



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

(From left) Students Igor Perez, Theresa Weidmann and Nick Ganster receive advice on relationships and marriage from instructor Bonnie Maute during a recent religious-education class at St. Patrick's Church in Macedon.

Macedon teens mull over marriage-related matters

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

MACEDON — A study on marriage may seem premature for students whose most immediate concerns are proms, not nuptials.

Yet the lessons learned from a religious-education course offered at St. Patrick's Church, 52 Main St., are so valuable that they remain fresh in the minds of onetime participants.

Steve Kuntz, 28, and Patrick Luke, 29, acknowledged that because a lot of people bury their feelings at the age of 17 or 18 and it comes out later," Maute told the class.

"It was interesting how real people developed their relationship, instead of the marriages you see on TV," said Kuntz, who attended the same class with Luke more than a decade ago.

"The only other people we really knew who were married were our parents," added Luke, who has been married for four years.

The St. Patrick's program is currently being taught by Bonnie Maute, a St. Patrick's parishioner and clinical social worker. Held on Sunday mornings over a 14-week period, the course begins with discussions on relationships and evolves into issues surrounding marriage.

"Our program could very possibly be the only place our teens receive any education regarding marriage before pre-Cana," observed Elaine Doyle, who serves as St. Patrick's religious-education coordinator.

In a recent session with Maute, 10 high-school juniors and seniors pondered the issue of sacrificing one's individual desires for a marriage's sake.

For Andy Annesi, one of his biggest challenges along these lines would be to give up "going out with the guys."

Ray Pearles added that another major adjustment would be "having a kid."

Students also devoted time to examining their less-endearing traits, such as giving in too easily, possessiveness, anger, worry, fear and jealousy.

The class also considered

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how these tendencies might affect the other partner in a relationship. For instance, Ray noted that when somebody is possessive, "It kind of puts you in a corner."

Maute pointed out it can be a good thing to recognize these undesirable qualities "as long as we're willing to grow and change," she said.

"It's good that you're figuring these things out now, because a lot of people bury their feelings at the age of 17 or 18 and it comes out later," Maute told the class.

She added that when suppressed negative feelings do resurface, adults frequently turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drugs and alcohol — often after they marry.

"We need to get a hold of these things now, because they can destroy relationships," said Maute.

No matter what stage a relationship is at, it's vital for couples to remain open with each

other, Maute emphasized. By intimately sharing one's thoughts and feelings with a husband or wife, this opens up the possibility for that spouse to "perceive the truth of who the other person is." In turn, the potential for deeper bonding and a healthier marriage is heightened.

It's this emphasis on openness and honesty that was most useful for another former St. Patrick's religious-education student, Christine Sisson.

"There's a lot on communication," said Sisson, who is engaged.

"I think (communication) really is the biggest part," agreed Luke.

Although it may be several years before her current students are faced with the actual challenges of marriage, Maute told the *Catholic Courier* that it's never too early for teenagers to begin exploring these matters.

"Our job is to give them a foundation — a thought process they can use once they get into college and begin dating more," Maute said.



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Extra Credit!

Lauren Lesczinski, a junior at Aquinas Institute, has been selected to attend the National Young Leaders Conference Feb. 21-26 in Washington, D.C.

This select program is for high-school students who have demonstrated strong leadership skills and scholastic merit. Lauren will be one of approximately 350 people from across the country to attend the conference.

T.J. Grab, an Aquinas senior, attended a similar National Young Leaders Conference this past November.

Six students at Northeastern Catholic Junior High School delivered gifts to the pediatrics unit of Rochester General Hospital on Feb. 3.

The visit culminated a three-week project by the student body under the guidance of math instructor Terry Niedzialek. Gifts such as gum, candy and crayons were delivered.

Student representatives who presented these items to the hospital included eighth-graders Michele Dufett, Joe Nassar, Lisa Higgins and Carrie Schaut; and seventh-graders Matthew O'Brien and Becky Sutherland.

Several diocesan school groups were active during the holiday season with a variety of service projects.

National Honor Society members from Bishop Kearney High School prepared and served a meal on Dec. 26 at the Rochester Ronald McDonald House, a temporary lodging facility for families of seriously ill children. In addition, Kearney's student council made its annual Christmas food-basket delivery on Dec. 22 to families in the neighborhood surrounding Rochester's Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. BK also has begun an ongoing service project at Rochester's St. Joseph's House, where students cooked and served meals over the Christmas break to homeless and low-income people served by the Catholic Worker facility.

Aquinas students donated approximately 1,000 toys to the U.S. Marines Toys for Tots program. This marked the second straight year the AQ student body has participated in this effort.

Our Lady of Mercy High School "adopted" several families for its Christmas-basket project conducted during the month of December. Baskets were distributed following a Golden Mass celebrated Dec. 22 at the school by Bishop Matthew H. Clark. Mercy also staged its annual Christmas party at the Rochester Psychiatric Center in mid-December. Students presented residents with a number of individually wrapped gifts such as toiletries and playing cards.

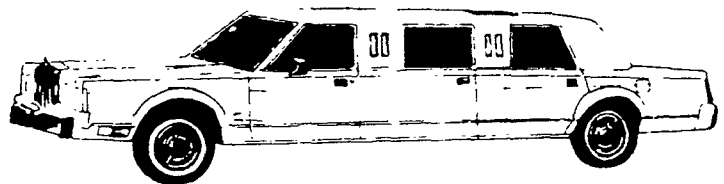
McQuaid Jesuit students, faculty and staff made provisions for approximately 150 people in 30 families as a result of the school's annual Christmas-basket drive. In addition, McQuaid raised about \$2,600 which was divided among six charities.

Religious-education students at St. Patrick's Church in Seneca Falls staged several Christmas service efforts. Children in grades 1-8 provided cards and gifts for adult-home residents, prisoners, hospital patients and people overseas. The youths also decorated the church and religious ed office.

Students from St. Boniface School helped celebrate the opening of the City of Rochester's new South Avenue Police "mini-substation" on Dec. 21. A chorus of St. Boniface fifth- and sixth-graders sang Christmas carols at the ceremony.

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