

Year of the pope

1994 saw the pontiff return as a distinguished figure on the international scene — Page 5

Gift of life

A kidney-transplant recipient urges fellow Catholics to consider organ donation — Page 7.

A kids' world

Diocesan children share more of their ideas to improve the world this year — Pages 10-11.

Runaway refuge

Rochester's Center for Youth Services offers troubled youths a place to heal — Page 14.

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Diocesan parishes move to implement Synod goals

The religious-education office at St. Mary Our Mother in Horseheads is working with nine other parishes in Chemung and Schuyler counties to sponsor a Lenten speakers' series on the consistent life ethic.

The consistent life ethic also was one of several topics for an adult-education series that ran for six mid-December days at St. Mary's Parish in Bath.

St. Stephen's in Geneva also promoted the consistent-life ethic last October by sponsoring an exhibit of art, essays and poetry on the theme by students from St. Francis/St. Stephen School and DeSales High School.

At St. Joseph's Parish, in Penfield, the parish council recently voted to approve the formation of a parish women's commission, which will examine how St. Joseph's can promote women's spirituality through liturgy and prayer.

And, according to various reports, parishes in Ithaca, Elmira, Livonia, Avon, Caledonia, Fairport, Scottsville and Rochester are among the faith communities exploring or already establishing small Christian communities.

These parishes should have little difficulty in meeting the Feb. 1 deadline for submitting to the diocese their plans for implementing the 1995-1999 Pastoral Plan, because they're already implementing some of the goals and objectives outlined in the Synod document.

The Pastoral Plan's goals grew out of the General Synod, a diocesan-wide meeting that took place in October, 1993, and determined five major priorities for the diocese as it approaches the turn of the century.

Lifelong religious education topped the list of priorities chosen by delegates, who also selected the consistent life ethic, Catholic moral education, the role of women and small Christian communities as the issues of greater importance to the diocese.

The five priorities were later condensed into the Pastoral Plan's four goals which are as follows:

• Goal 1 is to form Catholics in beliefs, Catholic morality and spirituality throughout life, a process known as lifelong faith formation. (Goal 1 combines the synodal priorities of lifelong religious education and of Catholic moral education).

• Goal 2 is to advocate for the consistent life ethic which advances reverence for all human life and condemns such practices as abortion, war, euthanasia and the death penalty.

The full text of the diocesan Synod Pastoral Plan appears in the second section of this issue.

• Goal 3 is to recognize and value the dignity of women in church and society.
• Goal 4 is to promote the growth of small Christian communities.

According to the Pastoral Plan, parishes are not obligated to act on every goal or objective every year.

generational gatherings" to educate all of its members, young and old, in the Catholic faith.

Father Richard J. Shatzel, pastor, added that his parish recently formed an adult education committee in light of the Synod's educational emphasis.

Consistent Life Ethic: Goal 2 of the pastoral plan seems to have drawn a lot of attention from diocesan parishes.

For example, the religious education office at St. Mary Our Mother in Horseheads, along with nine other parishes in Chemung and Schuyler counties, is sponsoring a speakers' series on the consistent life ethic in Lent.

The series is the second such undertaking the parishes' have devoted to synodal priorities — the first

However, "over the life of the Plan, each is asked to move forward on all four Goals," the document states.

Over the next several months, the *Catholic Courier* will cover how parishes plan to implement the four pastoral plan goals, a process already taking place both formally and informally at a number of parishes. A sampling of activities taking place at parishes follows:

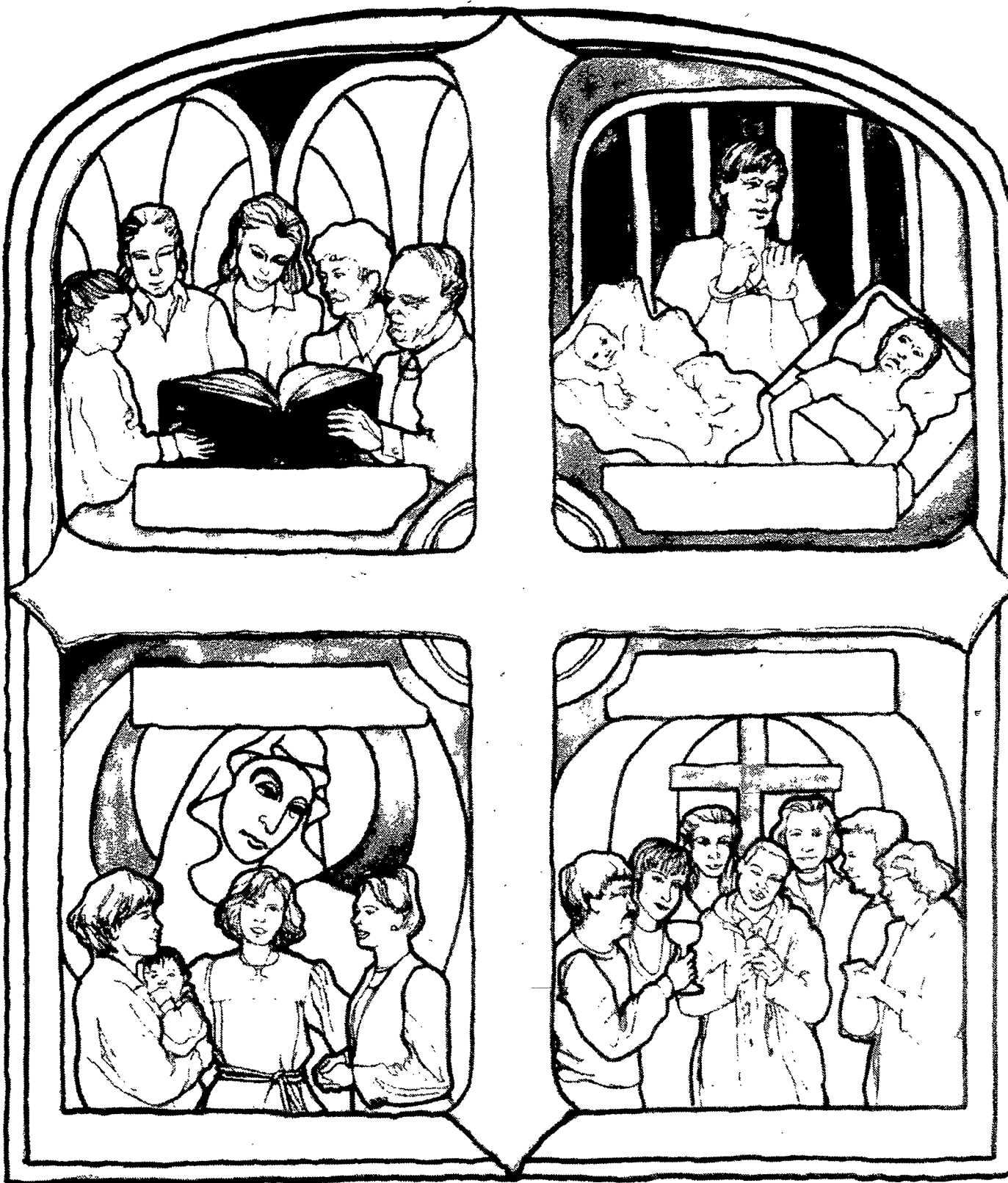
Education: Numerous parishes have developed or are developing various activities and programs designed to educate the faithful from their earliest years.

For example, lifelong faith formation is becoming a hallmark of activities at Rochester's St. Philip Neri Parish, according to Sister Mary Bernarde Entress, RSM, director of religious education.

Sister Entress explained that St. Philip Neri recently invited all of its members, from toddlers to seniors, to an Advent celebration at the beginning of December in the school hall. In addition to asking parishioners to pray for the parish's shut-ins, St. Philip's distributed Advent calendars with suggested daily activities designed to enhance the faith of believers, she said.

Sister Entress commented that her small parish will probably hold more such "inter-

Continued on page 18



Story by Rob Cullivan, Staff writer