

Helping youths in broken families

Workshop gives educators insight

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

AUBURN — In far greater numbers than ever before, youths reading this article can relate to its subject matter.

The percentages quoted by Dr. Dennis Boike reflect a drastically changing family structure in America: approximately 25 percent of all children in the United States currently live in step-families.

And that ratio is rising quickly. More than 50 percent of all U.S. marriages last year involved a second marriage for at least one spouse.

"Step-families will be the norm by the year 2000," Boike told a gathering of approximately 70 adults this past Saturday, Sept. 18.

Boike's daylong workshop, titled "Kids in Fractured Families," took place at Holy Family Church, 85 North St. Most of the people who attended the workshop were parish-based religious education instructors and full-time Catholic school teachers from the Finger Lakes area.

During the program, Boike examined the effects of single parenthood, separation and remarriage on children.

In the case of remarriage, he noted repeatedly that it usually takes a full four years before all members of step-families can be comfortable with each other.

"Can it become a real family? Yes, it can, where the children say, 'I'm close to everyone.' But it takes a lot of



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Dr. Dennis Boike held a Sept. 18 workshop for catechetical leaders on 'Kids in Fractured Families' at Auburn's Holy Family Church.

work," Boike remarked.

In the interim, children — most notably after age 7 — are beset by confusion, stress, mistrust and resentment.

And these are times when teachers can provide valuable support, Boike emphasized. He encouraged those educators in attendance to maintain open communication lines with their students.

"As teachers you can listen, even if (the students) don't talk. They feel good that you asked them," Boike said. "You'll be a real hero if you (say), 'I'll bet this causes some real confusion to you.' They need to know you understand them."

After his talk, Boike acknowledged to the *Catholic Courier* that religious-education instructors — whose contact with their students is often limited to

once per week — may have a particularly challenging task in establishing this type of trust.

"It's a much more difficult job," he said. "It takes some of this awareness (resulting from the workshop)."

Boike serves as director of Boike Marriage, Family and Individual Counseling Inc., a Rochester-based group practice. He is a parishioner at Church of the Transfiguration, 50 W. Bloomfield Road, Pittsford.

The Auburn program was similar to a workshop Boike conducted last year at Church of Christ the King, 445 Kings Highway S., Irondequoit. He will cover the same subject matter at Church of St. Mary Our Mother, 816 W. Broad St., Horseheads, on Saturday, Oct. 16.

Mary Britton, who serves as catechetical consultant for the Rochester diocese, noted that the success of Boike's workshop last year at Christ the King — which drew approximately 250 adults — led to this year's sessions in Auburn and Horseheads.

"The adults were here because they're around these kids, and they know that the youngsters (in fractured families) need predictability and security. They need to reach out to someone, and that can be the teacher," said Britton, who coordinated the Sept. 18 event along with a group of Auburn-based catechetical leaders.

DeSales senior receives American Legion honor

GENEVA — David Cox, a senior at DeSales High School, 90 Pulteney St., served as an alternate delegate to the American Legion's annual Boys Nation.

Cox was selected from 1,600 Boys State representatives in the Geneva area. Boys Nation, held in Arlington, Va., this past summer, is a program which provides students with the practical approach to the study and operation of the federal government.

Cox is a three-sport athlete, honor student and drama club member at DeSales. In addition, he volunteers for the Northside Fire Department and serves as a lifeguard for the New York Chiropractic College in Seneca Falls. He is a parishioner at St. Stephen Church, 48 Pulteney St.

*"We walk by faith,
not by sight."*

II Corinthians 5, 7



BOOK REVIEW

Author studies Seneca myths

Dreamquest: Native American Myth and the Recovery of Soul, by Morton Kelsey; Element, Inc. (Rockport, Mass., 1992); 168 pages; \$11.95.

By Sister Margaret Brennan, SSJ
Guest contributor

Morton Kelsey remembers listening to Seneca folk tales told by his mother, a lifelong friend to the Seneca and an advocate for Native Americans.

Though they knew all of these stories by heart, he and his friends loved hearing these tales again and again — stories of boy-heroes, of evil witches who paddled canoes in the air, of dark and dangerous forests, of sudden death and dismemberment, of strange forest creatures that took many forms, of conjurers and magicians and shamans, of miraculous healings and resurrection from the dead.

These were fantastic adventures for kids, like the tales of the Brothers Grimm or the outrageous feats of Indiana Jones.

But Kelsey now looks at these tales with new eyes. He believes that these stories are deeply spiritual and primordial, full of universal symbols, "stories of the human struggle with evil ... of my struggle and conflict, my pain and victory, how I might win victory over evil." In them he sees key elements of Greek, Norse and Arabian mythology, of European fairy tales and modern fantasy literature, of the Old and New Testaments, of depth psychology and dream analysis.

Here he records 10 Seneca tales and follows each with a commentary on its symbols, the layers of meaning in its action, and its application to life. He does this simply and without jargon, drawing examples from literature, history, mythology and Scripture.

Kelsey has unique credentials for such a study. Former professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, Jungian therapist, Episcopal priest and author of more than 30 books, Kelsey has spent most of his adult life dealing with the role of psychology — and particularly of dreams — in a spiritual life's development.

The tales themselves are charming, and the lake and woodland settings are especially real to us who live in the very Seneca country they describe. We can easily imagine the forest creatures, the windy lake shore, the beautiful and treacherous ice formations, the gentle waterfowl, the autumn cornfields, the mysterious river islands that figure in the tales.

These are not stories for the squeamish. They are tales of violence and brutality, told sometimes in graphic detail. But they are also stories of survival and endurance, of family bonds and interdependence, of the rewards of goodness and the toppling of evil. And they all have happy endings!

We are drawn into the Senecas' life. Kelsey's interpretation offers us insight into our own. And the message is the same. As Kelsey writes in his epilogue, "... these tales portray the world as a good place and the universe as one that is essentially directed toward peace and harmony. With Mother Julian they sing the theme: And all will be well. And all will be well."

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