

Advocacy: Helping People Help Themselves

By Michael Groden
Last in a Series

"Youth have rights and needs that must be heard. Youth, regardless of race, color or varying abilities, must be free to determine their own lives as long as the rights of others are also respected."

The statement of philosophy for Monroe County Youth Advocacy, Inc., originally evolved six years ago to answer the needs of young people who have had problems in school.

Young people who leave school, or are "pushed out" of school because of learning disabilities or emotional problems the Youth Advocacy organization contends, have as much right to an education as anyone else. Indeed, federal law requires that every child, regardless of limitations, is entitled to an education, and local school districts are responsible to provide such services.

Judith Leone, an Advocacy staff member, said that the agency is open to all young people, aged 0-21 years. It

handles any problems youth face today, through individual counseling or referral service. The majority of clients, Leone said, are handicapped.

Youth Advocacy, as the name implies, helps youth, parents and schools in solving problems that may arise. A student who is a discipline problem and often in trouble may have emotional problems that require special attention. Or a student who may be a slow learner and unable to keep up with the "normal" school curriculum can also create a bad situation.

Youth Advocacy provides counseling for the young person to determine what program or treatment can best serve the individual.

Leone said that many children are "pushed out" of a school system because they cannot keep up with the workload or cannot adjust to school rules.

These youth usually require special attention from in-



stitutions who specialize in special ed.

Youth Advocacy also works with school districts in convincing parents that their children need help.

"Some parents refuse to believe that their children may have a problem," she said. "We work with the schools to help parents realize that a special education program would be best for their children."

Youth Advocacy also provides a referral service, when other agencies are better equipped to help young people. "What we try to do in referrals is to eliminate unnecessary confusion that people often experience when dealing with agencies. We give them a specific agency to contact and we give them the name of a person to contact. If that doesn't solve the

problem, the client calls us back and we intervene ourselves," she said.

The referral service also handles any questions people may have about a certain agency or group which deals with youth.

The ultimate aim is to get kids back to school or into a program where these young people can begin to lead useful, meaningful lives.

Monroe County Youth Advocacy, Inc., is located at 36 W. Main St., Suite 490, Rochester, N.Y. 14614; phone 546-1700.

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DIVORCE TALK

Katherine Kircher, director of Ministry to Divorced, Separated and Remarried Catholics, will speak on

"Divorce — One Experience of the Paschal Mystery" at 8 p.m., Wednesday, April 29 at Our Lady of Mercy Parish in the library. All are invited.

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stitutionalization," according to a release.

If you or someone you know would benefit from the Meals on Wheels program, or if you would like to lend a hand to help, you may call the visiting nurse service, 482-0120.

Insights In Liturgy
By Gretchen Dent

Summit And Source

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The peak of the liturgical year, the Easter Triduum, has been celebrated with praise and rejoicing. Careful planning and hours of hard work have gone into these celebrations, and by now liturgy planners may be breathing a sigh of relief. Unfortunately, many feel their work is over until next Fall, with perhaps some attention to Pentecost. However, if liturgy celebrations are to fulfill their role as the summit and source of all that we do, each celebration throughout the year will require the same kind of careful planning and effort that went into the events of Holy Week.

... the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows." (Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy, CSL, 10)

... every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the Priest and of his Body, which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others." (CSL, 7)

The statements above underline the fact that the liturgical celebrations of the parish are the most important activities in which the parish engages. From them all other activities will flow as the community is strengthened and renewed.

As the community's personal and communal faith grows in richness and fullness, their love for God and for one another will pour forth into all the other activities of the Church. Human development, religious education, social programs, ministry to the sick and all of the widely-varied activities of the Body of Christ will be able to grow in fullness because the assembly will need to find ways to proclaim their discovery of God.

Providing liturgical celebrations which will do this is not an easy task, but worth all the effort it demands. We must provide good celebrations which nourish the faith of the community. Quality in every aspect of the liturgy is essential. We must use every resource available to provide the assembly with a means to encounter God in that celebration, to leave strengthened and renewed, and eager to proclaim God's love to all.

It is not enough, however, simply to offer good liturgical celebrations to the community. Even if the celebrations are well prepared and the best that can be offered, they cannot accomplish their purpose unless the community, the assembly of believers, believes what they are celebrating.

Great care must be taken to instruct the assembly on the changes in the liturgy

and the reasons for them. They must be brought to an awareness of their role as the assembly and the importance of that role. As they grow in this awareness, liturgical celebrations will become fuller, richer and more able to provide an atmosphere in which a saving encounter with God is possible for all.

Pastors must promote and oversee this instruction of the faithful (CSL 19), but they will be unable to do this unless they first understand it themselves (CSL 14). If they understand and believe deeply in the reform and renewal brought forth by Vatican II, they will be able to support and educate the community's growth in knowledge of themselves as the Body of Christ.

"Among the symbols with which liturgy deals, none is more important than this assembly of believers." (Environment and Art, EACW 28) When the community comes to an awareness of this and an understanding of the changes which have been made, liturgical celebration will fall into its natural place as the most important activity of the parish.

"The liturgical assembly is Church, and as Church is servant to the world. It has a commitment to be sign, witness and instrument of the reign of God." (EACW, 38) When the community comes to know itself as Church, through liturgical celebration, that commitment will be reflected in their individual lives and in their life as a community. Through the parish's most important activity, good liturgical celebrations which strengthen and nourish faith, the other important activities of the Church will be carried out as a matter of course.

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