

Young Adults Commission Installed by Bishop Clark

By Kevin Foy

Last Saturday, Dec. 4, the Commission on Young Adult Ministry was officially recognized by the diocese.

This does not seem terribly exciting until one realizes that young adults (ages 18-35) are the largest segment of our population. However, Karen Materna, chair of the commission, says that "the majority of young adults, including those raised in the Catholic tradition, are not affiliated with any institutional religion. We (the members of the Church) are not meeting their needs."

Formed and sponsored within the Division of Special Ministries, the commission is the result of the work of a task force of young adults. This group circulated questionnaires throughout the diocese to find out their concerns and ideas. The task force then presented their findings to Bishop Matthew H. Clark in June 1981. Realizing that there were problems to deal with, the bishop accepted the formation of the commission which presently has approximately 25 volunteer members.

According to Ms. Materna, there is a concern that many young adults are leaving the Church because they feel alienated. They feel they receive little attention from parishioners and parish staff members because these people have only a vague idea of the problems young adults face. "The Church thus has little input in their lives," said Ms. Materna.

Ms. Materna, 28, who is working on a masters degree in Pastoral Ministry and teaching within the Special Education Division of the Caledonia-Mumford School System, says that the main purpose of the commission is to address the varied problems, needs, and interests of young adults in the diocese.

The young adults were only too happy to share their thoughts. "People were actually thanking us for meeting with them because we showed concern by asking their opinions. When you do something that simple (just meeting with them), you know there's a lot more to do," said Ms. Materna.

She feels that the commission can achieve its purpose by "reaching out to

those young adults who are alienated from the Church, listening to them, sharing the Gospel message with them, and thus welcoming them into the Church."

Why do young adults feel alienated?

Ms. Materna says that the Church has to remember that young adults were going through grammar school and high school during the 1960s, which was a period of change for both society and the Church. "Today's young adults have grown up in a society which challenged traditional values, ethics, and beliefs. They were going to school during Vatican II, when there wasn't a clear sense of where the Church was going," she said.

Ms. Materna believes that this has led many young adults to have a lack of knowledge concerning their Church and the faith it teaches. They were not getting the solid foundation in their faith available to today's youths and Ms. Materna says that most young adults have not updated their religious education.

This lack of knowledge

and a sense of feeling lost in the crowd at Mass has made many young adults turn to such evangelical groups as the Unification Church and the Hare Krishnas. (Ms. Materna noted that more than 50 percent of the membership of the Unification Church consists of young adults that were Catholics.)

However, Ms. Materna does not believe those who have joined the evangelical groups or those who rarely attend Mass have done so because they have lost their faith.

Rather, Ms. Materna feels these actions are the result of a lack of personal encounters. "They want a sense of inner direction," she says, and adds that "they want to belong to communities of caring persons." Singles (Ms. Materna points out that studies have shown that more than half of the young adults are singles) feel especially lonely at Mass and other parish functions because they believe that everything is directed toward either families or married couples.

"A single young adult who is not greeted hospitably will more likely drift away and not come back," she said.

The Church must deal with young adults on a personal level. Ms. Materna says that young adults have much to offer and their active participation in the Church will benefit everyone.

"There's a lot of energy to be tapped, but we're not tapping it yet," she said.

Unfortunately, these were not the only problems uncovered by the task force.

"There's a feeling among young adults that the Church does not live up to what it says," Ms. Materna said. She notes that young adults realize that the Church talks a lot about justice, but it seems to support in some circumstances and not in others. Young adults want the Church to take clearer stands on issues such as justice, and back up these stands. They also want other issues, such as the Church's stand on morality, to be better explained to them, so that they discern why the Church feels the way it does. Ms. Materna also pointed out that many young adults felt that the Church's position on women in the Church was not only unjust, but unclear as well. (She mentioned that Bishop Clark's pastoral letter, "Fire in the Thornbush," helped greatly.)

Ms. Materna feels that the commission can give parish staff members the direction they need to help young adults deal with these and other problems. Young adults can and want to be educated. "We want to provide ways for the Church to enter into dialogue with young adults,



Commission Chairperson Karen Materna signs the ministry charter as Bishop Clark looks on.

and hope to establish networks of young adults, whether they are Catholic or not," she said. The commission also hopes to continue to make the Church more aware of the problems, needs, and concerns of present young adults by coordinating services provided by other diocesan groups to young adults.

Possibly the most important and all-encompassing goal of the commission is to challenge young adults to respond to the Gospel. "As young adults, we have a lot to offer," Ms. Materna says, "but we often get caught up in selfish lifestyles." Eventually, Ms. Materna hopes to have an ever-growing group of young adults that will reach out to others in their own group and in the

Rochester community as a whole.

For example, the commission is attempting to get people who live in the large downtown apartment complexes to know and communicate with each other. They are providing orientation-type materials for those in the complex to set aside some time to help the newcomers out. They also hope to have the young adults and elderly people living in the complex interact with and help each other.

"We aren't creating a social club; we just want to meet needs," Ms. Materna said. "We would hope that we, as young adults, can be a part of the Church, while helping it to grow, change, and meet the new needs and challenges of today."



These 17 were formally installed during a ceremonial liturgy at the home of Anne Wegman on Saturday, Dec. 4: seated, from left, Karen Materna, commission chairperson, Bishop Matthew H. Clark, Betty Hurley; standing, from left, Mary Jane Brennan, Jim Rinefierd, Marianne Antczak, Anne Scheer, Ann Marie Holahan, Susan Arganbright, Michael Lynch, Jeanie Bayer, Chris Felo, Dave Predmore, Agnes Marini, Frank Paolotto, Joann Weber, Maureen Schnorr and Anne Wegman.

Driving Courses Slated for Seniors

The 55 Alive/Mature Driving Program, sponsored by the American Association of Retired People, has scheduled two courses for January.

The first will be from 1 to 5 p.m., Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 3 and 4, at St. Thomas the Apostle School cafeteria, Colebrook Avenue in Irondequoit.

Another will take place from 1 to 5 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 8, and Saturday, Jan. 15,

at the Prime Time Day Care Center, 1320 N. Winton Road.

No test is involved in the course and the cost is \$10. Drivers get a 10 percent reduction in their auto liability insurance by taking the course. Anyone who has points against a license can get them reduced by three.

Further information is available from Armand LaMay at 467-1343, between 5 and 7 p.m.

DDC Slated

Registrations are now being taken for Defensive Driving Courses sponsored by the National Safety Council. The course is an eight-hour classroom program in accident avoidance techniques. On completion of the course, participants may realize as much as a 10 percent reduction in car insurance premiums, according to Susan Murante of the Rochester Safety Council office. Further information is available by calling (716) 454-2220. Persons residing in Cayuga, Chemung, Tioga and Tomkins counties may register by calling (315) 476-1300.

Rosary on The Air

The Family Rosary Network may be heard at 6:30 nightly over the following stations:

- WWG, Rochester (1500AM); WXXY, Watkins Glen (104FM); WSFW, Seneca Falls (99FM) and 1110AM; WOIV, Syracuse (105FM); WSIY, Syracuse (1540 AM); and WXRL, Buffalo (1300AM).

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