

YOUNG ADULTS

Participants sense God at services

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

April 3 marks the first Friday of the month, and when work whistles blow, many young adults will flock to their local nightspots to relieve workaday stress.

But at a time when many will be whooping it up at happy hours, a small number of young adults — and older Catholics — will be trying to keep quiet, if only for an hour.

These Catholics have been attending First Friday Taizé services at St. Patrick's Church, 46 Stanley St., Mt. Morris, for more than a year now. The services, which run from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m., are sponsored by Kindred Spirits, the young adult ministry of St. Patrick's and Holy Angels Church in neighboring Nunda. The two churches make up the Catholic Community of Mt. Morris and Nunda.

About 60 people attended the last Taizé service at St. Patrick's, according to Jerry M. Rolison, an active member of Kindred Spirits. Rolison leads the meditative services, which are open to the general public.

The services are named for Taizé, a French town that is home to an ecumenical community of vowed brothers from different Christian denominations, including the Catholic Church. The Community of Taizé was begun in 1940 by a Swiss Protestant, Roger Shultz, and now has communities in impoverished areas of South Korea, Brazil and New York City.

Taizé brothers are known for their dedication to ecumenism; youth and young adult ministry; service to the poor; and music. Thrice-daily Taizé services are the ritualistic glue of the communities, and St. Patrick's has modeled its own Taizé services on those of the brothers, Rolison said.

"When someone asks what Taizé is,



words cannot suffice," Rolison said. "The more I try to explain it, the worse it sounds. The best way to understand Taizé is to experience it."

Rolison, who coordinates Kindred Spirits' activities with Debbie Cross, said the Taizé services were first suggested by a visiting seminarian to St. Patrick's, Steve Lape, who lived there from May 1996 to May 1997. Since Lape has left, Rolison has led the services.

Rolison said the purpose of the Taizé services is to aid participants in experiencing an interior sense of God. The church's lights are kept low, and the altar is lit with several candles. The service consists of scriptural readings, prayers, silence and simple, chanting music led by a four-member choir, he said.

Each service has a theme, Rolison said, noting that the theme for April 3 will be "rebirth" in anticipation of Easter. Participants are given scrolls to take home that contain writings on the theme, he said, and the participants are invited to sign a mailing list so that they can be kept abreast of

future services through a newsletter.

Mary Randozzo, a parishioner at St. Patrick's, has attended several Taizé services. She strongly recommended the services for anyone seeking to get closer to God.

"The atmosphere is so quiet and peaceful, even with the music," she said. "It's touching, it's real. God is near, and if only more people could experience it. To be able to see it and feel it and to know that God is near."

Those sentiments were shared by Tom and Linda Biondillo, who also attend St. Patrick's. They attended the service for the first time March 6, and plan on going back.

"We just thought it was very contemplative and relaxing," Linda said.

"It was just something so different," Tom added. "It just made you sit and think. I'm looking forward to going again."

Rolison said participants have come from as far away as Webster, Rochester and Fairport to Mt. Morris for the services.

"It's quite a nice feeling to see all these people coming into church just for this," he said.

Elizabeth Drake, an Episcopalian from Bloomfield, learned of the services through Rolison, a friend of hers. She was so moved by the Taizé services that she composed a poem called "Taizé Christmas" for the December scroll that participants received.

"(Do) we ever just take a moment ... a Taizé moment, to look at the gifts that we are given?" she wrote. "Do we see God's hand touching our lives daily? Do we thank the ones we love for the pure joy of loving?"

Hike slated to aid shelter

Dimitri House, 102 N. Union St., Rochester, will host its 11th annual "Hike for the Homeless" on Saturday, April 25. Hikers will register for the fundraising walk at 9 a.m. at the house, and begin the hike at 10 a.m.

A ministry of Corpus Christi Church, Dimitri House provides food and shelter for the poor and homeless, and supportive living for men in recovery. To learn more about the walk, call 716/325-1796.

Drake, 26, said she thought young adults in particular would benefit from attending St. Patrick's Taizé services.

"I think that everybody has a very busy life and forgets the time that it takes to reflect on God and ourselves," she said. "Taizé gives you that pause."

To learn more about Taizé at St. Patrick's, call Jerry Rolison at 716/658-9494, or call his work number, 658-3520, and ask for "Jerry Jr."

Humanize yourself

Dr. Dennis Boike, a marital and family therapist, will speak on "Developing Human Relationships" in Our Lady of Mercy Church, 36 Armstrong Road, Greece, on Tuesday, April 21, at 7:30 p.m. Boike will speak about establishing and nurturing human relationships. The program is sponsored by several parishes, and St. Bernard's Institute in Rochester as part of its "St. Bernard's On The Road" series. For information, call 716/271-1320.

Members of Odyssey, the diocesan-sponsored young adult network, will meet in Our Lady of Mercy's church foyer prior to Boike's presentation. The group may go out afterwards. Call Micaela Gutierrez at 716/325-4456 for information.

Odyssey is part of the Diocese of Rochester's young adult ministry efforts, which are supported by the Thanks Giving Appeal to the tune of more than \$66,000 a year. The funds cover the salary and staff expenses of the diocesan office of Young Adult, Adult and Family Faith Formation.

For information on Odyssey activities, call 716/328-3228 or 1-800-388-7177, then press 1-5-375.

Thoughts to Consider



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