

Ministry can play big role at colleges

Students enjoy direct approach

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

GENESEO — For college freshmen whose Catholic background involves traditional parish settings, their first Mass on campus is likely to be a surprise — and often a pleasant one.

"Students find that they can be liturgical ministers, eucharistic ministers, ushers and lectors. They see a sense of student 'ownership' of the liturgy," said Father James Hewes, co-chaplain of the Newman Community at SUNY College at Geneseo.

This type of hands-on involvement sparks a rejuvenation of many young adults' faith, according to Father Hewes.

"Sixty-two percent of those who leave the church are between the ages of 16 and 25. So the campus ministry becomes an important element in getting kids to come back — and also preparing for parish leadership," the priest said.

Paul Kreher, a senior at Geneseo State, is a living testament to Father Hewes' observation. After graduation, the Irondequoit native is hoping to become a youth minister.

"I feel a lot more confident in doing something like that after my involvement with the Newman (community)," said Kreher. "One of the things that kept me coming back (to Mass) were the sermons, because they were related to college-age people ... that's how my faith grew, having simi-



After daily Mass March 18, students Jan Cote (left) and Sue Major (center) prepare a salad while Wes Kennison, campus minister, slices the bread for a pasta supper. The dinner was sponsored by the Newman Community at SUNY College at Geneseo.



Junior Frank Costello (center) reflects during the daily Mass, which is held at the college's interfaith center.

lar experiences I could share," Kreher commented.

Campus ministries exist at every college within the diocese. Some, such as SUNY College at Brockport, are equipped with their own chapels. Others, such as Geneseo State and the University of Rochester, conduct their Masses in interfaith chapels. And at Monroe Community College, Masses even take place in classrooms.

One of the campus ministry's top priorities is to give students a home away from home. In the Geneseo State group, for instance, meals are a popular vehicle: welcome-back breakfasts, ecumenical Thanksgiving dinners and weekly pasta dinners.

Daily and weekend Masses also provide students with opportunities for spiritual and social growth. Kreher recalls that his affiliation with the Newman community evolved from attending Sunday Mass with some people from his dormitory.

"My friends said, 'Do you want to go' and I went because I had gone to church regularly on Sundays all my life," said Kreher. "Then I started going to daily Mass once or twice a week, got close to some of the people and became really involved."

Kreher is currently involved in a
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