

Synod

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took place last Lent and dealt with moral questions.

Such speakers as Dr. Patricia Schoelles, SSJ, president of St. Bernard's Institute in Rochester, are slated for this year's Lenten series, which will be kicked off by Father Joseph Hart, former director of the diocesan Synod. The series may also feature some national speakers, according to Gail Murray, St. Mary's religious education coordinator.

Speakers will be presented at a different parish each week, Murray said, and all parishes and their various groups, clubs and committees will be asked to participate in activities related to the weekly topics.

The consistent life ethic also drew a lot of attention during an adult education series in mid-December at St. Mary's Parish in Bath. The ethic was one of several topics, including small Christian communities, covered during six consecutive days of seminars.

About 65 people showed up for the seminars, according to Barbara Ayer, who noted that many participants wanted to hear out other Catholics on the consistent life ethic.

"I think people are dealing with that ethic all the time in dialoguing with people outside the faith," Ayer commented.

She added that non-Catholics often engage Catholics on consistent life issues by dealing with their political ramifications. But many Catholics need to simply talk to other Catholics who agree with their beliefs for spiritual reasons in order to more firmly ground themselves in the church's teachings.

"They really need forums where they can talk about these things themselves," she said.

St. Stephen's in Geneva also promoted the consistent life ethic last October, according to Marie Milligan, chairman of the social ministry committee.

The parish encouraged elementary

students from St. Francis/St. Stephen School and students from Geneva's De-Sales High School to create essays, poems and artwork dealing with consistent life ethic issues, she said. The students' creations were then displayed inside the parish's church, she added.

Women: In its pastoral plan, the diocese announced that it was reconstituting its current Diocesan Women's Commission as part of the process of implementing the plan.

A member of that commission, Nora Bradbury-Haehl, serves as youth minister at St. Joseph's in Penfield and Holy Trinity in Webster. She noted that her parish council recently voted to approve the formation of a women's commission.

The parish commission will examine how St. Joseph's can better serve women by promoting women's spirituality through liturgy and prayer, she said.

Bradbury-Haehl added that the Penfield parish has already instituted a Friday morning program for stay-at-home mothers, featuring faith education, prayer and sharing, along with discussions of women's lifestyles.

And in Chemung and Schuyler counties, the 10 parishes that form the area's regional Catholic grouping also plan to hold an all-day seminar on women's issues after Lent, Murray said.

Small Christian Communities: Several parishes have embraced the topic of small Christian communities (SCCs), a concept which originated in Latin America in the 1960s. Facing severe priest shortages, small groups of Catholics would gather on a regular basis in Latin America to share the Gospel.

Pope John Paul II, in his 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* noted that such communities "decentralize and organize the parish community, to which they always remain united. They ... become a leaven of Christian life, of care for the poor and neglected, and of commitment to the transformation of society."

According to various reports, parishes in Ithaca, Elmira, Livonia, Avon, Fair-

port, Scottsville and Rochester are among the faith communities exploring or already supporting SCCs.

Father Gerald Hafner, pastor of St. Columba/St. Patrick in Caledonia, noted that his parish has formed a small Christian community which claims about a half-dozen members.

St. Mary's in Bath is showing interest in SCCs, according to Ayer. She noted that in many large parishes, SCCs can help to personalize faith and make it more meaningful.

"I think people just want to get connected with the church on a smaller level," she said.

Correction

A sentence inadvertently was omitted from Dr. Patricia Schoelles' Dec. 15 column, "Theologians need to address disagreements." Dr. Schoelles had established a list of five standards by which to view the moral implications of homosexuality.

Her fifth point, which follows, was omitted: "I also try to explain for people the questions that theologians and others raise today in light of new information that has come to us about the nature of sexual orientation in general."

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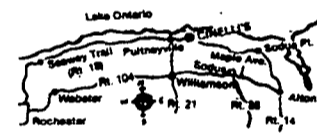
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