

Story by Mike Latona

Photographs by Matthew Scott

After stage

Young thespians act out their faith in other ways as well. At Church of the Assumption in Fairport, a group of teens clown around — literally — with their Catholicism. This contingent performed before several hundred teens at a diocesan-sponsored "Movie Madness" event last month at SONY Theatre in Webster.

Assumption's skit features clowns who portray a juggler, a tightrope walker and a gymnast. The fourth and final clown, however, walks on stage holding her hands in prayer. The other clowns ridicule her, and even squirt liquid from a fake flower at her.

Yet rather than retaliate, the praying clown reaches into her pockets and pulls out actual flowers, which she offers to the

other clowns. As they accept the flowers, their facial expressions change from glee to wonderment.

Ryan Conaughty, 14, portrayed the juggler. The message this skit conveys, he explained, is that "you can make fun of me, but I'm not going to change."

Amber Candela, who plays the gymnast clown, pointed out that the skit also mirrored how Jesus typically responded to his detractors.

"He would never talk back, and eventually people would listen to him," stated Amber, 15.

Amber also used her acting abilities when Church of the Assumption performed its



Clockwise from bottom Amber Candela, Sarah Haggett, Ryan Conaughty, Julie Schun, Jennifer Dailey, also from left to right individually are Ryan Conaughty, Sarah Haggett, and Jennifer Dailey

"Turnaround" skit March 10 for the youth group at Church of the Good Shepherd in Henrietta.

"Turnaround" — set to Bonnie Tyler's 1983 hit song "Total Eclipse of the Heart" — involves a teen who is tempted by negative influences. Other actors, dressed in black, wear signs with the words "suicide," "alcohol" and "drugs." However, that person cries out for Jesus, and an actor portraying Christ appears on stage and hugs the troubled teen. That person becomes "turned around" through Christ's love and compassion.

Tom Tammara, from the Corning-Painted Roman Catholic Community, has acted in Living Stations, clowning and Turnaround. Among his many performances, he particularly remembers a Living Stations his group performed at a parish youth retreat last fall.

"It was dead silent," said Tom, 17. "It grabs their attention, it really does."

A spark of creativity helped grab the attention of those who attended a program on chastity at St. Catherine of Siena Church in Mendon March 2. The subject was discussed by adults and youth-group members who employed a mock television talk-show format.

John McLean, 15, who played one of the panelists, said the television setting was an interesting way of driving home the message of chastity to the many teens who attended.

"They really seemed to

enjoy it — more than if it were a lecture," John stated. He added that he will also take part in the Living Stations to be held at St. Catherine of Siena on Good Friday, March 28.

Carole noted that these performances in church settings can provide that something extra which might help congregations digest Christ's message on a deeper level.

"It gives you a much better understanding. And understanding brings you closer to your faith," Carole commented.



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