

Institute's 'On the Road' series draws hundreds

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

PITTSFORD — Despite bitterly cold weather conditions last Thursday Feb. 9, more than 200 people turned out at St. Louis Parish, 60 S. Main St., to attend the second installment in the "St. Bernard's On the Road" series.

Titled "On Being American, Free — and Catholic," the evening featured speakers from St. Bernard's Institute, 1100 S. Goodman St., Rochester, and featured workshops on topics such as "When We Don't All Think the Same," and "Living in America with a Catholic Imagination."

On Feb. 2, about 350 people turned out at Church of the Transfiguration, 50 W. Bloomfield Road, to hear the series' inaugural installment titled "What Does it Mean to Be a Roman Catholic?"

Father Gerard J. Appelby, Transfiguration's pastor, was pleased with the amount of interest the adult-education series seems to have sparked. In addition to St. Louis, the priest last year had written fellow pastors at St. Catherine's, Mendon; St. Jerome's, East Rochester; St. Thomas More, Rochester; and Good Shepherd, Henrietta, asking them to co-sponsor the adult-education series as a way of implementing the 1993 diocesan Synod's first goal — lifelong religious education.

"Our hope is that this will continue on and become part of the life of the diocese," Father Appelby said about the series.

Both Father Appelby and Sister Patricia Schoelles, SSJ, president of St. Bernard's Institute, pointed out that parishes in Auburn, the Southern Tier and in Rochester are interested in having SBI speakers offer presentations to their churches.

Sister Schoelles added that the presentations are pivotal because SBI's instructors need to hear the concerns of Catholics who are hungry for education but who aren't necessarily pursuing theological degrees.

"It's very good for us to talk with people and have people's concerns raised right before us," she said.

She noted that the post-Vatican II church has made vast improvements in such programs as weekend retreats and marriage preparation, but has yet to fully realize its potential to enrich the intellectual life of all Catholics — not just those living in the academic world.

"They're ready for some meat," she said. "They want to discuss these hard issues."

Mary Stewart, a St. Louis parishioner, put herself among those Catholics who are looking to the church for more intellectual food.

"I think there has to be more adult education," she said, adding that "unless you do your own reading, you don't have this."



Father Joseph Hart (far right) speaks to about 350 people at Pittsford's Transfiguration Church during the first installment of the 'St. Bernard's On the Road' series.



Deacon Stephen J. Graff, diocesan coordinator of certification for designated ministers, leads a discussion on 'cafeteria Catholicism.'

Among the "hard issues" Stewart wants to learn more about are the roles of men and women in the church; the competing needs of Catholic children in public and parochial schools; and the duties of Catholic politicians to speak from their faith's viewpoint on various issues.

On that last point, Catholic political leaders and their church often disagree, according to Father Robert J. Kennedy, coordinator of SBI's student formation and assistant professor of liturgical studies.

Whereas the church maintains it has a right to speak out on such issues as abortion and the economy, Catholic politicians often differ as to how much input they allow their faith to have when forming a public stand, Father Kennedy noted.

The fact that politicians struggle with — or ignore — the church on various issues reflects a greater struggle that this nation wages with the church over the

purpose of life, the priest continued.

"Individualism lies at the core of American culture," he remarked, adding that this has both negative and positive effects on the country.

U.S. citizens are disconnected from a large sense of community for a host of reasons, he noted, adding that as people's ethnic ties have loosened in the country, other ties have taken their place that consist of common leisure pursuits and common income levels. As Americans become increas-

ingly segmented along lines of class and leisure, society has become more fragmented, he emphasized.

The church offers U.S. Catholics an opportunity to join the Body of Christ, and put the spiritual and material needs of their fellow men and women first, Father Kennedy noted.

"In this community, there is a chair for everyone who wants to come in and sit down," he said.

"Christ has come into the world that we might live in the world in a new way," he continued. "Our religion is meant to be proclaimed for the life of the world."

Father Kennedy continued this line of thought in his workshop titled "Living in America with a Catholic Imagination."

The priest noted that the seven sacraments form the center of the Catholic identity, and that by reflecting on their deepest meanings regularly, U.S. Catholics can come to understand why their faith has a public side.

In the anointing of the sick, for example, the church reminds its members that all of its resources are committed to the sick person, he said.

"We remember Jesus was present with the sick as a constant theme of his life," he remarked.

Anointing expresses the spiritual essence of the church's material and practical commitment to the sick — a commitment expressed through the Catholic health care system; home visits to the sick; and the church's participation in the national health care debate, he added.

The Eucharist also contains social implications, Father Kennedy said. Bread represents the whole cycle of labor and work, and by asking Christ to make it His Body, Catholics must ask themselves what is the quality of the bread, and therefore, the work, they are presenting Him.

Father Kennedy added that Catholics need not agree on how to apply these reflections in the political realm, but he emphasized that they must nonetheless consider them seriously when forming positions on political and social issues.

"Catholics need to maintain a kind of prophetic edge," he concluded, pointing out that the faithful must praise what is valuable in U.S. culture while challenging that which harms the community.

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EDITORS' NOTE: "St. Bernard's On the Road" sessions on the topic of "How do Catholics Decide?" are slated for May 15 at St. Catherine's in Mendon; and May 22 at Good Shepherd in Henrietta. A donation of \$5 for each evening is requested. For information, call these parishes, or SBI, at 716/271-1320, ext. 290.

Four diocesan programs set to move to St. Bernard's

ROCHESTER — St. Bernard's Institute, 1100 S. Goodman St., and the Diocese of Rochester have announced that four diocesan education and training programs will move to SBI in July.

The four programs are:

Professional Development, headed by Judith Ann Kollar, which provides education and skills development for those already serving in ministry. The program, to be known as Continuing Education once it moves to SBI, will also encompass St. Bernard's "On the Road" program, bringing academic speakers to diocesan parishes.

Certification for Designated Ministries, a pre-degree program for those prepar-

ing for particular church ministries, and the **Permanent Diaconate** program, both headed by Deacon Stephen J. Graff.

Instituto Pastoral Hispano (Hispanic Pastoral Institute), a three-year program preparing church members for service to the Hispanic community. The Institute is headed by Father Enrique Cadena, associate pastor at Corpus Christi Parish, 864 E. Main St.

Sister Patricia Schoelles, SSJ, president of SBI explained that the moves mark a new era in cooperation between the diocese and SBI.

"We'll (SBI and the diocese) both be more effective by having a single effort for ministry," she said.

In another development related to SBI, the institute kicked off its annual fundraising campaign — "Investing in the Life of the Church" — on Tuesday, Feb. 14, to raise \$100,000 for general operations, Sister Schoelles said. Donors will be asked to become charter members of "The Chancellor's Society of St. Bernard's Institute," according to a press statement.

SBI needs money for such items as faculty and curriculum development, publicity and scholarship assistance, Sister Schoelles added.

"Our campaign this year is critical, for SBI has accepted Bishop (Matthew H.) Clark's lead and will work in part-

nership with the diocese to serve as the center for theological training in our faith tradition," Sister Schoelles said.

The campaign's honorary co-chairman, Frank Stotz, echoed Sister Schoelles' remarks.

"If the church is going to survive we need priests and other qualified ministers," he said. "SBI plays a major role in educating deacons and the laity for the future. Our big challenge is to make people aware of our existence and how important SBI is to the community."

For information on SBI's education programs or SBI's fundraising campaign, call Linda Barton at 716/271-1320, ext. 290.

— Rob Cullivan