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Photo illustration by S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Young adult ministries strive for widespread acceptance

The state of young adult ministry is often as unsettled as the very age group it involves.

Only about 10 percent of all parishes in the Rochester diocese feature specific ministries for adults who fall into the 18-35 age range.

According to Dean R. Hoge, sociology professor at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., this figure is consistent with nationwide figures.

"You're not unusual at all. It's a very difficult type of ministry," said Hoge in a telephone interview.

He explained that the low percentage is due to the notion that "young adults are often in transition and are very wary of any commitments — it's a feeling of 'just passing through town.'"

Yet Eileen Sokolowski, who coordinates the recently formed Greater Elmira Area Adult Ministry, pointed out that this perception should not extend to all young adults.

"We don't have a lot of support from parish staffs. They're looking at young adults as being in transition and not looking to settle down, and they don't understand our needs," she commented.

"It's not the trend of the (Catholic) Church to reach out to young adults. It's to reach out to families," remarked Liz Webster, who serves on a part-time basis as diocesan young adult ministry coordinator.

However, last fall's diocesan General Synod has seemingly helped to alter these trends. "There didn't seem to be a desire until the Synod," said Webster.

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"If young adults feel there is a place for them, they will continue their faith."

Darcy DeBonis, 23

By Mike Latona, Staff writer