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St. Michael's Workshop: Building a Framework that Lasts

By Teresa A. Parsons

The windows of the building are boarded over; its walls are a screeching combination of peeling paint and graffiti. At first, the only evidence of occupancy is a small yellow sign with an arrow proclaiming St. Mike's Woodshop, 869 Clifford Avenue. But inside the basement of the Rochester building, people, noise, dust and life in general abound.

St. Michael's Woodshop began its summer program last week with 15 youths who will spend eight hours a day learning to make furniture, toys, picture frames and a host of other products for schools, churches and walk-in customers.

The woodshop doesn't have a list or statistics on its alumni to illustrate its success. As the head and heart of the 18-year-old program, Sister Pat Flynn won't support documentation or bureaucracy. Although during the summer, her employees are paid with federal funds, she does not use federal, state or even diocesan money directly. "I don't go to meetings and I don't write reports," she remarked, adding that, when a meeting is unavoidable, she will stay no longer than one hour.

The shop's history reads like an act of faith in her principles. Eighteen years ago, when she decided to leave teaching after 13 years, Sister Pat sought involvement with needier people and volunteered for two options — either South America or Joseph Avenue.

Joseph Avenue it was, during the most militant days of the FIGHT organization just after Rochester's riots. During one critical meeting, just as her obligatory hour was ending, Sister remembered, someone from Kodak stood up to say that he and the company were interested in helping young men in the community. When he finished, she in turn told him she had 25 young men looking for help, but then her hour was up and she left. When she got home, her phone rang and the person on the other end said Kodak was interested in what she wanted to do. Ever since, Kodak has supplied lumber and two carpenters for instruction twice a week.

About the same time, she happened to stop at a Sears store which, coincidentally, was seeking to make a donation to a worthy cause. Sister Pat had her tools.



Sister Pat Flynn, director of St. Michael's Woodshop, shares an outdoor break with her students.

Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Finally, she needed money for insurance. A friend suggested a fund that might donate its last \$1,000, but she had to contact and convince five men. Without a car, she trudged from one office to another on the city's north side, getting four yeses — and one final no. Exhausted and discouraged, Sister Pat remembers thinking on her way home "God, if you want this to happen, you've got to find me the money."

No sooner had she arrived home than the phone rang and someone offered her \$500. Another person walked up to her on the

street — to this day she doesn't know who — and handed her \$200. With additional help from her congregation, the Sisters of Mercy, and a few other providential gifts, she was able to open.

These days she's a bit more systematic about fund raising. During the school year, kids in her program are paid \$25 per week. She supports the afterschool program by sending letters to priests and human development committees in the diocese, asking for \$100 each.

Wages for the summer program are paid

with federal funds through a contract between the Summer Youth Employment Training Program of the City of Rochester and a community agency at \$3.35/hour, 30 hours per week. Summer Youth Employment screens youths technically identified as "economically disadvantaged" and provides a list for Sister Pat, who then hires as many as she needs from July to September. Others are holdovers from her program during the school year.

From her first site on Joseph Avenue, she

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Pastoral Assistants Look toward Parish of the 21st Century

By Teresa A. Parsons

Sister Brigid Quinn is a member of a team serving a cluster parish that covers most of the eastern side of Cayuga Lake — about 44 rural miles. Ss. Peter and Paul Parish, where Sister Bernadette Hemingway is a pastoral assistant, covers a few crowded city blocks. Sister Anne Michelle McGill works at St. Pius the Tenth, which geographically falls somewhere in between.

What do their ministries have in common? A call to parish leadership according to Professor Thomas Troeger, who conducted four of six day-long sessions at the 1985 Pastoral Assistants Workshop Wednesday, July 10 to July 17, at the diocesan Pastoral Center.

"You are really a major component," Troeger said, describing the potential for pastoral assistants to provide vitality to the Church, now as well as in the parish of the future.

At the same time, he cautioned, "the minute you step into that role as pastoral assistant, you step into the role of ministry of leadership. All of a sudden, you have a responsibility that goes beyond just what you personally feel ... you have to help the Church reach all that the Church is meant to be."

Troeger, professor of preaching at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, spent last Friday constructing a spiritual bridge from the first week's workshops on the parish community of the 21st century to his topic for the second week, the ministry of the word.

"Where there is the good teaching and preaching of God's word, it is an enormous help to the missionary capacity of the Church," he said. "Where God's word is not preached with joy and enthusiasm and meaning ... you're heading for a dying Church eventually."

A visually captivating speaker, Troeger was received with enthusiasm. "He's in touch with himself," noted Sister Brigid. "We've got to minister to people with what is meaningful to us to make our examples meaningful to people. He does that."

To help participants find their strength in preaching, later in the workshop Troeger explored different ways of doing Bible study, examining text in creative ways for teaching as well as sermon preparation. Each participant prepared a two-minute sermon, delivered without notes and videotaped to help identify strengths and weaknesses in preaching style.

Another day, participants took part in a



Pastoral assistants from around the diocese gathered for this week's annual workshop, which focused on the ministry of the word and the parish of the future.

Teresa A. Parsons/Courier-Journal

slide show of religious art, stepping into projected etchings from the life of Jesus and assuming a character's posture. The point was to discover and share what the body language of the picture reveals to them about the meaning of the story.

"I'm not somebody whose basic philosophy is that there is a technique or methodology of ministry because these people are much more expert than I in whatever their special field might be," Troeger said of his

style of teaching. "I try to teach the principle. I try to help people locate where their strength is. Then — they're imaginative and intelligent — they're able to figure out 'Oh, I can do it this way.' I've gotten them to claim their authority in the service of God."

Emphasizing the distinction between being practical and dictatorial, Troeger observed that "a lot of people think 'the way I will be practical is that I will come in and tell

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Along the Way

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Calendar

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Not Just For Kids

Camp Stella Maris expands its horizons to prove that summer camp can be fun for all ages — Pages 8 and 9.

Faith Today

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