

Parishes, youth groups sustain teens



Bishop Matthew H. Clark listens thoughtfully after his dialogue with teens at the seventh annual Bishop's Day with Youth. Babbette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

By Sean McNamara
Freelance writer

ROCHESTER — According to teenagers at the seventh annual Bishop's Day with Youth on Sunday, April 29, hospitality is the characteristic they are most proud of in their parishes.

The teens' responses came during a forum with Bishop Matthew H. Clark when — in a change from previous years when the bishop or a panel of experts fielded questions — the bishop queried teens about various issues.

Approximately 625 students attended the day-long program held at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center, according to Pat Fox, diocesan director of youth ministry. That number is slightly fewer than the 700 who attended last year's event.

The exchange between students and Bishop Clark provided several interesting insights on whether the church meets the needs of teenagers.

When Bishop Clark asked teens about what makes them most proud to be a part of their parish community, they overwhelm-

ingly responded with testimonials to their parish youth groups and parish communities.

One Fairport teen said his youth group "is not only loving in youth group, but also in school, where you really need it the most."

Another youth, who is a member of All Saints Church in Lansing, said her parish is special because of its unity.

"It is like a family. We're all very close-knit," she said.

The idea of family was echoed by Terri Lee, a student at Our Lady of Mercy High School. She found acceptance in a youth group outside of her home parish.

Johann Engstrom, the youth minister at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Brighton, said he is proud of the spirituality of his youth group, where he often finds more teens show up for prayer sessions than softball games.

Teens from St. Charles Borromeo and Holy Name of Jesus parishes in Rochester said they are proud of their inspirational youth minister, Ty Lambert. Lambert said he began his vocation as youth minister three years ago, expecting it to only be a one-year stepping stone to a better position.

"I've found there is nothing bigger and better than youth ministry," Lambert said.

Marie Claus, a youth minister at Assumption of Our Lady Church, echoed Lambert's enthusiasm about youth ministry. Teens from the Fairport parish overwhelmingly cited her as "the person in your life who has brought encouragement to you."

"They (teens) do a lot more for me than I do for them," Claus said.

Other students suggested their parish



Babbette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
Youth minister Johan Engstrom reports strong response among teens to spiritual activities sponsored by Our Lady of Lourdes Parish youth group in Brighton.

priest, parents, close relatives and Christ as inspirational figures in their lives.

Margaret Simpson said her aunt, Mary Bodine, is a constant companion, who "has helped me with just about everything." Bodine, who was with Simpson for the day, was gracious in accepting her niece's accolades. "We've gone through a lot together. She is a beautiful

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