

ECHO ECHO ECHO ECHO

Kearney resurrects campus ministry

By Anne Dealy

Bishop Kearney High School

"Go and preach, 'The Kingdom of heaven is near!' Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, heal those with dreaded skin diseases, and drive out demons. You have received without paying, so give without being paid."

Jesus' commands to the Twelve Apostles, which are recorded in Matthew 10:7-8, may seem impossible for today's Catholic youths to follow, but Jesus' words can easily be adapted to encompass many charitable deeds that need to be done in 20th-century American life. Perhaps today, Jesus would exhort us to comfort sick or hospitalized people, to visit with a lonely senior citizen, to reach out to a mentally retarded child, or even to do housework for someone who needs assistance.

Often in today's society many such needs are left unfulfilled because people are "just too busy" or simply can't find the time to give up part of themselves in helping others. Even Christians, who are supposed to be dedicated to serving others first, frequently forget that Christ is found not only in church but also in the least of his brothers and sisters.

Service, then, is an important and integral part of the Catholic faith and cannot be overlooked in a Catholic education. To better integrate service into its curriculum Bishop Kearney High School resurrected and revitalized its campus ministry program to meet this need for service and to strengthen the school as a faith community.

The Bishop Kearney campus ministry program, which was known formerly as PAX, faded out four years ago for lack of a school chaplain to run and organize it. Campus ministry is now back due to student, faculty, and parent urgings, as well as a genuine desire for Kearney to be Catholic both inside and outside its religion classrooms.

Run by Brother Tom Sanger and Ginny Kennedy, the program has two divisions: senior service projects, which involve Kearney as an influence on the Rochester Community, and the Alpha and Omega Peer Ministry Group, which is designed to improve intraschool relations and freshman adjustment to high school.

The senior service projects are Kearney's opportunity to assist the community through volunteer work. They also give Catholic teenagers the chance to practice their faith outside of church or school and to share their gifts with those who need them most.

The service projects consist of 20 hours of volunteer work and are a requirement for graduation. Students are given a wide range of options in what they can do, ranging from candy stripping at a local hospital to doing cleanup work for the town of Irondequoit; from teaching CCD in their parishes to working with Catholic Charities. Some of the agencies in direct contact with the school are St. Ann's Home, the Star Program of the St. Catholic Family Center, Volunteer Connection, Compeer, the United Cerebral Palsy Association, St. John's Home, Rochester General Hospital, and the ARC Program of the Al Sigl Center.

In a September 24 assembly, students met with representatives from the organizations with which they can volunteer. The organizers then



had a week to decide which agency to work with and to sign a contract for their services. Each senior must have 20 hours documented in a log book and also will share his or her progress with a faculty adviser. Those students who already do volunteer work, whether on their own or through church programs, may document their hours in the upcoming months and apply them to the required time.

The second part of Bishop Kearney's new campus ministry program is an adaptation of the old PAX program. Rather than going back to the previous system of class retreats, Kennedy and Brother Sanger worked to develop a peer ministry/counseling program based on programs at Cardinal Mooney and Aquinas high schools. The peer ministry group, consisting of 31 seniors, is called Alpha-Omega and will be involved in ministry, retreats and Christian leadership within the school. Its main purpose, however, is to minister to the freshman class on an individual level. According to Kennedy, "Peer ministry started in hopes of fostering spirit between seniors and freshmen" — a spirit which might not otherwise exist. The group hopes to unite the freshman class and make the closer to the upperclassmen, while boosting Kearney spirit and warmth throughout all four classes.

The Alpha-Omega group members were chosen last year from among interested juniors who were willing to rebuild Bishop Kearney as a faith community by working with the class of 1991. These students then attended a workshop on June 22 and a three-day retreat/leadership workshop September 1-3 at Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua. The purpose of both workshops was for seniors to get to know one another better, to break down any barriers among them and to instruct them about the work they would be doing with the freshmen. This process will be continued throughout the first semester in a new religion course that focuses on peer counseling.

Each senior will work with five freshmen. Since school started, the peer ministers have gotten to know their freshmen friends, particularly through the September 25 Field Day,



Speaking Out

By Anthony Wang

Elmira Notre Dame High School

For a few students, this school year will be a time of torment. Every high school has a group of students who can't make it through a day without being insulted at least once. These "outcasts" come in many shapes and sizes. The following students aren't real, but students like them can be found in every school.

"Mark" has a terrible weight problem. He just cannot lose weight. No diet has been able to work for him. He realizes that a nice personality should compensate for his physical liabilities. Yet, he often feels ashamed of his body. As a result, he lives his life behind a wall of virtual silence, only speaking when he is spoken to.

"Lynn" is similar to Mark physically, but her approach to dealing with others is far different. When people try to make fun of her, she strikes back with a verbal barrage of insults. Although very few people pick on her, she is unable to tell friend from foe. Thus, she treats everyone as if they had something against her.

"Mary" is a very intelligent and often witty person. On the outside, however, those qualities aren't evident. In both her appearance and her actions, she is plain. Whenever she tries to break out of her "plain" image, some inconsiderate person pushes her back. Therefore, only Mary's closest friends realize how wonderful she is.

Each of the above students has a high school life that for the most part isn't very pleasant. But it doesn't have to be this way. If more people looked for the good qualities in these three students, the scenarios would be happier. Instead the situations are bleak and desolate.

For a number of readers, what I am about to say is obvious. These readers know it will be a criticism of people who mock others. Basically, that is true. Some will say, "I heard this all before" or "What's the big deal?" For those who feel mocked or left out, however, ignoring the issue will do more harm than good. Keeping it quiet will not help students like "Mark" become more open, nor will it persuade "Lynn" to tone down her act and become more sociable.

Facing the effects that insults or put-

downs have on students and how these effects influence high school life would be a nice place to start.

High school is supposed to be four wonderful years in which personal, social and academic maturity occurs — mixed in with a lot of fun. Without the fun part, the maturity part may never come. When that happens, the time spent in school becomes meaningless. Personal maturity is impossible if one is put down constantly. How can a person look at his or her inner being and learn how to grow when he or she is constantly told in one way or another that he or she is inferior?

If personal maturity is stopped, then social maturity becomes next to impossible. If a person can't deal with himself or herself in a kind manner, then it will show in relationships with others. Clubs, sports and other school activities may be ignored. The camaraderie that comes with those activities will never be known. Finally, academic work will suffer. For some, studying may have a haven from outside life. Still, these are those who want to enjoy all aspects of being a high school student. In their struggle to achieve that, their studies would probably be sacrificed to some extent.

Before I finish, I'd like to point out some common facts. Generally speaking, most high school students are not acid-tongued insulters. But there will be times when a student does have a few choice words to say about someone else.

I won't say that I am an exception. Nevertheless, there are those who make it their business to put people down. Take a look at some of these people and why they take so much pleasure out of making fun of people. Most of them are basically insecure. They feel uncomfortable with themselves and what they have done with their lives. Therefore, seeing other people squirm makes them feel big. Who would want to imitate these people? What the better students should do is to stay in control. When fellow students act really weird or strange, try to see beyond the outside appearance.

I know that it is easier said than done, but if one person can be shown by the considerate actions of another that being in high school can be a great experience, then it will be worth the effort.

which the peer ministers planned and ran. This day consisted of various competitive and non-competitive games and relay races that helped the freshmen meet new faces and learn about their peer ministers. Seniors were also able to get to know other freshmen groups, and by the end of the day both classes were participating in such games as Charlie Brown baseball and an egg walk with spirit and friendly competitiveness.

Despite the focus of freshmen, campus

ministry does not end at the ninth grade. Administrators and students will be working on day retreats for all classes and on developing other aspects of the program to gain junior and sophomore involvement. The biggest hope for campus ministry at Bishop Kearney is that it will provide a support network of faith and love for all students and show Kearney as truly an example of Christ's love on earth. Or as Kennedy puts it, "What a way to kick off the first year of the next 25!"

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