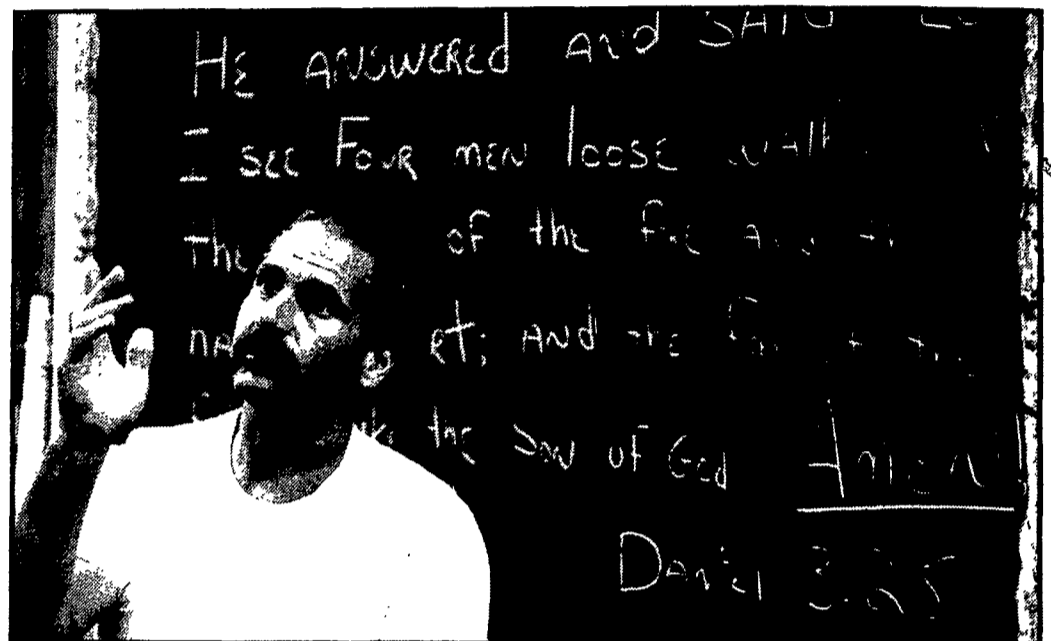


Groveland inmates discuss ways to aid church's image

The fall synod meetings concluded at the Groveland Correctional Facility's Catholic community in Sonyea last Sunday, Oct. 11, as inmates discussed violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and church accessibility. Clockwise from top left, Joe Antelmi states that 'we live in an ever-changing society, many companies use innovative ways to let people know what they offer, the church should do the same.' Don Montero records issues and concerns raised by inmates and synod facilitators. Stephen Ascioti suggests that 'we have to uplift the image of the church, the church is not recognized as a place to go for help. As inmates we have a negative image of the church.'

Photos By S. John Wilkin



Parishes, communities complete fall synods

Tier groups combine meetings to show unity

ELMIRA — The diocesan Synod's theme of togetherness is truly being taken to heart by parishioners at St. Patrick's Church, 604 Park Place.

Rather than stop at its own parish activities, the synod committee has expanded its effort to encompass much of the Southern Tier.

The fall synod, which concluded Oct. 11, featured a collaborative effort from St. Patrick's and 12 other parishes in Chemung, Steuben and Schuyler counties: Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Anthony's, St. Casimir's and St. Mary's in Elmira; St. Charles Borromeo in Elmira Heights; Church of St. Mary Our Mother in Horseheads; St. Mary's, St. Patrick's and St. Vincent DePaul in Corning; Immaculate Heart of Mary in Painted Post; St. Mary's of the Lake in Watkins Glen; and St. Benedict's in Odessa.

Linda Brabham, synod committee chairperson at St. Patrick's, said the idea to combine celebrations was put into action by committee member Marilyn Terkoski, with assistance from Brabham and fellow St. Patrick's representative Mary Klotz.

"We contacted the other parishes in the region so we could get a banner that would be identical," said Brabham. "Most parishes have banners hanging on the exterior of their church."

The banners measure three-by-five feet. Set against a white background, they include the synod logo in black along with the message, "The synod is here," in red letters.

"To get other people enthused beyond their own parish was very exciting," said Brabham. "It wasn't something that was called for, but we thought it would be a nice idea."

Brabham noted that it's important to send a unified message proclaiming the synod to Southern Tier residents of all denominations.

"One of the things that came out of the synod is that people want more parish interaction. We have a lot of parishes for a small area, so it's very, very important that Catholics in this area show their unity," Brabham emphasized. "It draws attention from the non-Catholic community and shows that we're doing something special."

She added that the same 13 synod committees will meet next month to prepare for the regional synod on Saturday, Dec. 12 at St. Mary Our Mother.

— Mike Latona

Members ask diocese to offer more services

ROCHESTER — The church needs to respond in a more realistic way to the needs of young people and divorced Catholics, according to parishioners at St. Salome's Church, 4282 Culver Road.

Such concerns were voiced during the parish's recent synod sessions, according to Patricia Gellner, a parish synod committee member.

Attendance at each of the sessions was about 70 people, Gellner said, adding that participants seemed enthusiastic about tackling the themes.

"They had obviously thought about these things before they even got there," Gellner said.

A total of 261 parishioners showed up for the sessions, added Gary Line, another team member.

In particular, St. Salome's parishioners believe that the church needs to implement more programs that cater to young Catholics in their adolescent years, Gellner remarked. Participants noted that young Catholics often drop out of church life after confirmation, often not returning until they are raising families of their own, she said.

Gellner added that some participants want the church to re-examine how it handles divorced Catholics and single-parent families.

"They felt so many of the single-parent families are being alienated from parish life," Gellner observed, adding that the annulment process was seen by some as "long" and "prying."

To strengthen marriage and family life, Line said participants recommended that more support groups be established for Catholics.

Most notably, participants suggested that the church establish "Post-Cana" support groups for married couples that would continue throughout their lives. To aid marriages, for example, such groups might re-educate couples about the church's sacraments, he said.

Line added that the participants would like the church to establish support groups for other Catholics, such as women facing unwanted pregnancies.

Finally, participants urged the diocese to create a telephone "hotline" that would serve as a referral service for Catholics in need of counseling and other services, Line said. The diocese might also consider publishing a directory compiling such services, he added.

— Rob Cullivan

Geneva team finds words lead to 'act-ion'

GENEVA — In *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare wrote, "The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."

Synod committee members at St. Francis de Sales Parish, 130 Exchange St., had other uses for "plays" at their church.

During September's weekend Masses, the committee employed short plays and character skits to introduce the major themes for the first three weeks of synod sessions: Christian marriage and family; worship and liturgy; and violence, addiction, burdensome pregnancy and terminal illness.

"The attempt was to make (the themes) seem more real life, affecting real people," explained Robert Tupaj, the parish's religious education coordinator and a synod committee member. "We wanted to make them more personal than having someone just read the themes."

The skits were part of an effort to both inform people about the synod and to interest them in the meetings held in late September and early October, noted Rachel Plano, head of the synod committee.

That effort included regular information in the parish bulletin in a question-and-answer format.

The parish hosted three sessions each week for white parishioners. In addition, the Hispanic community held sessions at parishioners' homes.

Sessions at the church attracted around 60-65 people per week, Plano estimated. The Hispanic sessions attracted five to eight people each time.

The results will be taken by delegates to the regional synod in December, Plano said. In addition, the parish will look at some of the recommendations to see if they can be implemented.

"I think there was a lot of sharing, a lot of dialogue, and now I hope we can put some of those ideas into concrete form," Plano said.

Among those recommendations are developing a family life center in the school building, establishing a neighborhood watch and developing a peer ministry component to the parish's Stephen Ministry program.

"I see that some of the recommendations are some of the things we can build upon," Plano said. "Then the people can see some of their words put into action."

— Lee Strong