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Bishop's Day offers seminars, focus on peace and hope

By Shealyn McGuire
Our Lady of Mercy High School
"Youth — Sowers of Hope — Builders of Peace" was the theme of this year's Bishop's Day with Youth, which took place on Sunday, April 5. More than 1,000 students from 82 parishes in 11 regions of the diocese gathered at Our Lady of Mercy High School on that day to celebrate a Eucharistic liturgy with Bishop Matthew H. Clark, attend workshops on timely and interesting topics, and make new friends.

The tradition of a youth day with the bishop was established three years ago in a gathering at Bishop Kearney High School. Its purpose was to bring teenagers together to explore various issues affecting their lives. Each year, a committee of youth ministers and young adults is designated to plan the special day. This year's committee of 10 people began planning before Christmas, conducting a meeting every two weeks since December. Their hard work paid off, resulting in a well-organized, well-attended and successful event.

The day began at 12:30 p.m. with an address and orientation session conducted by Pat Fox, director of Youth Ministry for the Diocese of Rochester. Thirty-four workshops were offered this year, on topics ranging from clown ministry and "God Isn't Just a Sunday God" to "Keeping Your Faith in College" and rock music. Each student attended two workshops of his or her choice.

At 1 p.m., students dispersed to their first workshops. I attended a seminar called "Raising Your Parents." Presented by Carol Montante, a youth minister at St. Rita's Church in Webster, the lecture focused on the difficulties

teens have in relating to their parents. "Understanding something about your parents makes it easier to live with them," Montante said. "Being a parent is a first-time experience, and as a young adult learns and grows, so do parents."

Following the first workshop was a liturgy of the Eucharist, celebrated by Bishop Clark with six diocesan priests concelebrating. The teenage participants' enthusiasm and interest for the day's events was evident in their singing of the opening song, "Let Us Build a City of God." After the liturgy, the bishop presented the Hands of Christ award to 77 young people from throughout the diocese. The award was established last year, when 52 teens were recognized for sharing their time and talent with their parishes. The award was inspired by a speech Pope John Paul II gave during a visit to New York City's Madison Square Garden. The pope spoke of young people's importance in the Catholic Church, saying that "they are not the Church of the future; they are the Church of today! They, too, can be the Hands of Christ for others."

This year's award recipients were presented with plaques bearing a Hands of Christ symbol and engraved with their names. For these teens, the recognition was well-deserved. As one observer put it, "It's about time that youths are recognized for the good things they do. Oftentimes, people only see the negative sides of teenagers and make generalizations based on these observations. Hopefully, through recognizing these teenagers as our representatives, people will be able to negate such opinions and realize that we (teens) can be responsible and capable of many good things."

In past years, the liturgy was followed by a forum in which Bishop Clark responded to the teenagers' questions on diverse issues. This year, however, organizers polled registrants prior to Bishop's Day and, as a result, decided to offer an additional workshop instead of the forum.

The second seminar I attended was on teenage suicide. It addressed means of recognizing suicidal tendencies among friends and acquaintances, and ways to help people who are considering suicide. The workshop was so popular that it was standing-room only. Ron Howe led the discussion, helping teens understand why people turn to suicide. After discussing specific incidents, Howe advised participants on ways of dealing with someone who is contemplating suicide.

Every year, 500,000 teenagers attempt sui-

cide. Of these, 35,000 succeed, and this figure is on the rise. Yet, when they are confronted by an acquaintance who is thinking of suicide, many teens are afraid, shocked or don't want to get involved. For this reason, the workshop was very helpful in bringing out an important topic people rarely discuss openly.

When the second workshop ended, students gathered together to share a meal and to participate in the closing ceremonies. Participants left Bishop's Day with Youth with a new sense of themselves, which will enable them to truly serve as the Hands of Christ.

Plans for next year's Bishop's Day are already underway. All Catholic teenagers are invited to participate. For more information, talk to your parish youth minister or call Pat Fox at (716) 328-3210.

By Elizabeth Berliner
Notre Dame High School

Suicide is the second largest killer of youths between the ages of 15 and 24. The teen-suicide rate has tripled during the last three decades; today, more than 6,000 kids each year choose to escape from their problems by killing themselves.

Why suicide?

A 1985 study revealed that suicidal thoughts are prevalent among youths today. As a matter of fact, 40.3 percent of 16 year olds surveyed in one study reported that they had considered suicide at least once in the preceding year. A survey taken in a Minnesota high school showed that three percent of the teens sampled had actually attempted suicide within the previous month.

Suicidal thoughts and suicide itself can be provoked by any number of factors: destruction of the family unit through death or divorce; drug and alcohol abuse (a May, 1986, study revealed that 10 to 20 percent of all American adolescents are "problem drinkers"); such emotional problems as hyperactivity, eating disorders and chronic depression; sexual abuse; the suicide attempts of friends or family members; unpleasant lifestyle changes; the news and entertainment media's glamorization of death; inability to face pain or deal with problems; and the loss of traditional values.

Ultimately, the bottom line in every decision to commit suicide is hopelessness. A rational mind possessing hope and faith in tomorrow can deal with the problems of today, but a mind consumed with thoughts of hopelessness and depression may find only one solution: death.

What are the warning signals?

At least 75 percent of all suicide victims exhibit warnings signals before their death. Perhaps the victims were crying out for help, but their pleas went undetected and unanswered. Statistics show that among those who survived one or more suicide attempts, 64 percent admit that they had truly wanted to live, but believed desperation left them only one choice. Fifty-four percent said they had hoped

someone would stop them. They, too, had sent out some of the many warning signals: chronic depression; drastic changes in sleep and eating patterns; social withdrawal; decline in school performance; irritability and mood swings; preoccupation with death; violence and rebelliousness; sense of failure; previous suicide attempts; and risky behavior.

All of these personality changes distinguish a person considering suicide. Most importantly, it is vital to recognize that youthful suicide does not have boundaries; it has no social, economic or geological ties, and may even claim the most unlikely youths as victims.

What can an outsider do?

Never dismiss a reference to suicide; often the victim is venting fears and frustrations in a verbal warning.

Don't hesitate to question the person directly. Chances are he or she may hide behind a laugh and a "What... me?", but this opens the gate for further communication on the subject.

Listen carefully to the problems he or she is dealing with.

Do not attempt to moralize, minimize, criticize or make uncertain promises.

Do not swear to secrecy. Losing a friend over a betrayed confidence is better than losing a friend to suicide.

Above all, seek further help from professional counselors and other qualified people who are trained in this area.

Suicide drains the American community of some of the best and brightest minds; it is a senseless loss of young, spirited individuals who could have made an important difference in the future. Fortunately, each of us can help by taking greater responsibility for others who are struggling around us. A small sign of friendship is enough to help even those fighting tides of hopelessness, and can give each of us a little more hope in the future.

Speaking Out

Equal Time

Our Lady of Mercy High School
Given the choice between a uniform and a dress code, which one would you choose and why?

MAUREEN BERMAN, sophomore

I have no preference between a dress code and a uniform, because with a dress code I wouldn't want to worry about what I was wearing each day, but it would also get boring wearing the same navy blue-and-white outfit each day.



JENNIFER MILNE, junior

I prefer a uniform to a dress code because, even though a dress code allows some freedom in what can be worn, it does not allow one to wear whatever they choose. When a uniform must be worn, a new outfit does not need to be put together every evening, and one does not need to worry about the last (time) an outfit was worn.



JODI LOBOZZO, freshman

I would rather have a uniform. Under a dress code, we would be competing for the best clothes. We don't need to wear nice clothes — we have no one to impress.

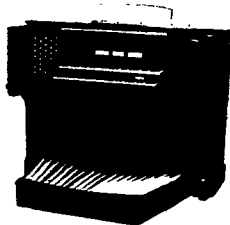


SUE CLAR, senior

I would opt for the uniform. It promotes unity, and there is no competition based on fashion. You go to school to learn, not to impress others with your wardrobe.



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We received 6 correct entries identifying "Happy Days" as the 1976 Pratt & McClain hit that was the theme song to the long running TV series.



The winner was
Jessica Norton
of Fairport

MUSIC TRIVIA

This week's question:

What year is Bob Seger's Chevy in his song "Night Moves"?

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
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A:

Rules:

Each week, the Courier-Journal, in conjunction with the House of Guitars will feature a Music Trivia contest. All you have to do to enter is answer the question, fill in your name and address and the school you attend (if applicable), cut out the coupon, and send it in to the Courier-Journal. If more than one correct entry is received, a drawing will be held and one winning entry will be drawn.

If yours is the winning entry, you will be mailed a coupon for a free album or tape of your choice redeemable at the House of Guitars, 645 Titus Ave.

All entries must be received within seven days of this paper's issue date. Winning names and answers will be printed the week following each drawing.

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