

Young people bring many gifts to the church

Monday evening.

Paul Tomasso and I returned from St. Theresa's, Stanley, just a few minutes ago. I confirmed 14 candidates from that parish community and from St. Mary's, Rushville. I find all confirmations enjoyable, each for different reasons. Smaller ones are delightful because they offer an opportunity for more personal interaction with the candidates. Such was the case tonight.

Our second reading was from Paul's Letter to the Corinthians and referred to the variety of gifts the Holy Spirit gives to the community. Paul makes the point that while the gifts are given to individuals, they are not given solely for private possession and enjoyment. Rather, the gifts are given to good stewards and are meant for the life of the community that proclaims the Good News that is Jesus.

In that context, I asked each of the 14 women and men who acted as the sponsors for the candidates if each would be willing to name aloud, for the community, one or two of the special gifts the sponsor most strongly identified in the young person she or he was accompanying.

I would not have done that if I felt it would make anyone feel awkward or embarrassed, but I was surprised at the great

ease and delight with which the adults took up the challenge. Each took a moment to do that. One mentioned a sense of humor, another the ability to be herself even when she felt a little down, still another a special sensitivity and care for other people. And so it went.

While that was happening, there was a special attentiveness among the members of the congregation, who were clearly interested in what was being said about their young people. Many nodded or smiled in affirmation. And all of it, at least in my judgment, was recognition in faith that these young friends truly do bear the touch of the Holy Spirit and that they truly are gifts among us.

I may have been especially sensitive to the reality of these young people because I had the joy of spending most of Sunday with 700 or 800 others at the Riverside Convention Center in Rochester. They came from virtually every area of our diocese to learn, to celebrate, to share and to worship, and they did all of those things with engaging enthusiasm. There is something very holy about them.

That holiness was manifested in several ways, but the one that impressed me was the way they listened to and honored one

another. The pre-luncheon portion of the program was keynoted by an outstanding group of performers from Cardinal Mooney High School. They presented a short drama, the theme of which focused on a real, integral person, living in healthy interdependence with others. When the presentation ended, I noted that there was well over an hour before lunch and thought to myself that such a large group could not possibly sustain a lively discussion for so long a time. But they did, and it was a fascinating experience to share in it.

Sunday's Gospel, as you recall, was the Resurrection scene from the Gospel of John. In it, Jesus feeds his friends by the lakeside after a miraculous catch of fish. He reconciles Peter, heals him and places him in a special relationship of service to the community. He entrusts to Peter, and to the church, the extension of his ministry throughout the ages.

The abundant goodness of our young people reminds me of the way the Lord nourishes, heals and leads our community today. They have so much to offer. We can do few better things than to encourage them to be confident in their gifts and to share them with others.

Peace to all.



Along The Way

Reader says lower tuition will raise school enrollments

To the editor:

As I see it, Catholic elementary schools will survive only if enrollment in the individual schools increases. To do this, Catholic elementary education must be made affordable. The diocesan commission's decision to make the tuition a "uniform rate" of \$1,095 for just one child, which is raising the tuition for most of the schools — who have managed, without diocesan help, to keep the tuition reasonable — is making Catholic education even LESS attractive and too great a strain on the budgets of most middle-income people. Many are already paying \$1,000 or more a year on public school taxes.

Subsidies alone are not the answer. When parents see the high tuition fee, they won't even consider sending their children to a Catholic school.

Why not make the tuition rate more reasonable, say \$700 a family? Would not more families send their children to the schools? By increasing class enrollment,

because of the tuition attracting more students, the cost of educating each student would decrease. Paying a teacher to teach 30 students, instead of 15, is certainly more cost effective. Seven-hundred dollars each for 30 students equals \$21,000; \$1,095 each for 15 students equal \$16,425.

All Catholics in the diocese must be made to see the importance of supporting Catholic education. With our youth lies the future of our Church. Educating our youth

should be a top priority for the parish churches and the diocese! Funding must come from all members, not just the parents. The older members must see that they should not deprive the youth of the opportunity they themselves had as children — the opportunity to attend a nearby school where God and His wonders can be openly discussed in every class; where prayer and Christian behavior is central to the school day; where the emphasis is on love, kind-

ness, and doing your best; where peer pressure is to behave in class; where "being cool" is being good and working hard.

I ask the diocese to reconsider the high tuition rates, which will result in denying so many of our youth the opportunity of a Catholic education. Don't make it available only to the wealthy.

Carolyn Joy
Short Hills Drive
Hilton

Abortion has not saved women's lives, writer claims

To the editor:

Very often we hear the argument that before abortion was legal, thousands of women died as a result of "back-alley" abortions. Therefore, legalized abortions insures "safe abortions." Not true!

These wild accusations, frequently made by those having an interest in the lucrative abortion business, can statistically be proven false, explains J.C. Wilke, M.D., president of National Right to Life. In the February, 1989, issue of *National Right to*

Life News, Dr. Wilke uses statistics from the Center for Disease Control, a federal agency, showing that only 39 women died from abortions in 1972. This was the year before the Supreme Court's decision *Roe vs. Wade* made abortion legal in all states.

Pro-abortionists claim that there were thousands of additional deaths from illegal abortions, which were covered up. This belief is unfounded. The fact is that physicians who filled out the death certificates would almost never be the abortionist. Therefore, there was no strong motivation for the physician not to report the cause of death accurately.

In a chart showing the official government National Center for Health statistics, Dr. Wilke shows a steady decline of ma-

ternal deaths from abortions, ranging from the 1940s to 1980. The higher number of deaths was in the 1940s — with 1,000 such deaths. The rate of decline is due to the use of penicillin, better antibiotics and the establishment of intensive care units — not with the legalization of abortion. In fact, when abortion became legalized nationally in 1973, the death rate on the chart didn't even blip or change.

Accordingly, we can make a firm factual statement that legalizing abortion has NOT saved any women's lives. However, it HAS mercilessly killed over 24 million unborn babies.

Eleanor Dean
Foster Avenue
Elmira

Parish councils advised to watch St. Anne's situation

To the editor:

As one of many former parishioners of St. Anne's (Rochester) and a past parish council president, I feel that there is a more subtle, real issue involved in the controversy over the closing of St. Anne's School. It is not as much *what* was done as *how* it was accomplished.

Is the Diocese of Rochester willing to uphold its own *Parish Ministry Guidelines*, the certified parish constitutions and the parish councils? I certainly hope that other parish councils in the diocese are watching these events very closely.

Cathleen V. Smith
Southland Drive
Rochester

Schools should consider supporting boycott

To the editor:

I would like to commend Paul Civiarrri, Beth Rieter, Don Schwab and all the students, faculty and school employees at Aquinas Institute for their continuing part in the grape boycott sponsored by the United Farm Workers of America under the selfless leadership of Cesar Chavez (*Courier*, March 2: "Poisons on grapes inspire fast at Aquinas")! And I want to challenge the other schools in our area to join them!

To get the videotape which explains the boycott just write to: UFW, P.O. Box 62 Keene, Calif. 93531 or call 805/822-5571. The tape is called "The Wrath of Grapes" (in color, VHS format, specify English or Spanish). It runs 15 minutes. Or perhaps Paul Civiarrri would be willing to loan you his copy from Aquinas Institute. Good luck! God bless your efforts!

Mary Rita Crowe
East Main Street
Rochester

Florida-based 'Isaiah 43' parish retreat program praised

To the editor:

Each year during Lent our parish enjoys a Retreat. We have been blessed in the past with different programs and several diocesan priests as our leaders.

Have you ever heard of the rather new "Isaiah 43" Mission? A core team from the parish helps in the preparation, prayer and participation. A visiting priest and lay person preach at the weekend Masses and conduct four evening liturgies.

We have just experienced the results

(March 6-9). Each night some 350 persons found peace, forgiveness and joy!

Indeed the Spirit is very much alive and moving in the church today! For information, contact: Food for the Poor, 1301 W. Copans Road, Pompano Beach, Fla. 33064; phone 305/975-0000.

Father Jim Jaeger
Deacon Bob McCormick
Father Elmer Schmidt
St. Ann's Church
Hornell



Catholic Courier Letters Policy

The *Catholic Courier* wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome all signed, original letters about current issues affecting church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions of the letter writers.

We reserve the right to edit all letters. Mail them to: *Catholic Courier*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, New York 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.