

Teens

Continued from page 1 and doing.

Trusting

"The loving relationship adolescents develop with God will shape and be shaped by their relationship with other people," the document asserts. Its sentiments form the philosophical basis of youth-group sharing sessions, which are the centerpieces of parish youth ministries.

"I would say that (teenagers) are looking for a friend, a God," remarked Ann Capone, youth minister at St. Margaret Mary's in Rochester. "It is hard for them to face trying to find themselves and where they feel." She said students ask themselves "Who do I trust?" and "Is God really there?" God can be found through the youth-group experience of church, noted Ann Karski, leader of the St. Cecilia/St. John the Baptist youth group in Elmira. "Our kids have commented on how they feel more comfortable with the church and with the liturgy. They feel more like a parish family," she said.

Youth group also is a refuge from the stressful adolescent world that puts a premium on fitting in, noted Kristin Schoeberlein, a junior at Elmira Free Academy and a youth-group member.

"It's not like school where they're in their cliques and everyone is trying to im-

press everyone." The confidentiality of the group's discussion nights is an added attraction, she said. "You can get anything off your chest and not worry about it getting back."

Brian Sweeney, a member of the group at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, remarked that students can't always count on their peers to accept them as practicing Christians. Youth group is one place where teenagers can trust one another with their religious feelings, said the Brockport High School senior. "They want to be around other people who think the way they do about God," he said.

Believing

"The activity of believing ... requires that we provide opportunities for youth to deepen and expand their understanding of scriptural/doctrinal expression of our faith tradition in ways appropriate to their readiness and maturity," observes the federation document.

The paper goes on to emphasize the "reasonableness" of Catholic teaching.

The importance of the Mass, for example, often is not apparent to students, youth ministers reported. "The Mass is boring," is a common teenage refrain, said Fox, noting that youth ministers and catechists should not shy away from the criticism.

"(The Mass) is repetitive — it is boring," he said. "Why is that such a surprise? It's meant to be a centering act to bring us to God." Fox said that while many young

Catholics — and, indeed, older ones as well — complain about the Mass, they rarely follow up such complaints by asking their pastor to explain the liturgy.

Interestingly, however, two youth groups will be responding to Fox's challenge this fall. Legere's group is planning a Mass in which the celebrant will explain the meaning of each step of the liturgy. Capone's group, meanwhile, will spend some time in its sessions focusing on the meaning of the Mass.

The Mass, Capone will explain, is like a family reunion. "We are welcomed, we have dinner — the whole idea is that looking at it from the perspective, (the group members) can own it a bit more," she said.

Activity

"Ownership" of one's faith expresses itself through activity — the third dimension of a sound adolescent catechesis, the federation wrote in *Challenge*. "Catechesis challenges young people to respond to God's love by living a life of service to others and by working for peace and justice on all levels of human existence."

Many parish youth groups are bearing the fruits of their faith by working in soup kitchens, shelters and homes for the elderly. Sweeney noted that working with his friends in service projects sponsored by the youth group makes him want to come back each week.

"I like helping with the church, so I'm down there a lot," he said. "It's just some-

thing to do besides watching TV. It's something productive."

Beyond occupying a bored adolescent's time, is the potential for converting a student's heart, noted Legere, who recalled how one group member reacted to her first Saturday volunteering at St. Peter's Kitchen in Rochester.

"One girl went home and cried for three hours," Legere remembered. "She was angry at me for making her go, even though I really didn't. She swore that she would never go again — and then she went every time."

Enlightened adolescents will someday become enlightened adults, noted Legere. "If you want a church in 1995, you better minister to these people now," she said. "I want to see them to see the church as dynamic and changing."

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Everyone deals with grief in a different personal way.

GRIEF RESOURCE INFORMATION FORUM and the PASTORAL CARE CENTER at Rochester General Hospital jointly sponsor a monthly bereavement group called WORKING THROUGH LOSS.

The group provides information, education and peer support for adults recovering from the death of a significant person in their lives.

The group meets the second Thursday of each month from 7:30-9:30 p.m. in the E-5 conference room at Rochester General Hospital.

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