

Catholics on campus

gether," agreed Gaston Ceron, a pastoral council member in the Cornell Catholic Community.

"People can learn a lot — especially in college — from each other about religion," added Gaston, a senior from Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Father Michael Mahler, director of the Cornell Catholic Community, noted that it often takes years for college students to fully embrace their faith.

"What we often find with freshmen is that they 'untie the apron strings' and do not come around for a while," Father Mahler said. "Then there are those who have great goodwill but get buried by academics very quickly. They get so stressed out; life has become so unmanageable for them."

However, Father Mahler continued, many of these students "start to roll in as juniors and seniors."

Erika still questions certain aspects of the Catholic faith, but appreciates the support lent by the campus ministry staff at Cornell.

"They realize that we are all forever in a state of change, especially in a college or university," she said. "They acknowledge that in order to grow in our faith, we can't stay in what we learned in elementary school."

Hands-on involvement, in both liturgical and social events, also helps to increase the sense of ownership for college students.

"Here, the students are more a part of everything," said Jeff Chabot, a Manchester, N.H., native who is in his second year at RIT.

"I feel more included," Renee agreed. "I really feel like I'm taking my faith into my own hands."

Gaston said he feels a similar welcoming spirit at Cornell.

"They tend to let people take the ball and run with it. I certainly feel this is my parish," Gaston stated.

And Gaston's campus minister, wouldn't want it any other way.

"I don't want to fill the pews with 'Sunday-obligation' Catholics," Father Mahler declared.

STORY BY STAFF WRITER
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Coming Next Week:
Teens debate the pros
and cons of smoking.



Fourth-year RIT student Eric Turck (left) serves as a eucharistic minister during the Dec. 16 liturgy.

it also may have been that I wasn't mature enough."

Then again, there's certainly a large chunk of college students who have never wavered in their Catholic faith. One such example is Jim D'Angelo, a third-year student at Rochester Institute of Technology.

Jim said he considers himself "fairly religious," and has been equally active at both the RIT Catholic Campus Parish and his home parish in Farrell, Pa.

"My motto is, 'I need all the help I can get,'" Jim joked.

Jim and Erin Sweeney, a second-year RIT student, regard Sunday Mass as more of a healthy routine than a tedious obligation.

"If I didn't go to Mass, I think I'd feel weird," said Erin, a native of Jericho, Vt.



Tony Paglia lends his singing talents to the student musical group in RIT's Catholic Campus Parish.

Whether the adjustment process be slow or quick, all agreed that college is the ideal time to take ownership of one's faith.

"There comes a point where you have to make a decision — do you want to do this, or don't you?" Louis of Geneseo State pointed out.

"My parents used to drag me to Mass, and now I'm doing it myself," said Renee Evans, a first-year student at RIT.

Renee, who hails from Glenville, N.Y., said her fellow RIT students often bond together in this effort.

"A lot of us go as a group, so we kind of motivate each other," Renee remarked.

"Student parishes have a great potential to draw people together — people all going through the college experience to-

"Our cultural patterns are an amalgam of black and white. Our destinies are tied together...Somewhere along the way, the two must join together, black and white together, we shall overcome, and I still believe it."

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

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