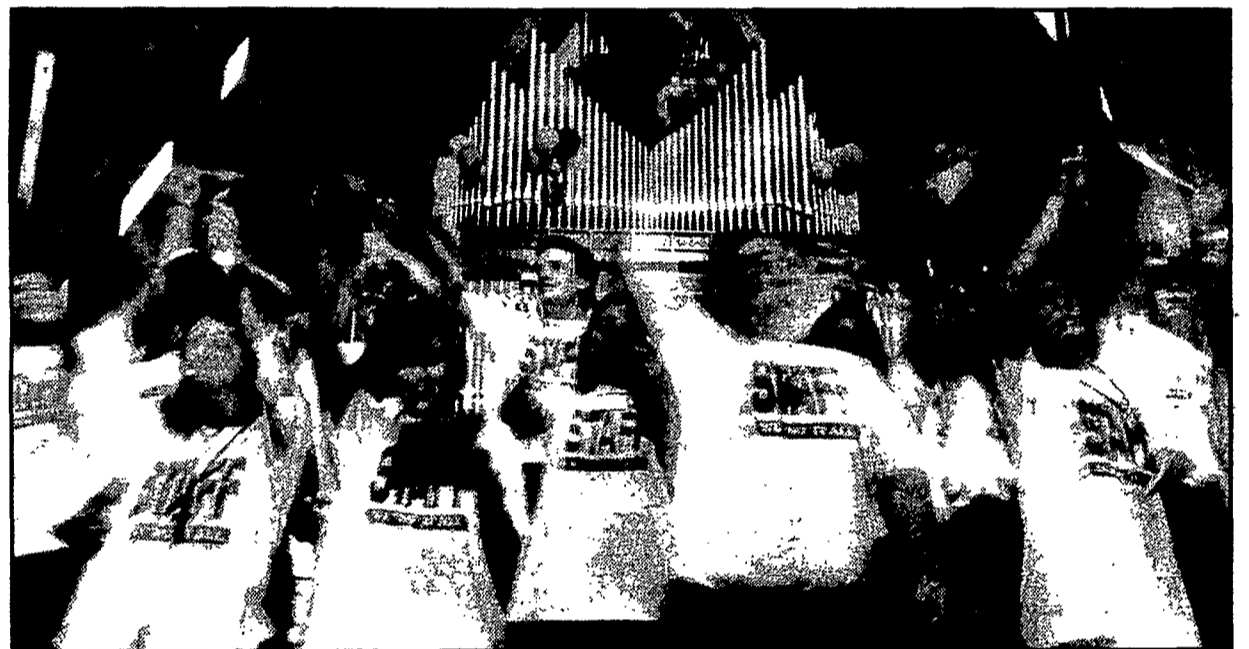


Youths in the Diocese of Rochester gathered at Keuka College June 5 for the second-annual Junior High Rally. The event drew 550 participants and included the play 'Different and Allike' presented by youths from St. Helen's and Corpus Christi parishes in Rochester; indoor and outdoor activities; and concluding events with Bishop Matthew H. Clark. Bishop Clark (at left) answers a question read by Danny Verdi from St. John the Evangelist Church in Newark Valley. (Bottom left) Gi-Anna Nydam (facing camera) hugs Deborah McCarthy during the 'Gesture of Peace' in Keuka College's Norton Chapel. Both are from St. Michael's Church in Penn Yan. (Below) Diocese Youth Committee members wave their ribbons while singing 'I Can See Clearly Now' during the closing program.

Photos by  
S. John Wilkin  
Staff photographer



## Bishop shares insights with rally participants

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

KEUKA PARK — What do you get when you combine hundreds of inquisitive youths with a religious authority figure?

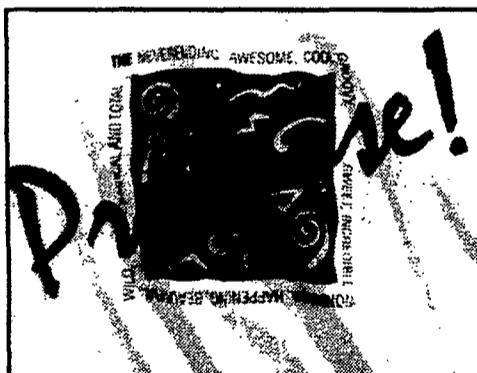
A grueling question-and-answer session that would make hard-boiled interviewers Mike Wallace and Sam Donaldson rate as comparative cream puffs.

By the time he had finished fielding 90 minutes of constant questions, Bishop Matthew H. Clark looked understandably drained. Yet he turned in an admirable effort by providing candid and thoughtful answers to the students' frequently blunt queries.

These exchanges took place at the Keuka College chapel during the second annual diocesan Junior High Youth Rally, held Sunday, June 5. The gathering came toward the end of an activity-packed day for 550 junior-high students in the diocese.

According to Michael Theisen, who serves as diocesan youth-ministry coordinator, attendance was more than double that of last year's inaugural event held at Keuka. He added that, because of its quick popularity growth, next year's junior-high rally will most likely be moved to the more spacious State University of New York College at Geneseo.

Bishop Clark highlighted the June 5 event by presiding at a late-afternoon Mass. Following the liturgy, he took a



seat in front of the congregation from which youths, one by one, came forward, introduced themselves and selected questions for the bishop out of a box. These forums were split into two 45-minute sessions.

Several of the questions evoked a smile or chuckle from Bishop Clark, as well as "oohs" and "aahs" from those in attendance. Other queries caused the bishop to frown as he searched for a meaningful answer.

Some samples:

**Why can't women be priests?**

"It's a very strong challenge for me to understand those reasons."

**Why can't priests get married and have kids?**

"Personally, I think it would be good for the church." (The bishop added that married priests were permitted in the Roman Catholic Church's early days, and that Catholic Eastern Rite disciplines currently allow priests to be married.)

**Did you ever date?**

"Yes — it was wonderful!"

**How are rules different for today's Catholic youth from when you were growing up?**

"The fundamental rules are the same. I will say that your life and times are much more exciting than mine were — (but) I'm not so sure that I envy that."

**What do you think about Kurt Cobain (Nirvana's late lead singer who committed suicide)?**

"I felt it was a terribly tragic event ... it's very hard for anyone who finds himself or herself in such desperately hopeless straits."

**Were you ever in love with a woman beside your relatives?**

"Oh, yes. (But) I'm not going to name any names."

**Have you ever heard a criminal confess a crime?**

"Yes. The most common one is stealing."

**Why are you more powerful than a priest?**

"I have more responsibility; therefore, I have the means to carry it out."

**What drew you to the priesthood?**

"It was a way in which one could support and help people in a very consistent way."

**What do you think about the pope's and President Clinton's clashing views on abortion?**

"The pope is opposed to abortion and so am I, because I think it's an attack on

innocent and defenseless lives." (Bishop Clark did acknowledge that he respects both leaders, calling them "right and good men.")

**Do you ever feel lonely?**

"There are times when I would dearly love to have a family ... but I don't feel lonely isolated, lonely miserable or lonely sad."

**Would you ever consider going back and changing your profession?**

"I never had any serious regrets. I'm quite happy about what I'm about."

**Do you find it difficult to be a bishop? Please be honest!**

"Yes. It's very, very difficult. But the greatest lessons we learn are from the most difficult things, and the happy things are much, much more (prevalent) than the difficult ones."

**Have you ever seen God?**

"No, if that means like I'm seeing you ... (but) I've seen God *because* I've seen you."

**What do you think might help stop violence by youth?**

"Some of the violence that is consumed in mass quantities by this culture (through the media) staggers my mind. That kind of communication coarsens us to what violence really is."

**How could you help all the people in need?**

This was the only inquiry to truly stump the bishop.

"That question is too big for me to answer in 20 seconds. I can't do it," he said.