

August 11, 1994

My dear people,

Just a year ago we convened as a diocesan family at our Synod to affirm our direction for the next several years. The proclamation of lifelong religious education as a primary focus and goal for us was heartwarming. It speaks of our concern that we all grow in faith and understanding of the mystery we share.



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At this time of year, when schools open, we are all reminded of the role education plays in our lives. Many of our parish initiatives begin in September and each of us look for ways that we can grow in our ability to link life and faith. Many of our children go to Catholic schools, long a primary way some are educated and formed in faith. Even more children return to public schools and continue their faith formation through parish religious education or family education. For adolescents, retreats, high school religious education, and youth ministry are important opportunities to grow in faith. Adults participate in Bible study, and discussion groups, and serve as sponsors for confirmation and Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) candidates. In all these ways, we learn more about what we believe and how that belief shapes our lives.

This year there is a new emphasis on families. Pope John Paul II has declared this the Year of the Family, an opportunity for the church to make families a focal point of our ministry. In this spirit, Faith Development Ministry is hosting an Oct. 28-29 conference focusing on the theme, "Families: Where Ministries Meet." This conference (see article on page 7A) will be an excellent opportunity for our parish leaders to grow in their understanding of the role families play in faith formation. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Throughout the year, a dedicated group of catechetical leaders, youth ministers, principals, volunteer catechists and Catholic school teachers serves our parishes and schools by sharing faith. I know I speak for the whole church when I thank them for their commitment and faithful service. They are beacons of light for our church.

As this new school year begins, please be assured of my blessings for you and those you love. May this be a year of renewed faith, growth in knowledge and understanding, and great peace.

Your brother in Christ,

† Matthew H. Clark
Bishop of Rochester

August 11, 1994

Dear friends,

Our General Synod last October identified five priorities for the Church of Rochester to develop and have strategies underway as we approach the year-2000. Lifelong religious education clearly emerged as top priority and challenges us to think about and implement faith formation in new and creative ways.



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This Synod goal is calling us, as educational ministers, to assist all Catholics to participate in multiple experiences of faith formation over the course of their lifetimes. Pope John Paul II expressed this same challenge with the words, "to nourish with God's help, an as yet initial faith and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful, young and old." (*Catechesi Tradendae* #20)

As we begin a new academic year, I am mindful of the many ministries that are so vital to this growth in faith of all people: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults; religious education, youth ministry, Catholic schools, formation and continuing education of ministers, sacramental preparation, as well as young adult, adult and family education. I am grateful for the openness and dedication of parish staffs and volunteer catechists who joyfully and tirelessly staff these ministries.

These are critical and exciting times. I pray that each of us may renew his or her commitment to lifelong faith formation which will help to enable the Church of Rochester to come to know, love and serve God more fully.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Binsack, RSM
Director, Faith Development Ministry



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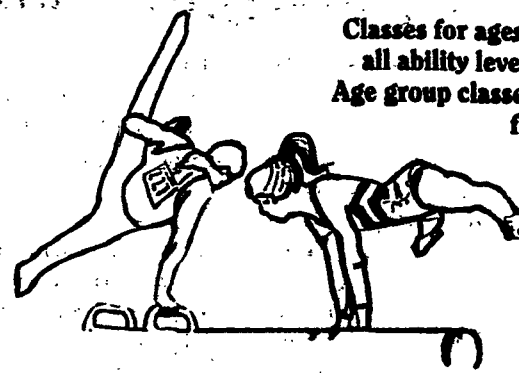
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