

YOUTH FEATURE



Members of St. Anthony's Life Teen Program take a break inside youth minister Bob Kantor's motor home during their late-July trip to Montreal. provided photos

Trips link fun, faith for Groton teenagers

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

GROTON — Two separate journeys are not required to take summer vacation and make a religious pilgrimage, members of the St. Anthony Church Life Teen Program have discovered.

Thanks to the availability of youth minister Bob Kantor's motor home, St. Anthony's teenagers have ventured many miles out of Tompkins County each of the past two summers. In 1993 a group traveled to the Niagara Falls area, and more recently Kantor piloted a journey to Montreal, Quebec, from July 29-31.

The Montreal trip included sightseeing at attractions such as Olympic Stadium and the Botanical Gardens. Other activities included a visit to Notre Dame, a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary located in Old Montreal; and a tour and Mass at St. Joseph's Oratory.

One of Kantor's most vivid memories of Montreal occurred at the oratory, where many miraculous healings have allegedly taken place.

"There were crutches upon crutches hanging there, where people had left them and walked," Kantor said.

Fawn Alfreds, 16, noted that the Sunday Mass at St. Joseph's was a unique experience because "everything was said in French, so we didn't understand a thing." However, Alfreds noted that the Mass was still familiar to her because its rituals were the same.

While in Quebec, the 14-member Groton gang camped on property owned by relatives of Carl Coti, one of St. Anthony's adult core-group members. Approximately half of the travelers rode and slept in Kantor's motor home.

The late-July excursion was similar to a trip through western New York taken by St. Anthony members in 1993. That group combined camping at Lake Ontario with a tour of the Our Lady of Fatima Shrine near Niagara Falls.

Participants acknowledged that combining relaxation with spiritual enlightenment proves extremely satisfying.

"The trips have been a great experience. I hadn't had a chance to travel much, and now I also feel closer to God," said Margaret Grisel, 15.

"Sometimes you're too busy to really think about God, so it's good to get away," remarked the well-traveled Al-



The journey to Canada served as one of Bob Kantor's final activities with St. Anthony's youths.

freds, who also attended both the Montreal and Niagara Falls expeditions. In addition, she participated in the High School Leadership Institute in Baltimore, Md., this past July.

Kantor noted that his group's outings have provided a nice supplement to regular Life Teen Program activities at St. Anthony.

"It's really great to get to know each other, because you can't do it in a few hours each month. It was a chance to get out with the gang and have some fun," said Kantor. "The fun, friendship and positive spiritual experiences were priceless."

However, because of new obligations Kantor has taken on, the Montreal journey served as one of his farewell activities. The St. Anthony youth minister departed from Groton on Aug. 26 to begin training for the priesthood at Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora, N.Y., near Buffalo.

Kantor had been a member of St. Anthony's since 1989, and its youth minister for the past two years.

"He's influenced everybody very much. He was always there to show us something new," said Grisel.

"He's done everything. He had all the activities planned for the upcoming year," Alfreds remarked. "He's going to be sorely missed."

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