

# Teenagers voice concerns at conference with bishops

DENVER (CNS) — As part of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry's western conference early this summer, young people from throughout the western United States shared with five bishops their concerns about their place in the church and also asked questions about church teaching on women priests, sexuality and other topics.

The youth-bishop forum was sponsored by the U.S. bishops' Committee for Marriage and Family Life. A similar dialogue

with bishops and teens from the eastern United States will be held in November in Louisville, Ky.

More than 20 teens asked questions of Bishops Bernard J. Ganter of Beaumont, Texas; Richard C. Hanifen of Colorado Springs, Colo.; Arthur N. Tafoya of Pueblo, Colo.; and Auxiliary Bishops Robert J. Carlson of St. Paul-Minneapolis and Dale J. Melczek of Detroit.

"High-school youth are eager to participate and should be afforded the opportunity," Bishop Carlson said when asked why youths aren't serving on parishes councils and committees.

"The church needs to support young people every day of their lives, not just in times of crisis," Bishop Tafoya said.

Bishop Melczek said bishops need to support youth ministry, especially peer-ministry programs, and that young people need to have visible roles in the liturgy.

The bishop said young people should be represented on parish liturgy committees

and that their ideas for meeting the needs of young people should be listened to.

One young man from the Midwest asked why special liturgies could include the music and cultural symbols of Poles, Hispanics, blacks and other groups, but the music meaningful to youths is forbidden.

Bishop Melczek said he was in favor of celebrations with appropriate music for young people.

The use of girls and women as altar servers was supported by the young people, and by the bishops. "We need to get on with more important issues in our lives and faith than a preoccupation with girls serving on the altar," Bishop Ganter said.

The majority of the 1,200 teens at the conference seemed to agree that priests should be able to marry, and that ordination should be open to women, even though the church teaches that the disciplines governing priesthood in the Latin rite are modeled on Jesus' ministry.

## Campus

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must be raised through liturgical offerings and special fundraisers. "The subsidy tries to fill the amount of money the ministries need that they cannot raise locally," explained Father Mahler, who serves as assistant director of campus ministry for finance and budget. And, the priest noted, "sometimes the subsidy does not cover (the expenses)."

Both the Cornell and Rochester Institute of Technology Catholic communities are self-supporting, receiving no diocesan subsidy — a situation that places a special bur-

den on ministry staff. "There is always the challenge of raising money, since we do not get enough from the weekly offering," Father Forni said.

Limitations on time and space are also concerns for the campus ministers, especially for those at community colleges, where fixed space and the strict schedules of commuters can hinder ministry efforts.

"We have meetings on a monthly basis, but it is hard because there are so many organizations and so few meeting rooms," Luna observed. It is ministry in a time-slot."

Despite such challenges, campus ministers are committed to the effort to minister to students and prepare them for church

life after graduation.

"It is a wonderful ministry to be able to impact students' lives and plant the seed of faith," remarked Father James Sauer, chaplain at Rochester Institute of Technology. "Then we leave it in the hands of the Good Lord that somehow the goodness of individual things will happen in a good way."

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