

Youth convention offers stimulating fare

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

On this magnificent Monday morning in August, I am still basking in the joy of the Diocesan Youth Convention, which was held this weekend at the State University of New York College at Geneseo. (See story, pages 8-9)

It was a stimulating, rich experience about which I'll be thinking for some time to come. What I'd like to do here is share some early personal reflections about the gathering and present to you the recommendations our young friends generated for the strengthening of the youths of our diocese.

1. Reflections on the Convention

a. It's a source of great energy and joy for me to be among such young people as those who gathered at Geneseo for the convention. They are gifted, generous and full of life. To me they are both a sign of life in today's church and a promise for tomorrow.

b. Mike Theisen, diocesan coordinator of Youth Ministry, and the adult and teen members of our Diocesan Youth Committee, offer us an admirable model for ministry and service. They work in genuine partnership, are joined by obvious bonds of affection, and seek and respect the input of all.

c. In similar fashion, I found in the youth ministers, chaperons and teens who attended the convention a sense of mutuality, respect and cooperation. Wherever and whenever such qualities are present in a group, the chances are very high that the group will offer life to all involved.

d. The kids manifested a hospitality and openness to one another and to us adults who were present; I found this most impressive. They prayed and played, sang and danced in a natural, inviting way, and they seemed most accepting of everyone else's style.

e. Our young friends are familiar with prayer and have a strong sense of spiritual life. They may articulate those realities in different ways and may communicate them without words, but both are real to them. It's my intuition that they welcome the opportunity both to share those gifts with caring adults and to receive the same gifts in return.

f. Our conventioners love music and laughter, dance and celebration, but they also enjoy quiet time, reflection and moments to talk about their experiences with others who care about them.

g. The experience of the weekend was and continues to be a strong symbolic reminder to me of how all of us are called to serve the life that is in



A LONG THE WAY

us by the gift of our gracious God. The assembly at Geneseo modeled for me the kind of healthy, loving, respectful and affectionate interdependence that would bring strength to all aspects of Catholic life.

2. Recommendations on Strengthening Youths

As I promised the young people at the convention, I present to you here the recommendations presented to me by the five regional groupings for consideration by our local church. In their original format, the recommendations were presented in this fashion: We recommend the theme of (name) by (means to advance the theme). Hereafter I will use the format: *Theme: by...*

Finger Lakes Region

Peer Pressure: by working on improving self esteem and by identifying negative pressures and how to say "no".

Teen involvement in and awareness of church ministries and activities: by choosing a youth representative to receive and share all information from the diocese and parish that regard youth; and by preparing announcements and skits by youth for youth to communicate activities and encourage involvement.

Outreach to hurting teens: by developing a buddy system similar to Stephen Ministries for Youth and establishing a crisis phone line.

Genesee Valley Region

Youth Ministers' Committee of parish youth help elect youth minister from applications and the

Youth Minister should be paid. Also, the Youth Minister and one youth should be on the parish council.

Youth budget: by a youth budget in every parish to sponsor Catholic conferences that advocate youth sharing and fun. Also to help youth share their gifts and talents with others.

Community service: by more service projects. More parishes working together and having fundraisers for a particular community service instead of going into parish budget.

Monroe County South

Drug and alcohol abuse: by supporting youth-led activities with time, support and money.

Youth interaction: by having teens represent youth at parish council.

Respect from adults: by building grass-roots support for Youth Ministry through education, interaction.

Southern Tier

Support open-mindedness in all generations: by encouraging active support by family, clergy, parishioners. Encouragement by leaders of all youth.

Help others to understand being a Catholic: by getting involved — community activities. More regional retreats. B.A.G. (Bring a Guy/Bring a Girl) of a different religion who is interested in our life or a Catholic who wants to become more involved in the faith.

More youth activities: by (such as) combating hunger through hunger retreats, soup kitchens.

Monroe County North

Youth involvement in youth ministry: by regional Masses once a month with a yearly liturgy at the cathedral or a central diocesan location. Regional gatherings — dances, parties, get together.

Parish support for youth ministry: by youth representatives in all areas of parish/diocesan life. Intergenerational youth ministry opportunities.

Peer pressure: by support and discussion through reflection groups for teens with trusted and open-minded adults. More conferences like this one and activities such as service projects to build self esteem and promote positive peer pressure.

Thanks for thinking about these recommendations from our wonderful young friends. Please be willing to talk about them at your family table, at parish meetings, any time you have a chance to share ideas with the youth of our diocese. All of us will be enriched by that.

Peace to all.

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Kids' Chronicle Answer Key

1. Jacob
2. Samson
3. John the Baptist
4. Peter
5. Jesus
6. Bartimaeus
7. Herod
8. Nicodemus



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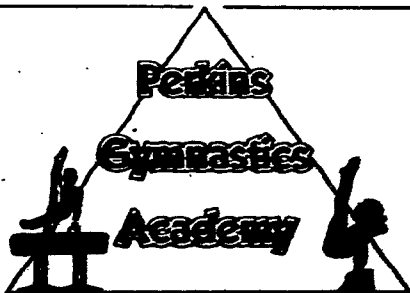
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