

Seniors receive Hands of Christ awards early

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Since the diocesan Bishop's Day with Youth celebration began in 1984, Hands of Christ awards have served as one of that event's major highlights.

However, due to some scheduling readjustments regarding future Bishop's Days, a Hands of Christ ceremony earlier this week had the spotlight all to itself — for one time only.

More than 250 high-school seniors from all over the Rochester diocese were honored this past Sunday, Oct. 31, at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park. Recipients were issued their plaques individually by Bishop Matthew H. Clark during the closing segment of a 2 p.m. Mass.

These awards, which recognize the seniors' ministry and service efforts in their parish and community, had previously been presented in the spring as a part of Bishop's Day with Youth.

Michael Theisen, diocesan youth coordinator, pointed out that by moving the ceremony several months forward, seniors will receive longer-term benefits from their Hands of Christ award. For instance, Theisen said, students can now mention the honor on their college applications.

Tiffany Clark, a parishioner in the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community, has already utilized her award in that fashion.

"It has good credibility when you're applying to a Christian school," remarked the 17-year-old Clark, who has applied to Le Moyne College, a Catholic institution in Syracuse.

Clark was selected to give a testimony to the Sacred Heart congregation just prior to the Oct. 31 awards presentation. A senior at Corning East High School, she told the *Catholic Courier* that the Hands of Christ honor has been an important goal of hers since she was a freshman.

"I made myself extra-involved. I taught religious education, and went with our youth group on trips," said Clark.

Hands of Christ awards will be presented even sooner for 1994-95 seniors. The ceremony is scheduled to be reunited with Bishop's Day with Youth when both are blended into the first annual Diocesan Youth Convention this coming summer.

The convention, open to teenagers entering grades 9 through 12, will take place Aug. 5-7 at the State University of New York College at Geneseo.



Bishop Matthew H. Clark hands Tiffany Clark (no relation), a parishioner in the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community, her Hands of Christ award at Sacred Heart Cathedral Oct. 31. S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Other traditional facets of Bishop's Day with Youth, such as various faith-building workshops, are also on the agenda.

Many new events will be added as well, including evening entertainment, use of college recreational facilities, and a series of discussions modeled after the recent diocesan General Synod. Both one-day and weekend packages, with overnight accommodations, will be offered.

Theisen said that by switching to the Geneseo campus from the Rochester Riverside Convention Center — which served as the location for recent Bishop's Day with Youth gatherings — activities can be expanded considerably without inflating the registration cost.

In addition, he remarked, "It's a beautiful campus and it's a lot closer to the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes."

Theisen noted that Bishop Clark is planning on spending the entire weekend with the youths. Also scheduled to appear is Steve Angrisano, a musician

and lecturer from Dallas. Angrisano performed before 80,000 people — including approximately 500 from the Rochester diocese — as a part of the World Youth Day welcoming ceremony for Pope John Paul II this past August at Mile High Stadium in Denver.

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