

Jesus appreciated women as gifted individuals

My daughter Teresa confidently grabs the orange rings hanging by the chains at her school playground. As she pauses on each ring, she gathers her momentum to seize the next ring. At the end, she easily leaps to the wooden platform and raises her arms in triumph like an Olympic gymnast. Teresa proudly turns my way and says, "Don't forget to clap, Mom." Her strength, agility and confidence are a joy to behold.

On the opposite end of the playground, Teresa's brother Bobby and his friends have finished a game of touch football. As the boys pass by Teresa, one of them makes an unkind remark to her. But with a broad smile and unflinching determination, she easily puts this bothersome boy in his place.

"Oh yeah. Well you're not bothering me," she said. "And I'm not listening to you and I bet you can't skip the rings like I can."

I'm enjoying this moment as much as Teresa's success on the orange rings.

I see both these scenes with a new perspective because I've recently finished reading two eye-opening books about the daily dangers of being young and female in today's world: *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* by Mary Pipher, Ph.D., and *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls* by Joan Jacobs Brumberg. Both are groundbreaking books that take a serious look into the ways that our "look-obsessed" "media-saturated" culture oppresses girls and can ultimately destroy their sense of self. Despite all the gains women have made in recent years, it's a culture that dictates how girls should look — beautiful, thin and sophisticated — and how they should act — docile, weak and nice. As a result, there is an enormous gap between what a girl knows her true self is and what our culture tells her it should be.

Interestingly, girls aren't as susceptible to these pressures in the preadolescent years. They are full of confidence, energy, cu-



family matters

By EILEEN MARX

riosity and ambition. But according to Pipher, something happens beginning in early adolescence. The cultural changes in the past 30 years have created pressures and confusion for girls at a vulnerable time in their physical and emotional development. Among Pipher's observations:

- A health department survey in Pipher's Midwestern city showed that 40 percent of all girls who lived there considered suicide last year.

- Eight million women have eating disorders in America. The omnipresent media portrays desirable women as thin, and in the last two decades these women have become slimmer and slimmer. Almost all adolescent girls feel fat, worry about their weight, diet and feel guilty when they eat.

- Many of the messages portrayed in popular culture encourage girls to consume alcohol and nicotine to sedate their pain. Adolescent girls are the only population group whose smoking has increased over the last 20 years.

- On any given day in America, 480 women and children will be raped, and 32 percent of all rapes occur when the victim is between the ages of 11 and 17.

Pipher effectively makes her case for the need to address the dangers facing our daughters but she also provides proven methods that have helped girls hold onto their true selves during the adolescent

years. She discusses the need for parents to listen to their daughters. She speaks of the importance of homes that offer protection, challenges, love and structure.

I like to think that one of the most important ways that girls can hold onto their true selves in adolescence is through their church and their faith. But we need to ensure that our church is a place that welcomes girls and women rather than an institution that undervalues, belittles or attempts to put girls in their place. Our parishes need to be havens where girls believe they can share their gifts and talents rather than hide them. As our culture sends messages causing girls to sell their bodies and souls, our church must send the message that real beauty lies in the size of your heart, not your dress. When girls feel pain and pressure in their lives, they need to know that they can turn to a loving God

who will see them through their suffering.

We need to be a church that teaches girls that Jesus saw women as people who had an equal opportunity to be involved in the work of spreading the Gospel. In a male dominated society, Jesus raised the status of women. In a culture where women were ruled by men and worshiped for their physical beauty, Jesus spoke with them, he healed them, he traveled with them, he taught them and he respected them. They were his disciples and his friends. They followed his cross to Calvary and they were the first to announce his victory over death. Jesus saw women as persons — their strengths and weaknesses, their inner beauty, their gifts, their talents and their potential. He saw them for their whole selves.

Marx lives in Lawrenceville, N.J., with her husband and two children.



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Aw, dad

Ed Starowicz goes over a skit with son Jason, 7, during "Where is the Spirit of God" program March 8 at St. Catherine of Siena Church, Mendon. The afternoon of prayer and activity for families was sponsored by five diocesan churches and the diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis. The Starowiczes are parishioners of St. John of Rochester, Fairport.

Notre Dame Retreat House



Serving the Diocese of Rochester for Men's and Women's Retreats

Men's Retreats:

April 17-19, May 8-10, 1998

Women's Retreats:

March 27-29, April 3-5, May 1-3, May 15-17, May 29-31

Retreat in Spanish: April 24-26, 1998

Couples Retreat: June 26-28, 1998

12 Step Retreat: June 26-28, 1998

The Musician's Retreat:

Fr. Fred Brinkmann, Dr. Wm. Greene: July 20-22, 1998

Directed Retreats:

August 9-15, 1998

Elderhostel Programs:

April 19-24, May 17-22, July 12-17, Aug. 30-Sept. 4,

October 4-9, 1998

Notre Dame Retreat House Staff:

Very Rev. Frederick Brinkmann, C.Ss.R.

Rector of Notre Dame

Rev. Leo Dunn, S.S.R.

Rev. Tim Keating, S.Ss.R.

Sister Mary Lynch, S.S.J.

Sister Dolores Monaghan, S.S.J.

Telephone: 716-394-5700

The Only Thing We Overlook Is Canandaigua Lake!
Please call for more information.



Linwood
SPIRITUAL CENTER

Linwood Spiritual Center is a magnificent property of 51 acres sitting high on a hill overlooking the Hudson River in Rhinebeck, NY.

Linwood serves as the Regional Center of the Society of Saint Ursula and as a Center for Spiritual Renewal.

The programs offered include weekend retreats and workshops; days and evenings of recollection; mornings apart for women; six and eight day guided/directed retreats: the Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life; regular retreats for men and women in 12 step programs; regular programs for senior citizens; on-going spiritual direction and bio-spiritual focusing sessions. Retreatants for private retreats and directed retreats are welcome as well as groups using our facilities for day use. Our facilities include 34 individual rooms; chapel, library, hermitage, conference rooms, tennis court, pavilion and swimming pool.

Please call (914) 876-4178 or fax (914) 876-1920 for further information about any of our programs.

BERAKAH:

"A Place of Blessing" in Pittsfield, NH

GUIDED RETREATS:

Celebrating all the Beginnings of Our Lives

Rev. Joseph McKay June 26-July 3

Continuing the Journey July 13-20
Mary Schneiders, O.P., Pauline Plante, C.S.C. and Doris E. Gagnon, C.S.C.)

Be Still and Know That I Am God July 22-29
Monique Gagne, F.C.S.C.J.

Wrestling With God July 31-August 7
Barbara Fland, S.N.D.de N.

Journeying With Jesus August 12-19
Mary Schneiders, O.P.

DIRECTED RETREATS:

June 26-July 3 Pauline Plante, C.S.C. and Mary Schneiders, O.P.

July 22-July 29 Pauline Plante, C.S.C. and Rev. Joseph McKay

August 12-19 Monique Gagne, F.C.S.C.J. and Maureen Kelly, O.S.F.

For more information please write or call:

BERAKAH

96 Fairview Road, Pittsfield, NH 03263
(603) 435-7271 • Fax (603) 435-6670



St. Columban Center

on Lake Erie at
6892 Lakeshore Road, Derby, NY 14047

For Priests June 8-11

Friendship, Key to Spiritual Growth
Rev. John W. Crossin, OSFS

Sisters' Conference Retreat July 5-11

Joy in Endings and Beginnings:
Hope for the 21st Century

for Anyone:

Directed Retreats

July 19-25 & Aug. 6-13

Sacred Circle, Mandala Retreat

Aug. 16-21

Call (716) 947-4708 for information, registration; or write....



Like a tree planted beside the waters... Jer. 17:8