

Parents

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answer it."

Neither Father Kawiak nor Sullivan disclaimed any Church doctrine in the course, Culhane recalled. "Doctrine is something we're supposed to believe in. Church law can be stretched to a certain extent," she said.

Even before Mary Coy took the "Parents Talk Love" workshop at St. John Fisher College, she had decided to be open with her children about sex.

"Coming from a family of five girls where nothing was discussed... I always told myself I was going to be approachable," she said. "The whole basis of (the course) was just becoming familiar with what's going to happen and what your kids are going to learn, and just to be open-minded and not to panic."

Her son was only a year-and-a-half old when Coy took the workshop. Now he is five and waiting anxiously for the birth of a new brother or sister.

"Some questions have come up about how babies are born," Coy said. "I've just tried to be open and answer his questions without making a big deal."

Along with his wife and five children, Gary Conrow of Rochester took part in the filming of the "Parents Talk Love" videotape. As far as Conrow is concerned, the tape focuses more on the need for family communication than on a specifically Catholic approach.

All Christian churches, he believes, could play a more active role in fostering communication between parents and children.

"The whole thrust was to keep the lines of communication open and not to treat sex as taboo or secret, to make sure that your children felt comfortable asking questions," he said. "You still do get uncomfortable sometimes, but the key is not to let yourself get so uncomfortable that you clam up."

Many parents agree that more support and resources in the areas of communication, sexuality and family relationships before these subjects become problems.

"It's really important for the Church not just to provide counseling for people when they are really in trouble, but to provide more enrichment opportunities," DeRycke said.

At the same time, parents need to be informed about what is already available in the diocese in those areas.

The Diocese of Rochester was among the first school systems in the country, public or private, to develop a sex education curriculum, according to Evelyn J. Kirst, assistant superintendent for curriculum.

The diocesan Division of Education provides guidelines for sex education from kindergarten through grade eight. A handbook written by a committee of doctors, nurses, teachers and parents is also available to all parents. The handbook was written in 1971 and was most recently updated in 1983. Parent workshops are also offered in some schools by either school or diocesan staff.

The Department of Youth Ministry also offers a four- or five-part series known as "Education in Sex and Relationships for Parents and Teens." Sessions are presented by Anne Wegman, associate director of youth ministry, at the invitation of parishes throughout the diocese.

During the first session, Wegman meets just with parents. Then she spends two or three sessions alone with teens. Both parents and teens are present for the final session and, afterward, Wegman encourages families to continue the dialogue at home.

"A lot of today's parents grew up before Vatican II. Instead of the yes and no answers to questions they got, they need to know the whys," she said. "My experience has not been that parents are confused, but that they need to re-hear Church teaching. I don't find a lot of anger out there; I find people trying to understand and search and grow."

Since 1979, Resurrection parishioners Judy and Ron Platten have offered workshops and seminars aimed at helping both parents and teens survive adolescence.

In the course of raising six children of their own, the Plattens decided to research and write an outline to help others — what they now call the "Partnership Family Life Program."

"Our program is a little more aimed at building relationships and communication between parents and teens," Judy Platten said. "We feel if you're communicating with a teen, you will be able to deal with problems in other areas."

Platten believes that it is harder than ever before for parents to instill their values in their children.

"It's so difficult for children today," she said. "It seems like the people on TV and everywhere around them are all sleeping together, and they (the children) ask 'How can all those people be wrong?'"

Through the Catholic Family Center and other agencies, the diocesan Division of Social Ministry also offers education and counseling in programs such as LifeStep and the Family Life Demonstration Project.

Although there are more general resources on sexuality for parents today than in the past, Maryellen Sinicropi, director, educator and site coordinator of the Family Life Demonstration Project, believes that providing parents with Catholic resources on sexuality has simply not been a priority.

"Planned Parenthood puts out so much material and sometimes the information is very good," she said. "But many times we know that it would not be acceptable in Catholic homes."

"It's ironic because the Catholic community has been very concerned about abortion, but to put it all together with sexuality has not been a priority," she added. "We let the world know how we feel about those things, but we don't talk to our own children about them."

While they remain anxious to instill Catholic values in their children, some parents nonetheless question the Church's credibility in some areas of sexual morality, such as birth control.

"I can't say I take anything the Church says in regards to sex as gospel," said Mary Coy. "I'm hopefully going to tell my children what the Church's teachings are, but also teach them to use their own consciences and common sense."

Sue Staropoli, who attended a workshop

in Spencerport with her husband, Frank, in 1979, does agree with most Church teachings, "not just because they're Church teachings, but because there are values there that are important to adhere to."

She is concerned about the Vatican's criticism of "Parents Talk Love," not only for the sake of the book, but because of the more general attitude it displays.

"We grew up with a black and white, legalistic frame of reference — that you do something simply because you're told," she recalled. "As my understanding of the process of conscience formation has matured, I've learned that Church teaching is a very important component in decision making... that I need to seriously look not only at what the Church says, but that I also need to look into my own heart, at my own experiences, at what theologians have to say."

"It sounds as if we're getting back to where everything is black and white," she added. "I hate to see us go back."

Workshop

Continued from Page 3

Families, meanwhile, may be faced with a drastic loss of income when one member, often the breadwinner, is jailed. Those with relatives in the state prison system may lose touch as they are transferred from one facility to another in a distant part of the state. Others, without transportation, cannot visit.

Sometimes the family doesn't speak very good English and they don't know where to go for help," Martinez said. "There is nobody to help them."

Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministry is trying. Founded in 1969 to sensitize clergy to the needs of the inmates in local jails, it currently claims 100 trained volunteers who generally visit pre-trial prisoners once a week, offering support and advocacy to them and to their families.

Sister Barbara is seeking additional funds to hire someone who would work more closely with offenders' families, including those who are Hispanic. She managed to fund Saturday's workshop with a \$1,300 grant from the diocesan Division of Urban Services.

Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministry staff members are also looking for ways to

implement some of the recommendations brought to the diocesan Hispanic encuentro in March, 1985, by a former inmate at Monroe County Jail. They included: increasing the number of bi-lingual counselors; housing Hispanic inmates near one another for communication's sake; scheduling special programs on Hispanic cultural holidays; and training prison personnel to better understand different Hispanic cultures.

Recently, the Monroe County Jail introduced an English-as-a-second-language course and re-instituted a Spanish language Mass, according to DeBruyn. "We've recently increased the number of Hispanic volunteers from 30 to 50," he said. "We also have a number of deputies who are either Spanish-speaking or of Hispanic origin."

Martinez' personal goal is to establish a halfway house and follow-up program for ex-offenders to ensure that they don't become offenders again. He also believes the Diocese of Rochester could do more to help inmates and their families.

"There's no organization in the (Hispanic) community that deals with the family," he said. "The diocese, through the Spanish Apostolate, should have a full-time person to help with these problems."

For more information about the workshop or the work of Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministry, call (716)325-1942.

Catholic Community slates party for both adults and children

The Catholic Community of the Blessed Trinity, which consists of St. Thomas of Red Creek and St. Mary Magdalene of Wolcott, is planning its annual Christmas party for Saturday, December 13, at the Elk's Club in Wolcott. A cocktail hour will take place at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m.

For information and reservations call

(315)594-2110.

The group is also planning a Christmas party for the children of the parish community after the 10:30 a.m. Mass on Sunday, December 21, at St. Mary Magdalene. Donation of Christmas cookies would be appreciated. Please leave them in the basement of the church before Mass.



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