

## Diocesan men

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Casey.

"I found it well worth it," Deacon Casey observed.

Men in general, Deacon Casey said, have a harder time expressing their spirituality than do women, but gatherings of this sort help them to feel more free to speak about their faith. "This is one thing that will help us to grow as men in our relationship with Jesus Christ," the deacon said.

In reply to the criticisms that some have made against the Promise Keepers' movement, including its emphasis on male-only rallies, Deacon Casey said that he saw no signs that the retreats were anti-woman. "Most of the wives we've talked to are really encouraging about this, that men are taking a role in their spiritual growth," he observed.

"I feel there's a lot of men (who) are not involved spiritually with their families, and they are not as strong spiritually (as women are)," Deacon Casey's wife Rita said. But retreats such as the one held at Steubenville and others sponsored by Promise Keepers "bring them closer to God and bring the whole family closer to God."

"One of the things they kept using was the word 'covenant,'" Mike McCaig said. "They talked about your marriage covenant, how sacred that is and what a grace it is. It made you look at it in a different light.

"It was the same with fatherhood," he continued. "I think one of the things they stressed was, 'Those of you with children, they were given to you as a gift from God.' They emphasized, 'What are you

doing with those gifts' God gave you?"

Fred Collins, who went to Steubenville with McCaig, is not a father. And as a newlywed he has not encountered some of the issues involved with marriage raised by other men at the conference. Still, the gathering's Catholic-centered spiritual dimension struck home with him.

"It was very exciting to be with an entire group of men who shared the Catholic faith and were able to express that without being inhibited," Collins said. "When you get 600 men in a field house all singing, there's nothing like it."

Collins said he had been an active Catholic before he attended the conference, but admitted he had a hard time linking his faith with having a personal relationship with Jesus. The conference — and conversations with the McCaigs — helped to clear up those problems for him.

"When we went to Steubenville, everything kind of came together and culminated in a revelation that I can have my faith in Jesus Christ and fully have faith in Jesus Christ through the Roman Catholic Church," Collins said. Since the retreat, he added, "I've been wanting to find out what the Roman Catholic Church had for me sacramentally, and what I've been missing."

A sacramental focus was one of the Catholic elements incorporated into the Steubenville conference, noted John Sengenberger, Steubenville's director of conferences. Consequently, the retreat included daily liturgies along with a closing Mass.

The Catholic university decided to offer the conference as a joint venture with Promise Keepers because of the movement's growing interest among

Catholic men, Sengenberger explained. "There's a tremendous need for this in the Catholic Church," he observed.

In addition, he said, the retreat at Steubenville was intended to help encourage more contacts between Catholics and Promise Keepers in hopes that Catholics might be invited to speak at future conferences the movement sponsors.

Meanwhile, Steubenville officials are hoping that other Catholic conferences based on the values espoused by Promise Keepers will be held around the country.

In fact, the Ohio university plans to hold another gathering next summer.

Sengenberger has no doubts that such a conference will quickly fill up. Indeed, those men from the diocese interviewed for this article all expressed their desires to go back next year, taking with them other men from their areas.

Miner, for one, has high praise for Promise Keepers and the Steubenville retreat.

"I think it will make me a better husband and a better father and a better Christian," he concluded.

## Crusade

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He added, though, that most men think the conference is the main experience. "But that's just two days," he said. "Actually, we're interested in the other 363 days. The conference is the ignition point. It ignites the men to be open to a relationship with God and a few other men, to honor their pastor and prayer."

"It gives them a stronger desire to honor their wife and children, to really become male servant leaders," he said. All of that is supposed to come from seven promises the organization emphasizes.

By making the promises, the men pledge to honor Jesus Christ and model their lives on his, build support networks with other men, practice spiritual and moral purity, strengthen family ties, support their local churches, bridge racial and denominational barriers for the sake of unity, and actively influence society. The movement also encourages the creation of men's support groups in churches and parishes.

Promise Keepers has been criticized as anti-feminist, anti-gay, and has been called just a "boys weekend out" or a "good old boy" club that pushes the idea of male-dominated households.

"My personal response to the ones who would say this is a men-only group that will eventually downgrade women is that (it works) to the contrary," said Randy Krebs. A parishioner at Sacred Heart of Jesus in Enumclaw, Wash., he attended a Promise Keepers conference in Portland, Ore., last year. "To me it's one of the more pro-women organizations because it gets into the biblical aspects of how a husband should treat his wife: with dignity, respect and loyalty."

Father Timothy Nolan, pastor of St. Paul Church in Ham Lake, Minn., said in an interview before the Metrodome conference that he planned to go with 150 to 200 men from his parish.

"I see this (Promise Keepers) as a graced moment on this country," he said, "not our church or a particular church, but one of those waves of renewal. It's a God-given grace of repentance and commitment."

"As Catholics, we would be crazy not to tap into it, even though it is not a specifically Catholic movement," he added. "How else am I going to get 100 guys tuned up for the Lord? It's a freebie."

Includes reporting by Senior Staff Writer Lee Strong.

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## Designing our stories in a world of change

By Robert A. Healy, AIA

In today's society, we are taught to embrace change. The world moves rapidly and the technology of cellular phones and fax machines will continue to structure the way we work and live. If we don't catch on, we will certainly be left behind.

And yet, amidst all this change, it is crucial to find foundation. Our foundations live in our stories. The stories of our families, our faith and the community that makes us a parish.

I recently spent an evening at a parish as members gathered in an open forum to discuss potential renovations to their church. While the level of support varied, what remained constant was that each speaker had a story to share about what the church meant in his life.

Our stories can form the common

ground to counter the polarization of interests that often come in times of change.

How can our parish centers and worship spaces help us to celebrate the lives and the cultures of the people who create and sustain each parish community? Let us look for a way to display and share our stories — our times of joy and birth; sorrow and death; comfort and faith.

Change provides the opportunity to learn more about our faith, its symbols and its sacraments. Yet, it is also a time to learn about each other. Let us look at our church and ask how its architecture can help us to understand not only the story of Jesus, but the stories of each of us as well. For this will help us and our children to build a foundation in a world of constant change.



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