

Speaker urges teenagers to exercise 'saved sex'

By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

FAIRPORT — "If we are ever going to solve the problems of teenagers, we have to first go to the teenagers," author and speaker Molly Kelly told Rochester-area audiences last week.

And that's just what Kelly does. The Philadelphia woman, who brings her message of chastity to youth groups and schools across the country, spoke to more than 400 young people at St. John of Rochester Parish on Jan. 8.

Kelly began her talk with a brief discussion about abortion. She explained to the junior high and high school students that abortions were not legal until 1973. Since most of the youths in attendance at the church that evening were born between 1973-78, Kelly told them that seven million more people their age would be alive today if it weren't for abortions.

She noted that since 1973, 26 million fetuses have been aborted in the United States. About 98 percent of all abortions are performed for non-medical reasons,

according to Kelly.

The advocate of chastity — who has brought her message to 41 states over the past five years — noted that about 1.2 million teenage girls are currently pregnant, and about 1,000 teens give birth in Rochester every year. Even though each state has a commission to study teenage pregnancies, it is tragic that no youths are allowed to sit on the panels, Kelly said.

Another tragedy, said Kelly, is that too many people of her generation believe that today's teens can't say no. "Then teens start believing they can't say no," Kelly remarked.

Although society conveys a message of "safe sex," Kelly said her message is one of "saved sex." She gave two versions of sexual responsibility — one that requires a person to eat or wear something to protect themselves, the other that utilizes a self-control that comes from within.

"Pills and condoms don't always work," Kelly pointed out. "You guys don't need that stuff — you're better than that," Kelly told her young audience.

When adults give contraception to kids, they give young people the tool to practice the very thing they want them to avoid, said Kelly.

"We can't change our message. If someone does drugs, we don't give them fresh needles. When a school tells kids not to drink, they don't give them alcohol," she argued.

Since she raised eight children — six of whom are male — Kelly said she understands that young adults have sexual urges. Young people must learn that they cannot act on those urges, she said.

"By giving the message of safe sex, we are taking something good and reducing it to the animal level," she explained.

According to Kelly, the decision to engage in sex has life-or-death consequences. "If someone has sex and a condom fails, a girl gets pregnant and we gain a life. If a condom fails and a person gets AIDS, we lose a life," she said.

Because of the apparent loose morals in today's society, Kelly said youths now face more peer pressure than when she was young. But teens need to take control and make their own decisions, she instructed.

"I can be a 'rubber raider' and go remove all the contraceptives from the stores, but I want to put the ball in your court and have you make the decision for yourself," Kelly said.

She added that sex has become a commodity. "I'm not opposed to sex, but I am



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
Philadelphia resident Molly Kelly gestures during her Jan. 8 lecture on chastity.



More than 400 young people attended Kelly's Jan. 8 talk at St. John of Rochester Parish.

opposed to the selling of sex."

For instance, she continued, many songs today give the message that having sex before marriage is OK and even expected. Although listening to a song can't get a girl pregnant, Kelly noted that the presence of sexual messages on the radio and in the movies desensitizes kids.

She raised another question for youths when she asked how many of them had heard the word "condom" in the past week. She then asked how many had heard the word "chastity" during the same period of time.

When only a few people admitted to hearing "chastity," Kelly asked, "Who is doing a better job of advertising — the condom people or the chastity people?"

She added, "People are so concerned about pure air and water, but when it comes to their own bodies, they don't care about purity." The 51-year old Kelly told the audience that there is such a thing as secondary virginity. "Once you've done it, you don't always have to do it," she said.

How far does Kelly think young people should go in terms of sexual experience?

"Just remember this," she suggested, "if you rev the motor up, you intend to go. Kissing and hugging are OK, but that's different from petting and arousal."

She also encouraged young people to be aware of the signals they give to the opposite sex through their words, clothing and body language. "Sexuality is a gift from God," said Kelly. "The more you chew gum, the less the flavor. The more you have sex, the less meaningful it becomes. Sexual intercourse says, 'Do not open until marriage.'"

In an interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Kelly — who has been speaking to teenagers about chastity for 14 years — noted that her husband's death gave her the motivation to bring her message to teens. "I felt that I would be closer to him if I did what he did," she said.

The pro-life activist said this is her calling from God, and if teens at least hear her message, than she is making a difference. She said she receives positive feedback from youths.

Take Joe Lanning for example. The 12-year-old Martha Brown Junior High School student said he agreed with everything that Kelly said.

"She was powerful," he said. Lanning, who is enrolled in religious-education classes at St. John of Rochester, said he had heard people talk about abstinence before. Kelly, however, gave much more information on the subject, he said.

Steve Dellapietra, a 19-year-old Nazareth College sophomore and religious-education teacher at St. John's,



Kelly opted to challenge St. John's teens to be chaste, rather than to order them.

said he also agreed with what Kelly had to say.

"She really got across to the kids the importance of chastity," Dellapietra said. "She affirmed the teens there and gave them the courage to be chaste."

The Bishop Kearney graduate added, "The media tells us to do it (have sex) but never mentions that self-control could be the solution to our problems."

Judith Norton, an 18-year-old member of St. John's youth group, said she was pleased to see that Kelly held such a high opinion of teenagers.

"We need that type of support," Norton said. "People like her (Kelly) raise our hopes for the future and make us want to keep ourselves pure."

Kelly also spoke to classes at Northeastern Catholic Junior High, Bishop Kearney High School and two schools in Honeoye Falls on Jan. 9. Parents were invited to St. John's the evening of Jan. 9 to hear a talk aimed at adults. But even though she spoke to different audiences, her message of self-control remained unchanged.

"I don't order you to chastity," Kelly said at her Jan. 8 talk, "I challenge you. Chastity will put you more in control of your lives."

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