



Spiritual support

Some youths preparing to receive the sacrament of confirmation are asking peer sponsors — friends or siblings close to them in age — to be their spiritual guides. Page 14.

You Are

Jesus often referred to the Kingdom of God as a feast or a party — a sumptuous banquet to which everyone is invited.

Yet according to one observer, Christ's followers in the late 20th century need to work harder at extending invitations to one group of Catholics who often feel unwelcome in the Catholic Church.

Out of more than 180 U.S. dioceses and archdioceses, only about 20 have made any "significant" ministry efforts for people in their 20s and early 30s, according to Father Ronald Bagley, CJM, director of the St. John Eudes Center in Buffalo.

Rochester is among the 20 dioceses that have taken steps toward ministering to young adults, said Father Bagley, whose center specializes in ministry formation and parish leadership development.

In an era of parish and diocesan cutbacks throughout the nation, Father Bagley explained, young-adult ministry offices and directors

are

often the first to fall when the budget ax is swung.

"I think the reason is basically that young adults are not a very visible part of most parishes or dioceses," he said, observing that the saying, "the squeaky wheel gets the grease," applies to the situation facing young adults in most dioceses and parishes.

Unfortunately, however, the available data indicate that the overlooked wheel of young-adult ministry is particularly important because it rolls through a region encompassing much of the church's membership, the priest and other observers remarked.

Making ministry among young adults all the more necessary is the fact that many are contemplating a return to the church, after having wandered away during their teens and early 20s.

Whether they're returning to the church or have never left, are today's young adults being invited to join the banquet at the average Catholic parish?

Invited

**By Rob Cullivan, Staff writer
RSVP on page 18**