Teen Mass fuels faith among parish youths

By Mike Latona Staff writer

GREECE - Father Dave Faraone understands that the struggle to reach teenagers is not limited to parents and

The church, he said, is involved in a constant effort to get and to hold teenagers' interest.

The Sunday homilies need to be geared toward all different age groups. But it seems that the ones who get lost are the high schoolers," asserted Father Faraone, who serves as parochial vicar at Our Mother of Sorrows Church, 5000 Mt. Read Blvd.

So beginning about two years ago, Father Faraone attempted to find a vehicle for appealing to teen-aged pari-

In April of 1991, the parish's firstever Teen Mass, geared exclusively for teenagers, was held. And it was received so well that the event has continued to take place on the first Sunday evening of each month.

Approximately 30 youth's attended the most recent Teen Mass, held this past Sunday, Jan. 3. Pews were left vacant as the teens instead flopped down on the floor at the sanctuary's base near Father Faraone, who was seated

Teen participants performed the readings, and during the homily they also had the opportunity to comment on Father Faraone's theme for the day: how to be a "star" in leading others to Christ, similar to the northern star which led the three wise men to the baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

Many teens' responses focused on the need to support their peers, who may be experiencing struggles in their

'You have friends out there who

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would never set foot in church. But don't ever underestimate the power of your own light (that you can give them)," Father Faraone reminded the gathering.

The Mass's most visually striking moment came during the offertory, when all of the participants stood in a circle around the altar. A hug-filled sign of peace soon followed, and the teens returned to their "floor seats" after Communion.

Many of the youths who regularly attend Teen Mass are either members of the parish youth group and/or preparing for confirmation.

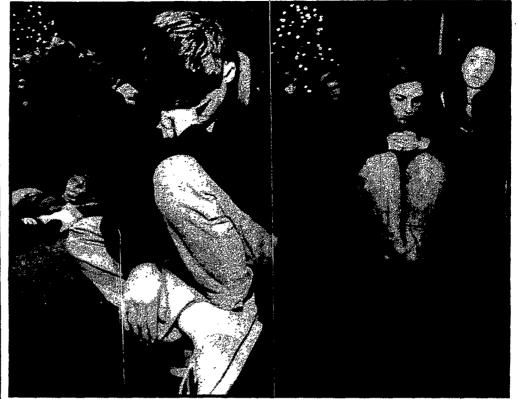
The youth group, which had been dormant at Mother of Sorrows since the mid-1980s, was restored during the same period in 1991 that Teen Masses

Father Faraone noted that the informal concept at Teen Mass emphasizes that "it's OK to be comfortable in church, and it's OK to be comfortable with God." He added that Teen Mass "allows (youths') faith to be expressed more articulately.'

Two young Mother of Sorrows parishioners, both of whom were instrumental in getting the Teen Mass and youth group off the ground, agreed with Father Faraone's comments.

"I go to a public school, and in school (religion) is something you don't talk about. So it was something missing in my life," said Amy Mietus, a 17-year-old senior at Greece Arcadia High School. "And if I needed it, I figured other people needed it too."

"We felt that a lot of kids weren't coming to Mass, or they weren't getting anything out of it," added Jennifer-Consler, 19, who graduated from Our Lady of Mercy High School and is currently a freshman at D'Youville College in Buffalo.



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

Seated at the base of the sanctuary, youths reflect in prayer during the monthly Teen Mass at Greece's Our Mother of Sorrows Church Jan. 3.

With the intimate atmosphere the Teen Mass provides, "You actually feel a little closer to God ... you feel invited," said Consler.

Mietus recalled a similar experience the first time she stood next to the al-

"You could see what (Father Faraone) was doing, and that's the whole purpose," she remarked.

Consler acknowledged that, initially, a number of Mother of Sorrows youths were wary about departing from the Mass rituals with which they had grown up.

"But once we experienced this, everybody was like, 'This is great,"

A smiling Mietus also pointed out two other reasons why the Teen Mass appeals to her friends.

They don't have to go to church in the morning, and we get to come down (into the church hall) and have pizza after Mass," she said.

Auditions are next week for Creative Response

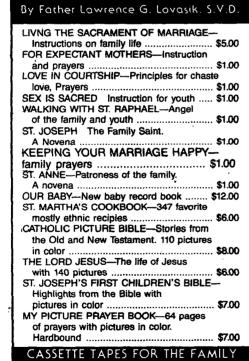
ROCHESTER — Auditions will be held next week for the 1993 Creative Response summer international tours.

The auditions will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 13, at the Baptist Temple Church, 1101 Clover \$t.; and Saturday, Jan. 16, at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St.

Children ages 12-19, who would like to sing, dance, act or work as stage technicians, are invited to attend.

Creative Response, formerly known as the Peace Child Foundation, plans on conducting performances this summer in places such as Australia, New Zealand, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Finland, Hungary, Korea, Japan, South Africa and the former Soviet republics.

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