

Programs strive to bring back alienated Catholics

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Now Donovan is reprising the role of Monsignor Krieg through his work with a new program at St. Mary's. Known as "Homecoming," this ministry is designed to rejuvenate those people, like himself, who have become distanced from their faith.

Homecoming originated at St. Mary's in late 1991. The program is promoted extensively during the Christmas and Easter seasons — the times when marginal Catholics are most likely to come out of the woodwork, noted Homecoming Coordinator Deirdre Hetzler.

In the Homecoming advertisements appearing in area newspapers, potential participants are invited to "drop their baggage."

"Our mission is to bring in to oneness all of God's family, and that includes a lot of people we, as a church, may have hurt," Hetzler acknowledged.

Those wishing to take part in Homecoming may come to the church during appointed times to meet one-on-one, or in small group settings, with program officials. Hetzler emphasized that if people are unable to come during the scheduled times, they can call the church at any time to arrange individualized appointments.

Hetzler noted that the program at St. Mary's is not limited to fellow parishioners.

"We draw from other regions, because it might be embarrassing for those people to come back to the same parish they'd walked out on," she said.

Although diocesan officials could not provide an exact number, there are a small but steadily growing number of parishes offering welcome-back programs similar to Homecoming.

To help that number grow further, a workshop will be held at St. Columba's Church, 198 North St., Caledonia, on Saturday, June 5. Titled "How to Set Up an Inactive Member Ministry in Your Congregation," it will run from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Call 716/538-2490 for details.)

The issue of alienated Catholics is prevalent in dioceses nationwide, according to Father Thomas E. Comber, CSP, senior administrator of the Washington, D.C.-based Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association.

Using figures from Gallup Poll studies in the late 1980s, Father Comber estimates that approximately 65 million Americans are "unchurched" and that 16 million of them are "lax or

inactive Catholics."

In an interview with Catholic News Service, Father Edmund S. Nadolny, pastor of St. George Church in Guilford, Conn., labeled many of today's Catholics in the following categories: "L.E." (come late and leave early), "C.E." (Christmas and Easter), "W.F." (wedding and funeral), or "A.P." (ashes and palms). In his view, he added, for most Americans "the important thing is not to do good, but to feel good."

In addition to apathy, the reasons for infrequent participation can be many, according to Father Robert P. Ring, diocesan director of priest personnel.

"For a number of people, (inactivity) centers around divorce and remarriage issues," Father Ring acknowledged. "Others were in some sort of need and sought help from the church, but didn't get it. Some issues were more politicized, where people felt the church wasn't respecting their values, such as gay rights."

In 1989, Father Ring, then pastor at St. Augustine Church, 410 Chili Ave., Rochester, instituted one of the diocese's first welcome-back programs. It served as the model for the one currently operating at St. Mary's in Scottsville.

Using the Knights of Columbus hall on Thurston Road, Father Ring and Sister Campion Bush, SSJ, currently the director of evangelization for the Roman Catholic Community of the 19th Ward, ministered to more than 20 people during their first series of meetings.

The prevailing attitude presented by

program officials, Father Ring explained, was one of compassion.

"If we really want to reach out, the key priorities are: to have the readiness and willingness to listen to stories in a non-judgmental fashion; and to have a real welcoming attitude," Father Ring commented.

"We haven't walked in their shoes, so we may not know the reasons why people become separated," Father Comber added. "We cannot judge; that's what the Lord asks us to do is not to judge."

Those interviewed said that this benevolent attitude has not always been prevalent in church history, especially for those on the fringes of their faith.

"I would say that's (a) fair (assessment)," Father Ring commented.

"Sometimes in the past, it's been 'pray, pay and obey,'" observed Sister Roberta Rodenhouse, RSM, development director at St. Monica's School, 841 Genesee St. "As a result, we almost made it so that all we cared about was if people put their envelope in the basket on Sunday."

With many of the people he counsels, Donovan pointed to excessive guilt as a major factor in the separation process.

"We (as Catholics) lay the guilt on quite heavily," he remarked. "We beat ourselves up pretty good when we've done something wrong, and we tend to forget how forgiving Christ is."

Yet, said Sister Rodenhouse, "I think the church is becoming more and more a social agency. The church is the people, not that institutional church."

Sister Rodenhouse noted increased

parish efforts to provide specialized activities such as singles clubs and youth groups.

"What is the church offering to get people to want to come back? These people are amazed to find out that things are different. They just have to come and see," said Sister Rodenhouse.

Through the welcome-back programs, Father Ring noted that previously marginal Catholics frequently re-immersed themselves in their faith with exceptional vigor.

"At St. Augustine's, a number of people who returned became quite involved in the life of the community," said Father Ring. "The alienation had not only ended, but these people had an awful lot to offer, too."

In addition to the diocesan programs for alienated Catholics, Father Comber reported that the 16-year-old Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association was founded "just for that service." The organization provides related materials and programs to dioceses across the country, he said.

Obviously, welcome-back efforts are not going to attract every marginal Catholic, and neither are they going to alter the feelings of everyone who attends. But, Hetzler pointed out, this ministry isn't meant to be a numbers game.

"It doesn't matter whether one person comes or 20 people come," she commented.

Donovan added that, even if Homecoming participants don't become extensively re-immersed in their parish, his ministry's basic priority is simply to achieve a spiritual reconciliation.

"As human beings, we sometimes don't pay attention to our actual needs and goals," he said. "No. 1, why are we here on earth, and No. 2, what are we supposed to be doing? To be perfectly honest, there's only one way to get through our difficulties, and that's with prayer and the sacraments. Sometimes we need to be hit in the head with a hammer to be reminded of that."

Donovan, who had a cancerous tumor removed in February and recently completed radiation and chemotherapy treatments, is now extremely thankful for the renewal process he experienced nearly 15 years ago.

"I've had tremendous support from the (parish) community. I guess they'd always been there and I just didn't realize it," he said. "Without them, I'd have a very difficult time coping and recuperating."

Garage sale to benefit health clinic in Haitian capital

PENFIELD — A garage sale to benefit a new health clinic in Haiti is scheduled for Saturday, May 29, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The sale will be held at St. Joseph Church's Resource Center, 44 Gebhardt Road.

The sale will raise funds for the completion of construction and equipping of the two-story clinic which is adjacent to an orphanage for 54 young girls in Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince. The clinic serves the orphans' medical needs as well as people from the surrounding community who have no access to medical care in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation.

Dr. Michael R. Mirwald, a Rochester obstetrician-gynecologist

who is directing the project, has arranged for the delivery of surplus medical supplies from the local medical community to the clinic.

Needed for the garage sale are old or new items, donations of specialized services of various kinds as well as financial contributions. Each donated item should have a suggested price tag. Those individuals donating such services as meals, laundry, gasoline, athletic facility usage, or other personal services should provide a coupon that could be offered for sale.

Checks should be made out to St. Joseph's Church Haiti Fund and mailed to Dr. Mirwald at 12 Mountain Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14625.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		Holy Apostles Our Lady of Mercy St. Stanislaus	Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual Help	St. Anne St. James St. Michael's St. Stanislaus St. Jude the Apostle	Holy Ghost Most Precious Blood St. Cecilia's St. Mark's	Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	St. Charles Borromeo St. Mary St. Michael	Holy Apostles Our Lady of Mercy St. Stanislaus	Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual Help	St. Anne St. James St. Michael's St. Stanislaus St. Jude the Apostle	Holy Ghost Most Precious Blood St. Cecilia's St. Mark's	Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	St. Charles Borromeo St. Mary St. Michael	Holy Apostles Our Lady of Mercy St. Stanislaus	Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual Help	St. Anne St. James St. Michael's St. Stanislaus St. Jude the Apostle	Holy Ghost Most Precious Blood St. Cecilia's St. Mark's	Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle
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Bishop Kearney 125 Kings Hwy. S. 671-1066 Wed. 8pm Good Shepherd 3286 E. Henrietta Rd. 334-3518 Sat. 7:30pm Guardian Angels Church 2061 E. Henrietta Rd. 334-1412 Wed. 7:30pm Holy Apostles 6 Austin St. 254-7170 Tues. 7:30pm Holy Family Church 899 Jay Street 328-3110 Sun. 7:30pm Holy Family Home School Assoc. 899 Jay St. 328-4800 Wed. 7:30pm Holy Ghost 220 Coldwater Rd. 247-3535 Fri. 8pm Most Precious Blood 179 Stenson St. 458-6079 Fri. 7:30pm Our Lady of Mercy 600 Denise Rd. 885-0775 Tue. 7:30pm Our Lady of Perpetual Help 923 Portland Ave. 467-2725 Wed. 7:30pm St. Anne 1600 Mt. Hope Ave. 271-3260 Thur. 7:30pm St. Boniface 15 Whalin St. 271-1468 Sun. 7:45pm	St. Cecilia's 2732 Culver Rd. 467-4286 Fri. 8pm St. Charles Borromeo 64 Maiden Lane 663-3230 Mon. 8pm St. James 119 Brockley Rd. 482-9796 Thur. 7:30pm St. Jude the Apostle 4100 Lyell Rd. 247-4322 Thurs. 7:45pm St. Mark's 54 Kuhn Rd. 225-3710 Fri. 8pm St. Mary Lycaum Hall Auburn 315-252-9545 Mon. 7:30pm St. Michael's 669 Clinton Ave. N 325-4040 Thur. 7:30 & 9pm St. Michael's 320 S. Main St. Newark 315-391-2297 Mon. 7:30pm St. Rita's 1008 Maple Dr. 671-1100 Sun. 7:30pm St. Stanislaus 1150 Hudson Ave. 467-1472 Sun. 6:15pm, Tue. 7:30pm, Thur. 8pm St. Theodore 170 Spencerport Rd. 429-6811 Sun. 7:30pm St. Thomas the Apostle 41 Colbrook Dr. 342-2323 Sat. 8pm
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