

# COLUMNISTS

## Moral issues invite discussion, questions

One of the exciting outcomes of the diocesan Synod has been an increasing effort to bring opportunities for adult education to parishes. I have worked extensively myself in a program called "St. Bernard's on the Road." This program is committed to bring some of the most current and responsible ideas in contemporary theology to parishioners in the diocese.

The individual sessions that have been part of this program have dealt with a range of topics. We have talked about what constitutes the core of Catholic faith, moral issues, sin, spirituality, Jesus, suffering and salvation.

Part of the process that has come to characterize "St. Bernard's on the Road" is collaboration among parishes and their staffs to identify issues that parishioners want to learn more about. The program has tried to remain faithful to a method that begins by asking what it is that adult Catholics themselves want to hear about. Then, we try to bring the best resources available to us to a discussion of the relevant topics. We also try to answer questions raised in the course of the session.

By asking first what it is that people want to learn about, and then attempting to answer questions from the groups who attend the sessions, "St. Bernard's on the Road" is trying to meet the educational needs of adult Catholics. This



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By PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SSJ

in itself is new in some ways, since the bulk of educational energy and resources in Catholicism has for many decades centered on educating children rather than adults.

Good adult education in moral theology is different from good childhood education. The education and training of children should be directed at making children aware of the rules and norms that are part of their moral tradition. Children should know that there are moral principles and rules necessary for the proper conduct of a life well lived. As they mature, children and young teens need to be exposed to the increasingly complex process of applying norms to actual life circumstances.

The needs of adult Catholics for good education in moral theology are more complicated. Adult Catholics need to understand precisely what the church

teaches on a given issue, and they need to know why the church teaches what it does. They also need to know what sorts of questions are brought to church teaching on a given topic by theologians and faithful Catholics trying to live according to the teaching.

Every single moral issue that people want to hear about today is surrounded by a great deal of discussion within the church. This is quite natural, since the issues that have been settled for a long time and involve no controversy are hardly sought-after topics for discussion. Slavery, for example, was once a "hot topic" in this country for discussion among church people. Usury, or taking interest on a loan, was once a major issue for moral theologians. In our economy, this is no longer an issue at all.

Today people want to hear about issues that are NOT settled. It seems quite natural to me that adults seeking further education in their faith would want a fuller and more nuanced treatment of issues than they have had thus far in their religious development. It is a mistake, I think, to assume either that the church's teaching includes no degree of complexity, or that there is no controversy surrounding the teachings of the church.

The issues people want to hear about are those that involve both a strong teaching by the church AND important

questions raised because of the experience of Catholics trying to live and understand those teachings. Thus our responsibilities in conducting adult education include reiterating what the church teaches and why, but should also clarify for people what questions, concerns and difficulties the teaching poses for Catholics living their faith today.

Sometimes I meet people who are uncomfortable with the idea that church teaching is open to discussion and questioning. But the church itself accepts that part of the learning process includes continued reflection and discussion. In its own documents on moral teachings, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith makes this very point over and over again. A 1987 instruction on reproductive technologies, for example, includes the following sentence:

"The precise indications which are offered in the present instruction, therefore, are not meant to halt the effort of reflection but rather to give it a renewed impulse in unrenounceable fidelity to the teaching of the Church."

Good teaching ought to invite good discussion and good questions. Adults need to know that moral issues are complex and are never settled by single-word answers to real life questions.

Sister Schoelles is president of St. Bernard's Institute, Rochester.

### All Dioceses

■ **Weekend retreat:** Early reservations will be accepted for May 17-19 Retreat at Our Lady's Villa, Mt. Pocono, Pa.; Fr. Albert Shamon, retreat master; round-trip bus transportation will be arranged; for information, call Mary Smith, 607/732-1080.

### Chemung Schuyler

#### Fundraisers

■ **FRI, MARCH 1 - Super Bingo:** sponsored by Holy Family Catholic Schools, Elmira; St. Anthony's parish center, W. Washington and College Avenues, Elmira; doors open at 5:30 p.m.; "Early Bird" begins at 7:15 p.m. and the super games begin at 7:30 p.m.; there are seating sections for smokers and non-smokers.

### Monroe County

#### Adult Education

■ **SUN, FEB. 25 - Series:** "Life and Holiness"; Room 11,

Corpus Christi School at Blessed Sacrament Church, 546 Oxford St., Rochester; 11:10 a.m.-noon; Thomas Tripiciano, presenter; call 716/342-1177.

■ **THU, FEB. 29 - Lunch Conversations:** "Bringing Beijing to Rochester: Local Strategies for a Global Platform"; part of Downtown Community Forum; The Dugan Center, St. Mary's Place, Rochester; 12:10-1:30 p.m.; reserved lunch \$7 per person, brown bags welcome; 1:45-3 p.m. roundtable discussion; Maureen Fiedler, co-director of the Quixote Center, speaker; call 716/232-7140.

■ **FEB. 28 & MAR. 13 - Session:** "Venite a Parlare"; a two-part Italian conversation session; sponsored by Casa Italiana at Nazareth College of Rochester, LeChase Lounge, 4245 East Ave., Rochester; 1:30-3:30 p.m.; Elizabeth D'Amanda, native speaker; admission \$5 for each afternoon, free to Casa members; call 716/586-8744.

#### Entertainment

■ **FEB. 23-MAR. 3 - "Benefactors":** a comic drama by Michael Frayn; presented by Shipping Dock Theatre, 3690 East Ave., Rochester; Fridays and Saturdays at 8:15 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m.; call Box Office, 716/385-8400.

■ **FEB. 23-25 & MAR. 1-3 - Musical Production:** "Little Shop of Horrors"; Nazareth College Arts Center, 4245 East Ave., Rochester; Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., Sundays 2 p.m. with an interpreter for the hear-

ing impaired on March 3; adults \$10, students \$9 and senior citizens \$8; call 716/586-2420.

■ **FEB. 29-MAR. 2 - "Fiddler on the Roof":** presented by the Mercy/McQuaid Players; Mercy High School auditorium, 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester; 8 p.m.; \$5.50 for reserved tickets, must be picked up at Mercy before Feb. 28; call 716/288-7120 (days) or 377-3920 (evenings); tickets will be available at the door for \$7.

■ **FEB. 29-MAR. 2 - "Steel Magnolias":** presented by St. John Fisher College, Kearney Auditorium, 3690 East Ave., Rochester; 8 p.m. on Feb. 29, March 1 & 2, and 2 p.m. on March 3; general admission \$5; handicap accessible; call 716/385-8000.

#### Religious Activities

■ **THU, FEB. 22 - Workshop:** "Allowing Dreams to Teach Us"; Sisters of St. Joseph, 4095 East Ave., Pittsford; 7:15-9 p.m.; \$5; call Sr. Judy Reger, SSJ, 716/586-1000, ext. 177.

■ **SAT, FEB. 24 - Gathering:** and sending ceremony for Sister Theresa Rutty, who is going to work in Chile with the Mercy Community in the Santiago area for the next three years; Mercy Motherhouse Chapel, 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester; 2 p.m.

■ **SUN, FEB. 25 - Prayer Service:** Celebrating Women; Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park, Rochester; 1:30 p.m.; call 716/223-0525.

■ **TUE, FEB. 27 - Yoga and Contemplation:** Sisters of St. Joseph Spirituality Center, 402 Rogers Parkway, Rochester; 7:30-9 p.m.; \$10 per session; continues March 12 and 26; wear loose clothing; call 716/336-4371.

■ **WED, FEB. 28 - Presen-**

tation: an outline of Catholic history with emphasis on worship and the sacraments; Church of the Assumption of Our Lady, South Meeting Room, 20 East Ave., Fairport; 7:30-9 p.m.; Mrs. Sheryl Zabel, pastoral associate, Sacramental and Adult Education.

■ **THU, FEB. 29 - Styles of Prayer:** "How Christian Meets God"; Session 1: "The Prayer of Reconciliation," presented by Lawrence Searles, SJ; Queen of Peace, 601 Edgewood Ave., Rochester; continues March 7 and 14; 7:30-9 p.m.

■ **FRI, MAR. 1 - World Day of Prayer Service:** First United Methodist Church, 31 West Church St., Fairport; 10-11 a.m.; followed by fellowship and refreshments; child care will be provided; handicap accessible.

■ **FRI, MAR. 1 - First Friday Mass:** sponsored by Catholic Women's Club of Rochester, 492 East Ave., Rochester; noon; preceded by 11:45 a.m. rosary for peace; Fr. Joseph D'Aurizio, celebrant; call 716/461-9173.

#### Social Activities

■ **SAT, FEB. 24 - Euchre night:** sponsored by St. Thomas More Singles' Club; 7 p.m.; call Anne for details, 716/482-5656.

■ **FRI, MAR. 1 - TGIF:** sponsored by Single Adult Ministry of St. Louis Church, Pittsford; The Brookwood Inn; 5-7 p.m.; for information, call Marie, 716/425-3956.

■ **SAT, MAR. 2 - Volunteer Informational Brunch:** sponsored by Catholic Family Center Restart Substance Abuse Services' Freedom House, 81 Barberry Terrace, Rochester; 10 a.m.; men who are interested in helping recovering men are welcome to attend; call and leave a message at

716/546-1271, ext. 252.

### Seneca Cayuga

#### Health

■ **SAT, FEB. 24 - Health Fair:** Sacred Heart Church Parish Center, 90 Melrose Road, Auburn; 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

### Steuben County

#### Entertainment

■ **SAT, FEB. 24 - Sadie Hawkins Day Dance:** St. Joseph's School, 209 Fremont St., Wayland; 8 p.m.-midnight; \$5 couple, bachelors free; BY-OB mixers and refreshments available; hillbilly attire preferred, shoes optional.

### Yates Ontario Wayne

#### Adult Education

■ **TUE, FEB. 27 - "Being Catholic in Today's World":** part of St. Bernard's On the Road; St. Mary's Church, 95 N. Main St., Canandaigua; 7:30 p.m.; \$3 per session; call 716/394-1220.

■ **FRI, MAR. 1 - Reservation deadline:** for RCIA, "A Day of Prayer - Moving to Your Special Easter Vigil" on March 9; Notre Dame Retreat House, Foster Road, Canandaigua; offering \$15 per person, lunch provided. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.; call 716/394-5700.

### CORRECTION

The dates for two penance services at St. Mary's Parish in Auburn were incorrect in the Lenten Calendar printed in the Feb. 15 issue of the *Catholic Courier*.

The second service is slated for March 30 at 11 a.m., and the third service is set for April 3 at 7:30 p.m.

The first service, Feb. 29 at 7:30 p.m., was listed correctly. The *Courier* regrets the error.

Be a Courier Kid! Read the Kid's Chronicle on page 12.

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