

# Empire Girls State Draws Four Diocesans

By Terrance J. Brennan

Thirteen girls from Rochester area high schools were among more than 340 statewide that participated in a hands-on experience of our government at work.

Empire Girls State, sponsored by the State American Legion Auxiliary, provided high school juniors from 62 counties a taste of what state and local government is like behind the public eye. The program ran from Sunday, June 27, through Saturday, July 3, at Cazenovia College.

Among the 13 were four from Catholic high schools — Karen Brankacz and Lynette Allis from Mercy, and Barbara Beattie and Margaret Ann Mykins from Cardinal Mooney.

"I learned more history of the American government in one week than I could in a year," Ms. Beattie said.

The program featured speakers each day from

various positions in state government. Among them were county and district judges, a state senator, a congressman, a mayor and a state trooper.

According to Ms. Beattie, the participants stayed in the dormitories on campus, the total being broken down into "wards." There were approximately 28 girls in each ward. Then, each ward would be split into two political parties.

"Instead of using the Democrat and Republican labels, one side was referred to as the Federalists and the other as the Nationalists," Ms. Beattie said.

The program began on Monday with a general caucus to select party leaders. Then on Tuesday the parties separated to begin a series of primaries for local elections. Among the offices to be filled were district and county judges, mayor, sheriff, district attorney, and commissioner of welfare.

The same process took place on Wednesday for state elections to various offices including governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and comptroller. Once the elections between the two parties were over, the girls not chosen to office then took seats in either the state assembly or congress.

The program concluded with an inauguration on Friday night for the state officials elected. Also that evening, two girls were chosen by their peers to represent New York State at the countrywide program, Girls Nation, later this summer.

"The program was definitely worthwhile," Ms. Brankacz said. "You never get to see how political parties work. It's a real insight of the election process. After all, everyone should know what is going on inside the government."

"I would like to go back," Ms. Beattie said, "but, of course, you can't." Rules of the program include that each



MS. BEATTIE



MS. BRANKACZ

participant may attend only once. One way to return is as a counselor, but she admits that the chances of that are very slim because "everyone wants to go back."

The program had a special significance for Ms. Beattie. Her mother attended the inaugural Empire Girls State in 1941 as a high school junior from the Bronx.



## Words of Our Lady

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Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

## God Will Heal Our Depression

(Father Shamon is pursuing studies at Louvain. Following is a previously published meditation on the readings for this weekend's liturgy.)

Sunday Readings: (R3) Jn. 6/41-51. (R1) 1Kgs. 19/4-8. (R2) Eph. 4/30-5/2.

Did you ever wish to die? Has your patience ever been so tried by people around you, or by failure, a long sickness, or foreseen calamity, or by a sense of your own sinfulness or inadequacies that you wished to die? Well, this was exactly the way it was for the bold and brilliant prophet Elijah right after his great victory on Mt. Carmel over the priests of Baal.

Jezebel, the wicked queen of Israel, was not present on Mt. Carmel when Elijah had brought down fire from heaven. When told of the feat, she scorned this as a mere conjurer's trick. She contemned the cowards who had stood by while her priests were butchered by a madman. Far from quailing before the wild Bedouin, she wrote him a scorching letter that unmanned Elijah. She put a price on his head. Paradoxically, Elijah ran away, and then asked God to take the very life he was running away to save. "This is enough, O Lord! Take my life," he prayed. How depression, or despondency can unhinge one's thinking.

We might wonder how craggy Elijah, who towered among the prophets of the Old Testament, got into such a despondent mood.

Depression, as almost everyone knows, can be due to overwrought nerves, to sheer physical exhaustion. Surely, Elijah's tense meeting with Ahab, his contest with the priests of Baal, the intensity of his prayers for fire from heaven, the excitement of the victory, and the fatigue from his flight — all must have bankrupted his emotional bank.

Trivial causes, like a sunless day or an overheated room, can annoy us. How much more would all the strain Elijah had been through have drained his strength to the point he was ready to die rather than expend one more ounce of energy.

Another reason for Elijah's depression was the fact that for a moment he had taken his eyes off God and had focused them on his own problems. Once St. Peter walked on water. Imagine that! But he so walked only as long as he kept his gaze on Jesus. The moment he turned away and fixed his eyes on the winds and the waves, he began to sink. So it was with Elijah. Up to this time, Elijah had been animated by a splendid faith that focused on God. As long as Elijah had riveted his eyes on God, all his problems became as dust on a scale — not even deemed necessary to be considered as part of the weight. But once Elijah began to dwell on the opposition and to forget God — his problems appeared gargantuan and he cast a pall of melancholy over himself.

Finally, God permitted such weakness in Elijah to teach us that faithful service of God does not exclude

depression and discouragement. This state is not only consistent with intense devotion but it is even necessary. For in great success, there is great peril. Too much sun withers the rose, too much rain wilts it. For our sake, then, life oscillates between prosperity and adversity, success and failure, triumph and defeat, thrill and depression.

How did God remove Elijah's depression?

First, He took care of his bodily needs. Sometimes the best remedy for discouragement is a good night's sleep.

Second, God gave Elijah food. He miraculously supplied it. Elijah ate this "bread from heaven," and in its strength he walked to the mountain of God and, according to Scripture, he never died.

What a beautiful type this "bread" is of that miraculous bread given by Jesus to help us in the journey of life and to the mountain of eternal glory.

Like Elijah, we too get weary on the journey and need proper sleep and food. Like Elijah, we have a long way to go to reach the mountain of God. But like Elijah, we too have a God, who is also constant in His love to us, no matter how depressed we may feel. And in His constant love, He too provides us with a bread from heaven, far greater than that which the raven brought to Elijah — "The bread I will give you is My flesh. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever."

## St. Philip Neri

The Women's Club of St. Philip Neri has slated a picnic for 6 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 31, at Fenicchia's Willow Brook Farms, 712 Bay Road, W. Webster. The event is open to all women, whether parishioners or not. Reservations are made by calling the rectory, 482-2400, before Aug. 15.

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