

# Timely workshops, Church issues bring youth closer to bishop

By Richard A. Kiley

An alcoholic priest talked about how excessive drinking lowered his IQ a staggering 20 points.

A Vietnam veteran told of a time when he was so "out of it" due to drug abuse that while walking aimlessly from a grocery store, he was hit by a freight train and knocked several hundred feet.

An experienced youth minister told students effective ways to deal with stress without feeling overwhelmed by problems related to peer pressure.

These were just a few of the timely lectures and workshops dealt with at the third annual Bishop's Day with Youth program at Bishop Kearney High School last Sunday. The day-long program drew approximately 900 students from the Genesee Valley, Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions.

"Kids are dealing with a lot of pressure at an earlier age than when I was growing up," said Matt Flanigan, a youth minister at St. Margaret Mary Church since 1979. "The same problems and pressures that I dealt with as a senior in high school, they are dealing with as sophomores."

Flanigan offered his solution to the problem: "The education they need to deal with these problems has to come at an earlier age." Flanigan said. "I think with a little pressure in the right places, we can get them that education sooner."

Flanigan ended his workshop on stress by telling students how important it is to "do what you want to do in life, not what somebody else does," and that "the way you handle a lot of the things your going through today, will shape your lives later."

A workshop on alcoholism and chemical dependency pointed out in a poignant manner several unsuccessful ways in dealing with stress. An diocesan priest who is a reformed alcoholic talked openly about the disease which afflicts not only himself, but 10-20 percent of the world's population.

"If you have the disease, you are the last person to know," Father Bob said. "It is extremely important that you admit you have the disease, and I know that the day I stop admitting I am an alcoholic, is the day I begin the road toward death."

Father Bob told the students to take note of the homeless street people who stagger through the city in their own world because they are sad illustrations of the disease's effects.

"If alcoholism doesn't kill you, it will cause you to go insane (if untreated)," Father Bob said.

To further exemplify alcoholism's effects, Father Bob introduced members of his AA group, one, named Bill, who needed a life-threatening incident to motivate him to get help.

"I was hit by a freight train walking back from a grocery store because I was concentrating only on sitting down somewhere with the bottle in my knapsack and getting drunk," said Bill, a Vietnam veteran. "I started to get treatment after that and I've been straight ever since."

The workshops were followed by a one-hour Bishop's Forum, in which students



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal  
 Father David Mura puts the finishing touches on the face of Kim Natoli from St. Paul's Parish, Webster, during a workshop on clown ministry, one of nearly 30 topics explored on Bishop's Day With Youth at Bishop Kearney High School, Sunday, March 2.



Lynn Staropoli of Corpus Christi parish, Rochester, poses a question to Bishop Matthew H. Clark.



Robert Joseph of St. Patrick's, Elmira, relaxes as Bishop Clark fields questions from students.

exchanged questions and answers with Bishop Matthew H. Clark, and discussed issues regarding the church, diocese and world.


Bishop Clark encouraged students to get involved in parish activities as often as possible and to "keep in touch with both the Courier-Journal and your parish bulletin."

In response to students desire to see the bishop out in public more, Bishop Clark suggested local parishes "get together in clusters" so he could see people in greater numbers.

The bishop said his favorite activity is getting out with the people, but noted that his busy schedule limits his ability to do this as often as he would like.

The bishop drew a thunderous ovation when he was pressed by a student regarding the question of abortion, and how he would deal with a woman who came to him to discuss an abortion she had undergone after being raped.

"I would make the distinction between the action and the person, and my reaction would be one of compassion and understanding. It's not my job to judge hearts," Bishop Clark replied.



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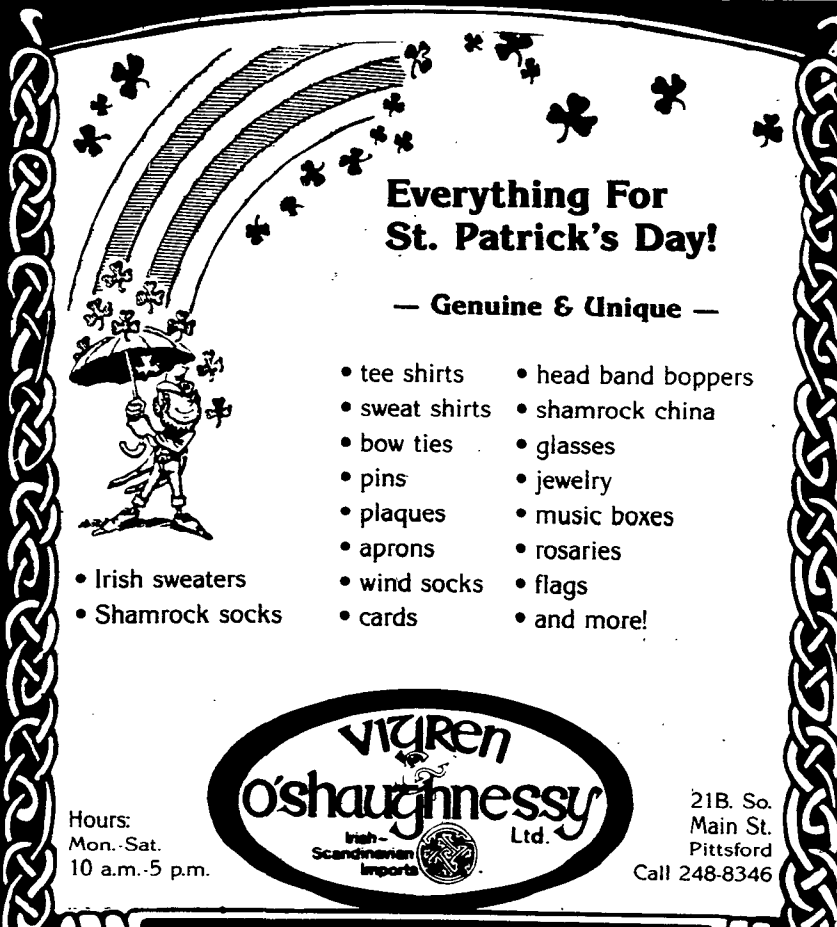
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