

Education

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New lifelong faith formation packets

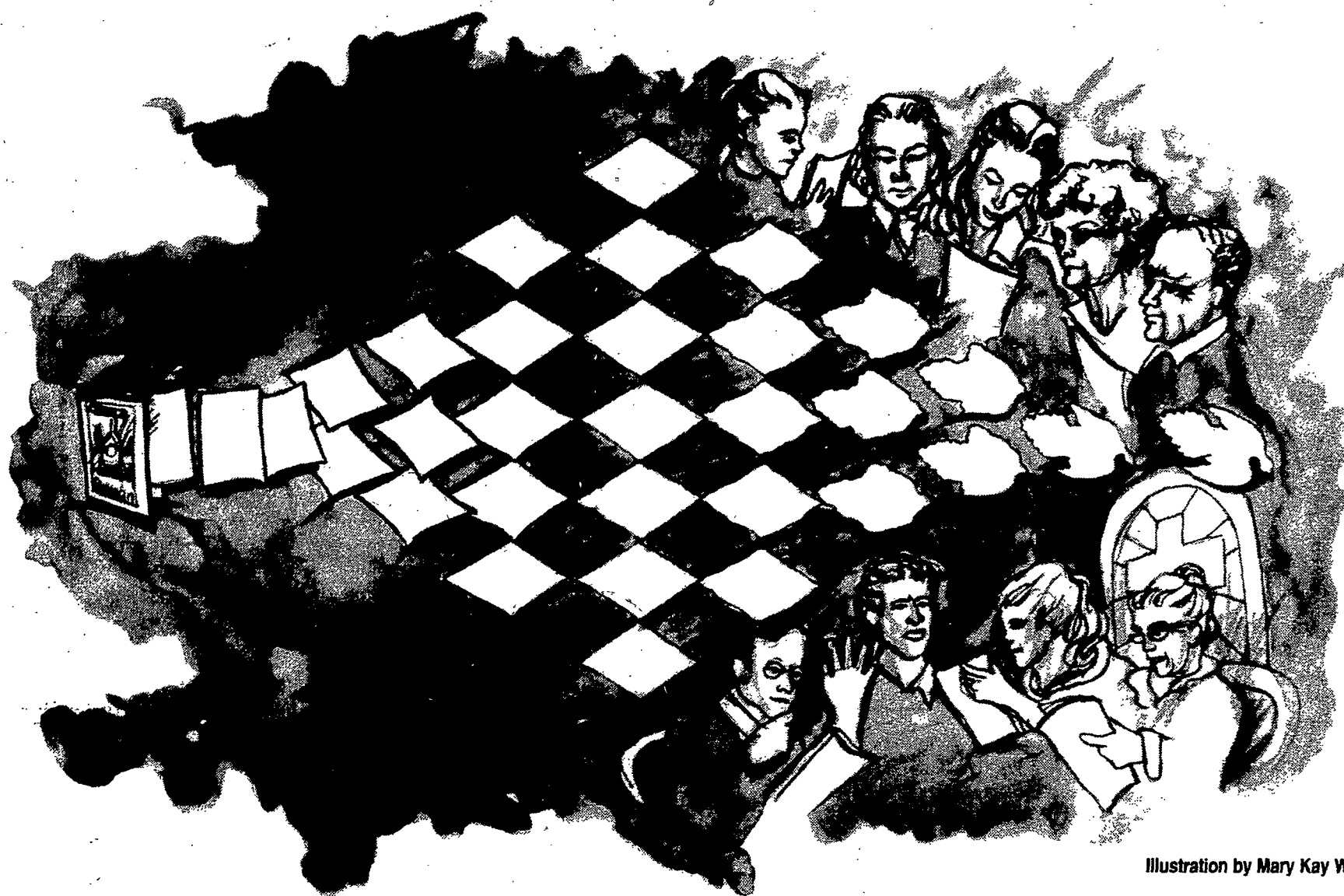


Illustration by Mary Kay Williams

Diocesan effort offers flexible educational path for all adults

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

John Dealy knows firsthand about the realities faced by those who sponsor adult faith-formation programs.

As director of adult education at Greece's St. John the Evangelist Parish, Dealy noted that special events or speakers attract respectable crowds, but regular educational programs for adults have a hard time drawing big numbers in the face of busy schedules.

"People say they want adult education, but the numbers that come to programs is miniscule," Dealy said. "The last ones we had averaged 15, 20 people. But when I talk to people from other parishes, we're doing better than a lot of them."

Nevertheless, the desire for such educational programs appears to be out there, noted Sister Mary Jean Smith, SSJ, pastoral associate for St. Vincent DePaul Parish, Corning, and Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Painted Post, both of which are part of the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community.

"I find people are hungry," Sister Smith said. "A good, strong core of people do want adult-faith formation."

Indeed, so many people across the diocese desired lifelong faith formation that it was the number one goal established during the diocesan Synod almost two years

ago.

At the same time, diocesan officials recognized that parishes need to find other ways to provide adult-faith formation beyond classes or large gatherings because parish staffs are stretched thin and parishioners have so many conflicting demands on their time.

"Parishes very clearly say lifelong faith formation is important, but their frustration comes through very clearly," noted Karen Rinefierd, coordinator for Young Adult, Adult and Family Faith Formation for the Rochester diocese.

To address this frustration, the diocese last fall formed a committee charged with developing adult-education packets designed to be flexible enough to allow people to pursue faith formation on their own time and at their own pace. And in recognition that adults don't learn the same way children do and have different educational needs than do children, the program is being called, "Children No Longer: Living Catholic in Today's World."

The committee, which included Dealy and Sister Smith, focused the packets around six topics that emerged during synod discussions: how adults pray; reading Scripture; ethical practices in the workplace; making moral decisions; marriage and divorce in today's church; and living a spiritual life.

Packets dealing with the first three topics will be ready for distribution this November; the other three

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John Dealy
director of adult education
St. John the Evangelist, Greece

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