

CONTINUED...

Prayer

Continued from page 1

have to find ways that are appropriate for them. And it may change."

The O'Tooles, in fact, learn from their children, even though Karen is a religion teacher and Terry is a music minister at St. Paul's Church.

"They are probably more open to it than we are, to the movement of the spirit and the presence of the Lord," Karen O'Toole said. "That's why Jesus said, 'You have to come to me with the heart of a child.' It's beautiful. I say, why can't I be like that. I must have been once."

She recalled how her own parents prayed the rosary every night before going to bed. "I always found that very comforting to hear that, the back and forth."

For now, the O'Tooles' nightly ritual is gathering in the living room to pray the Our Father, Hail Mary, Angel of God, and individual thank-yous for their day.

Another type of prayer diocesan children are learning is from ancient tradition — quiet meditation or centering prayer (where a child might center thoughts on the life of Christ). Sister Dolores Monahan, SSJ, uses it in prayer classes at St. Michael School in Newark.

"One thing I help them talk about is going into the 'heart room' and talking with Jesus," she said. "I help them to quiet down and breathe deeply, to breathe in all that love Jesus wants to give us."

With fourth-graders she adapts traditional, methodical Ignatian contemplation. Imagining they were in particular Gospel scenes comes naturally to the children, she said, noting, "It is a beautiful way God leads them into insights."

With older children, she uses the Jesus Prayer: "Lord, Jesus Christ, son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Adults can easily learn this with their children, she added.

Through the Sisters of St. Joseph Spirituality Ministry, Sister Monahan also presents workshops on teaching children

"Lord, Jesus Christ, son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

to pray. She asks parents to reflect on their own images of God first.

"If your attitude about God is a punishing God or that you have to be very careful what you say to God, or one you very formally go to in church, children can read some of these messages," she said.

The diocese also offers some guidance when it comes to children and prayer, noted Mary Britton, diocesan catechetical consultant.

Diocesan religious curriculum guidelines, Britton noted, suggest that children in pre-kindergarten through second grade know the sign of the cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and An Act of Contrition, and be encouraged to say morning and evening prayer, grace at meals, the rosary, and responses at Mass.

For grades three through five, the Apostle's Creed is added to the list of prayers to know. Other prayers to be encouraged include the Stations of the Cross and the Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love.

For sixth grade, the Nicene Creed is added to the list of prayers to know, and prayers to be encouraged include the Prayer of St. Francis and Psalm 23. In addition, the students are taught that forms of dance, singing and art may also be prayers.

"You learn to say them in class, and memorize them through church and home," Britton explained, noting that class is usually only an hour a week.

From a historical view, she said, "In the 1970s parishes and schools had gotten away from using the catechism, and were looking for new ways for forming in faith. We always taught the sign of the cross,

the Our Father, Hail Mary and Apostles' Creed. We never lost those." But Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity or Guardian Angel prayers were less emphasized.

"Spontaneous prayer, from the heart, was what was taught," Britton continued. "It isn't a black or white, before and after thing. It is a continuing unfolding and deepening of our understanding of prayer."

Numerous parents find encouragement from author Kathleen O'Connell Chesto, who developed prayers for milestones in a child's life — losing a tooth, for example. Rote prayers seemed meaningless to her own son, so she instead taught him spontaneous prayer. But during a crisis later in his life, he was unable to pray in his own words, and didn't know the rote prayers that gave his mother comfort. Today she encourages a combination.

More than 100 "hungry" parents went to hear Chesto at St. Cecilia's Church in Irondequoit in October, according to Rinefield.

Her audience also included Father Richard J. Beligotti of St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Leicester and St. Lucy's Church in Retsof, who arranged a car pool after hearing her in March.

"I got a lot out of it myself," he said. "I thought parents should hear her. It's a very practical, very real approach to prayer, not anything pie in the sky. It was dialogue with God about events in their lives."

Referring to his own young parishioners, he said, "When you don't have Catholic schools, you don't expect them to know the Liturgy of the Hours."

He continued, "Kathleen Chesto

helped encourage us that prayer comes from our daily lives and what we experience." She even urges celebrating when a child learns to ride a bike, he noted.

"I wouldn't think of that as a moment for prayer," Father Beligotti laughed. "Now I realize every moment can be a teachable moment. Nothing is profane."

The priest's own upbringing was more liturgical, and he remembers in certain months his family lighting candles around statues in his home for evening prayer. "Statues or images or candles or icons are part of our sacramental dimension," he said.

Parishioners who accompanied him to Chesto's talk seem to appreciate the new and the old.

"We're getting more involved than just to have prayer at church," Debbie Stein, one such parishioner, said, adding she and her husband Peter hope to celebrate moments such as when their youngest children learn to tie their shoes.

Still, she noted the same 7-year-old son, Andrew, who is encouraged to pray at night for someone ("And it usually ends up being a cat or a dog") also is captivated by the rosary given to him for his first Communion and carries it everywhere.

Also combining approaches are Jack and Jackie Magiera of St. Lucy's Church. After Kellen, 4, walked five miles of the area churches' CROP Walk for hunger, they lit candles on a cake and sang congratulations. During more routine family prayer, their other son, Connor, 2-1/2, tries to keep up with the Our Father and Hail Mary. And without his contribution to grace — "Dig in" — meals wouldn't be the same.

Brenna O'Toole of Webster would be all for that. She can't imagine anyone not praying. Even if you don't know any prayers, she suggests, "make up your own, because they don't have to be formal. God hears all our prayers."

(EDITORS' NOTE: The page-one illustration is by the grandmother of staff photographer S. John Wilkin.)



SERVICES for SENIORS & SMALL FRY SERVICES

In-Home Care for Children & Elders

- Senior Care
- Child Care
- Respite
- Housekeeping
- Transportation
- Shopping
- Meal Preparation
- Companionship
- Errands

Bonded And Insured Call 723-8760

Serving Monroe & Surrounding Counties/Eastside office 473-5580

Pre-need Counseling Available.



De Nancy Bennett
Funeral Home
Since 1897

181 N. Main Street • Geneva
315-789-2224

MEMBER BY INVITATION NATIONAL SELECTED MORTICIANS



NEW HOPE ADULT SERVICES, INC.

- Housekeeping • Senior Sitters
- Laundry Service • Companionship
- Heavy Cleaning • Shopping Services

336-9770

Interested In Sharing Your Family?

Become A Therapeutic Foster Parent

A unique opportunity exists. Put your skills to work in your own home. Enrich your life and the life of an individual with special needs. You can be a part of an exciting team that will assist individuals in realizing the opportunities of a lifetime.

Therapeutic Foster Care Parents are needed to accept children with developmental disabilities into their own home. Foster Parents receive a generous monthly payment for the provision of support, guidance and a warm, friendly home. Free training, ongoing support and assistance from professional staff is provided.

For more information please phone: Lifetime Assistance, Inc.

Lifetime Assistance, Incorporated, a leader in the provision of services to persons with developmental disabilities.



(716) 637-6819

Heroes Wanted.



No cape required

SOJOURNER HOUSE

Shelter, Structure, Strength

You don't have to be an action hero to play an active role in bettering someone's life. Volunteer a few hours each month at Sojourner House. You'll be helping women and children to build productive lives. Give us a call at (716) 436-7100 today.



Space donated to the Ad Council as a public service of The Catholic Courier

For elegant home entertaining

Marcy Long CATERERS

Enjoy your Guests, We'll do the Rest

(716) 385-5773

Rehearsal Dinners • Brunch • Showers

Kids Answers

W	I	S	E	M	E	N	S	R
A	G	M	U	R	Y	T	H	E
W	A	X	A	S	A	K	E	G
C	N	O	T	R	E	E	P	N
B	G	O	L	M	Y	J	H	A
B	E	T	H	L	E	H	E	M
R	L	U	S	H	D	E	R	T
Q	N	I	N	E	V	R	D	F
L	U	N	N	A	W	O	S	R
E	G	D	I	V	A	D	T	O