sponsored by Holy Trinity in Webster in 1969. The retreat was so successful with eight families attending that a second one was held the following year. The summer of 1971 the retreat was extended to a one week vacation at Stella Maris. Since then the number of week-long sessions has grown to four. Father Hammond reported that last year 80 families, 748 people, attended with an additional 95 staffing. The fee is \$235 per family for one week.

Family camp is designed to bring the family closer to God and to each other. "Family camp is a joyful life in the midst of the Eucharist," Father Hammond said. It is also a vacation with plenty of free time for relaxation and fun.

Camp Stella Maris offers a time for "painless growth in the Lord." The highpoint of the day is the Children's Mass. "One of the problems for kids at mass is that all they can see is somebody's tweed coat," Father Hammond said, explaining his habit of calling children to gather around the altar. There they can begin to see the relationship between Mass and daily life.

Two or more priests or religious are present each week of camp. Seminarians and members of the Teen Seminar Movement of the diocese volunteer and compose the remainder of the staff. The volunteers are chosen because of their interest, ability, and desire to make a contribution to the growth of the family.

Families are lodged in cabins at Stella Maris with two families in each cabin. Care is given to placing families with older children with families with younger children. This arrangement allows the older family to enjoy a baby again and gives the young mother help with child care.

Food is prepared in the Stella Maris kitchen and served family style.

Family Campers is a younger program which began in Newark three years ago, when 20 families with campers went on a weekend retreat. The program grew until last year 11 or 12 families camped for a full week at Darien Lake near Batavia. This year two one-week sessions are offered, July 27 - Aug. 2 and Aug. 3 - Aug. 9, at Skybrook in Dansville. The cost is \$75 a week. Campers must supply their own food and camping equipment.


Father Hammond said that the day focuses on daily Mass with morning Bible classes for all ages and evening family sharing. Camp affords families the opportunity to "share Christ together."


Families interested in attending Camp Stella Maris should write Christian Family Renewal, Box 32, Webster, N.Y. 14580.

Those interested in Family Campers week may contact Bill and Barb Peck, 345 Charlotte Street, Newark, N.Y. 14513.

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