

on the MOVE

CONFIRMATION

Story by Mike Latona

Joy Liberi doesn't see age as a major issue when the sacrament of confirmation is involved.

"There are adults who think like children, and children who think like adults," stated Joy, 13. She was among 117 young people, ranging in age from 10 to 17, who were confirmed at Greece's St. John the Evangelist Church on April 6.

"There are some people who could be ready at fourth grade, and some who could never be ready. The only thing that could make somebody ready is if they love Jesus. If kids care enough that they want to devote themselves to Jesus, then who's to say they're not ready?" said Joy, a seventh-grader who attends Odyssey at Hoover Drive School.

Catechetical leaders in the Diocese of Rochester share Joy's viewpoint. Diocesan officials have instructed parishes to offer the sacrament to a much wider age range than in years past.

Based on a diocesan policy instituted in 1994, confirmation preparation is open to all baptized Catholics beginning at age 7 (usually second grade). Bishop Matthew H.

Clark has instructed all parishes to fully implement the new guidelines by September 1997.

Barbara Carroll, diocesan coordinator of sacramental life, said that confirmation classes over the past several years have mostly included youths in grades seven through 10. However, she added that parishes are generally complying with the new guidelines.

"The majority of the parishes have really taken this seriously," Carroll said.

According to informational brochures distributed by Carroll's office, confirmation "completes the sacrament of baptism, brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace and more clearly shows forth the gifts of the Spirit received in baptism. At the same time, the celebration of confirmation leads us to (E)ucharist as the way to live out being a fully initiated Catholic."

Under the new guidelines, three crucial areas are involved in the readiness process:

- The individual. A person must be baptized and have reached the "age of reason," which is considered to be age 7.
- The family. Families must provide guidance to the individual by praying together at home, and also by participating with the individual in church and

community activities.

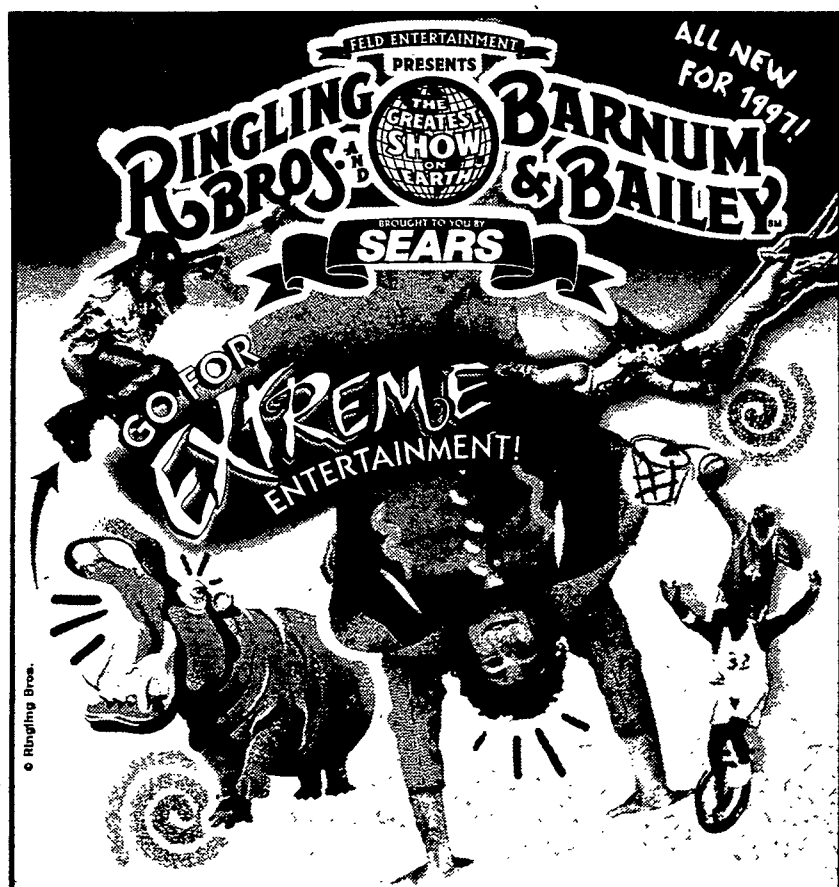
- The parish. The church must offer adequate faith formation programs during, and after, confirmation preparation. Individuals should also be fully welcomed into their faith community.

However, parts of the new policy are questioned by Johan Engstrom, youth ministry coordinator at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Brighton.

He wondered whether all parents would be truly committed to preparing their children, or if some would simply rush their children into the sacrament because they consider it a mere formality.

Engstrom also remarked that not all parish staffs are equipped to offer confirmation preparation for several age groups.

"I think the guidelines, in theory, are right. But I don't think,



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Children from a distant town visit Don Bosco Moshi Seminary

in Moshi, Tanzania, also reports a "steady growth" in the number of seminarians in this region of East Africa - in fact, the number of students has doubled since the seminary opened in 1992! Eric Mairura is one of them.

Eric said he "always dreamed of being a priest." Unfortunately, Eric's father did not share this dream. However, upon seeing his son's determination and earnestness, Eric's father apologized, and said to him, "Go son... God bless you." † Please pray for Eric and Father Thomas. And, please - support the Church in the Missions through the Propagation of the Faith.



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