

'S to Single Parent Families

education coordinator for St. Christopher's, North Chili, and David Dineen, who worked on the Stella Maris staff, and is from Canisteo.

Sister Cheryl explained that in the children's meetings they tried "to proclaim God's love for them," and "give them a sense that God is their friend."

She noted that she had seen changes in the children during the week. "The awe I see in their eyes" when "their faces light up" with realizations makes it worthwhile, she said. Often they didn't say anything at the time, Dineen noted, but they planted a seed, and "someday they will reach out to somebody."

Sister Cheryl said children approached her outside the sessions to talk, and had parents tell her that their children had begun discussing things which they previously wouldn't discuss.

Children whose parents are divorced are often perceptive of their parent's problems, and are reluctant to ask questions or bring up their difficulties. Sister Marie said they worked to "create an environment where it will be okay to talk," and apparently they succeeded.

Sister Kathleen noted the effect the week had on the 20 teenagers who attended. They hadn't really expected so many, she said, but they were full participants in the week. On the final night, they even conspired to disable all the cars so no one would be able to leave. They decided that wouldn't be right and didn't do it, but protested loudly when they learned that their parents were planning a reunion, for adults only. Sister also reported that many of the teenagers are now doing babysitting while parents attend programs sponsored by her office, and in other ways are getting involved in the divorced and separated groups.

At the Friday morning adult session, Sister Judy Greene, chaplain at Park Ridge Hospital, introduced the subject of personal growth resulting from negative experiences, such as divorce, or the death of a parent. Several participants added their stories, noting the growth they had felt since their divorce. One participant reported that for some time after her divorce, she had been in a sleep-walk, just maintaining herself. After the discussions of the week, she said, "I'm wide awake — and crying."

The entire group felt the emotion, and, when others stated their feelings and how they had grown during the week, one woman interjected, "I'll cry to that."

Friendships and trust often are formed during such a week-long experience, Sister Kathleen agreed, but, she noted, the participants probably arrived with more apprehension than would many other groups, and grew closer than even she expected. She also is sure, she stated, that for many parents and children, the week won't be remembered simply as time well spent, but as a valuable experience that will benefit them in their daily lives throughout the year.



Stevie, left, shows his comment on the singing of those around him, but it didn't seem to stop the singing and clapping.



Jay Barrett of Geneva ended up with some company when he decided to stretch out on the grass.



Picking wild flowers for an outdoor Mass were Sharon Lapinsky, her father George and her sister Ann Marie. The Lapinskys are from Horseheads.



Patricia O'Mara, of Rushville, facing camera, says goodbye on the camp's last day to Bernie Reitz of Rochester.