

YOUTH



Marianne Kreydatus, a senior at Elmira Free Academy, is an active parishioner in the St. Casimir/St. Charles Borromeo Roman Catholic Community.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Tier teen stands up for her faith

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ELMIRA — By making regular visits to Sunday Mass and her church's perpetual-adoration chapel, Marianne Kreydatus is a good role model for Catholic youth.

Yet what may even be more impressive is the way Marianne affirms her faith away from St. Casimir's Church.

Marianne has found a need to be more vociferous ever since her freshman year at Elmira Free Academy. After attending Holy Family Catholic Schools until eighth grade, Marianne suddenly found herself in a public-school environment where her Catholic beliefs were frequently criticized by her peers.

"So many other people try to put Catholics down," stated Marianne, who is now in her senior year. "At (Elmira Free) Academy, you have every different religion. They'll tell you their religion is better than yours."

Because Catholicism is regarded as a strict religion, Marianne said, some of her classmates joke that she constantly prays and worships statues. Her response is to let them know that Catholics follow their faith in many different ways, none of which are necessarily wrong.

"It's what you believe. It's all in your heart," the 16-year-old said.

Marianne also keeps an open mind about the religious beliefs of her non-Catholic friends.

"I respect what they believe," she said. "Their religion teaches them to do certain things, too."

She added that her two older brothers,

who currently attend Elmira College, encounter similar differences of opinion on campus.

"I don't know how you can say one view is right over another one. I don't even know if priests can do that," Marianne remarked.

However, her air of acceptance is put to the test when viewpoints sharply opposed to Catholic moral teaching are voiced.

"When people say they're pro-choice, it's hard to bite your tongue," she noted.

Marianne pointed out that she occasionally has differing opinions not only with non-Catholics, but with her Catholic friends as well.

"I have a friend who doesn't like to go to church. She thinks it's the same thing over and over," Marianne said.

A good way to enliven one's faith, she suggested, is to explore Catholicism on a deeper level.

"A lot of kids I know say, 'I'm Catholic — I think.' I don't know how you can call yourself Catholic but not know what it means to be a Catholic," she commented.

Yet she also acknowledged that understanding the Catholic faith is no easy task.

"Everybody's supposed to question it. If you don't question it, you don't understand it," she reasoned. "I've questioned it, but I don't think I've ever doubted it."

She used Bible interpretation as an example. Rather than follow the Scriptures word-for-word, she said, a simpler approach would be to use them as a general guide for one's faith journey.

"You're supposed to try to get your own grasp of it. You're supposed to try to make your own interpretation," she said.

As she prepares to begin college and pursue a degree in physical therapy, Marianne is looking forward to keeping her Catholicism in the forefront of her young adult life.

"I think you should always go to church," she said. "A lot of people say it's a repeat process and get bored with it, but I don't get bored."

Smyth receives honor for service to schools

Bob Smyth, a longtime artistic director of musical productions at diocesan high schools, has been honored by the New York State Theatre Education Association.

Smyth was presented with the Special Award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre Education at an NYSTEPA conference Oct. 7.

Over the past 12 years, Smyth has directed programs at Bishop Kearney, Our Lady of Mercy, McQuaid Jesuit and the former Cardinal Mooney high schools.

Fundraiser to support Tier Catholic schools

ELMIRA — The final drawing for "Discover '95," a fund-raising raffle for Catholic schools in the Southern Tier, will be Nov. 21.

A grand prize of \$25,000 is at stake. Tickets are available until Nov. 20 at 6 p.m. Call 607/752-5432 or 734-6339, or stop at a school or parish office.


Teen hotline available

A new crisis hotline, "Teen to Teen," is open to Rochester-area teenagers.

Teens calling the hotline will speak to teen volunteer staff members for counseling, advice and information regarding issues such as family conflict, drugs, sexuality, relationships and abuse. The program is operated by Rochester's Center for Youth Services, Inc.

The telephone number is 716/256-0040. Teenagers can call from 5 to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, on school days only.

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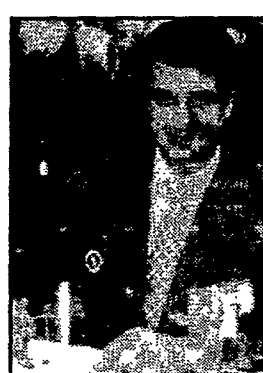
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