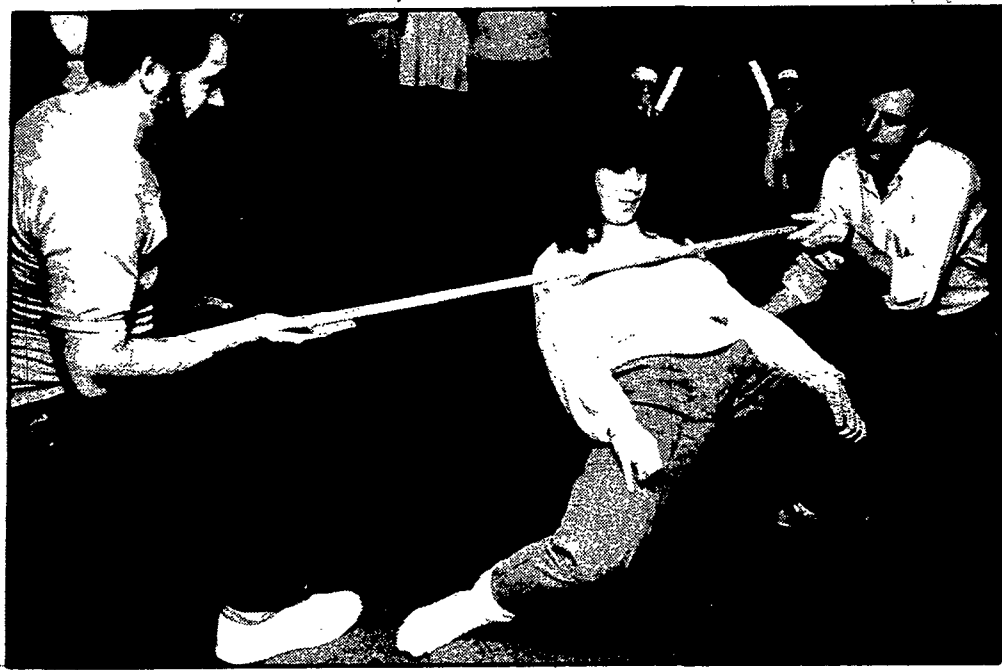


Features



J. Sanchez

Michelle Murante, winner of the limbo contest, struts her stuff at the citywide teen Mass and dance sponsored by Holy Name of Jesus Parish.

Teen gatherings combine Masses, social interaction

By Lee Strong

Many aspects of the citywide teen Mass and dance hosted by Holy Name of Jesus Parish Saturday, March 19, stand out in the mind of Ty Lambert, the parish's youth minister.

The "Blues Brothers" act from St. John's, Humboldt St., that won the lip-sync competition; the 10-minute-long sign of peace during the Mass; the music during the liturgy and the enthusiastic folk group made up of teens from several parishes; and the limbo contest all helped to make the evening memorable for him.

But, Lambert said, nothing stands out as much as the arrival of a third carload of teens from Webster's Holy Trinity Parish.

Two of the three carloads from Holy Trinity's youth group had arrived in time for the beginning of the Mass. By the time of the consecration, the third group still had not arrived, causing some concern. The congregation said a special prayer that they would arrive safely. The missing group walked into the Church just after the prayer.

"That was remarkable," Lambert commented.

The Mass, dance and lip-sync contest were all part of an evening intended "to give the teens a chance to socialize as well as to grow spiritually," said Patrick Fox, director of the diocesan Office of Youth Ministry.

Lambert said he organized the evening "to

meet the prayer needs of the teens. (Sometimes), we address the social needs and tend to neglect the spiritual needs."

The chief value of such evenings is that they allow teens to meet other teens who have a strong faith, Lambert remarked, adding, "That's really when things happen — when one teen sees another really involved and begins to wonder why."

Father Charles Manning, associate director of Youth Ministry for Youth Retreats and Family Camp, celebrated the Mass. Such gatherings as Saturday's not only bring teens together with other teens to share their common faith, he said, but also convey an important message.

"The kids come together with a sense of belonging, not in the sense of teens, but as part of the diocese," Father Manning said. "We're telling them they have a place in the Church. The message we give them is, 'You're the Church of tomorrow, but you're also a part of the Church today.'"

Approximately 115 teens from at least eight parish groups attended the Mass. Many of the youths took active roles in the service itself, assisting at the altar, serving as eucharistic ministers, doing the readings, and participating in the folk group.

Lambert acknowledged that some of the teens may have attended more for the lip-sync competition and dance than for the Mass, but he said he wasn't disturbed by that.



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Chris Holdridge (left) and Jeff Vallone, perform the Blues Brothers routine that earned them the dance's lip-sync title.

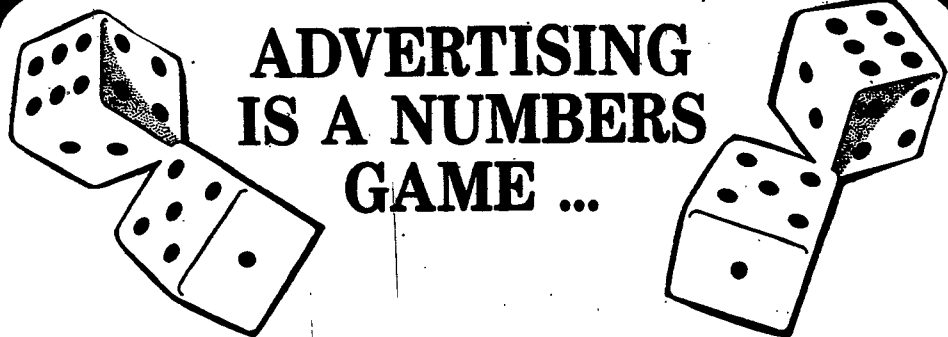
"That's not necessarily bad," Lambert observed. "It gets them involved in their own youth groups. Even if they're there for the wrong reason, the right object gets done."

Father Manning pointed out that combining a Mass with dancing and music could even be said to have a biblical endorsement. "God calls us to celebrate," he noted. "David in the Old Testament said it's important to pray — and to dance and sing and play musical instruments."

The gathering at Holy Name was the third

such teen Mass conducted in Rochester in recent months. On January 22, a Mass and a dance were held at St. Augustine's Parish. Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish hosted a Mass and a pizza party November 29, and Lambert credits Brian Cool, the youth minister at OLPH, with originating the teen Masses.

The OLPH Mass attracted more than 120 teens from eight different parish groups. Cool was pleased that other parishes have picked up on the idea and expects more to do so in the future.



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