

YOUNG ADULTS

Hispanic youngest member of women's commission

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Elizabeth M. Muñoz, 27, wants women to be able to serve the church in whatever positions they believe they are qualified to hold — including the permanent diaconate and the priesthood.

However, Muñoz — the youngest member of the Diocesan Women's Commission — also knows that the Vatican has made it clear it won't be changing church law on such matters. Yet Muñoz noted she has no plans to leave the church she serves daily.

"It takes years for the Catholic Church to change, and one day, it will change," predicted Muñoz, who joined the commission in December. "I can't see leaving a faith that I love ... just because of an issue that will, in the long run, change."

Muñoz said she hopes to serve as an articulate voice for Hispanic women's concerns on the commission, which is aiding the diocese in implementing Synod Goal 3 — recognizing and valuing the dignity of women in church and society. In particular, she said she hopes to arrange for commissioned-sponsored speakers who are knowledgeable of Hispanic women's needs, as well as to have commission materials published in Spanish.

She also hopes to help organize retreats and workshops for Hispanic women. Muñoz said that Hispanic women in inner-city areas deal with many difficulties related to poverty, violence and low self-esteem.

"Women in the city have to learn to defend themselves in all kinds of ways," she said.

The commission operates under the auspices of the diocesan Office of Women in Church and Society, directed by Gloria Uterino. Uterino noted that Muñoz was a valued addition to the commission.

"She has a maturity beyond her years and is both strong in her views and gentle in terms of how she expresses those," Uterino said. "She obviously has a real deep understanding of people in the (Hispanic



Greg Francia/Staff photographer

Elizabeth Muñoz answers a phone at Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier Church, 34 Teresa St., Rochester. She is the parish secretary, activities coordinator, youth minister and youth catechist at the church.

community.)"

In addition to her service with the commission, Muñoz wears the hats of parish secretary, activities coordinator, youth minister and youth catechist at Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier Church, 34 Teresa St.

"My mother tells me, 'Why don't you just bring your bed over here,'" she joked of her busy schedule.

A native of Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, she is the oldest of Cecilio and Lucia Muñoz's seven children. Muñoz moved to New York City with her family when she was 3 and the family settled in Rochester in 1989. She became a U.S. citizen two years ago.

Muñoz attended St. John Fisher College from 1990 to 1993 and majored in sociology. She served as president of the

school's Latino Student Union and said she helped to organize weekly Spanish Masses there.

Due to financial reasons, she had to drop out of Fisher, but she plans to attend the State University of New York College at Brockport on a part-time basis this fall to finish her degree. She eventually wants to become a public defender specializing in family court matters, she said.

She enjoys working with young people, and involving them in contemporary issues in her catechetical classes. For example, she said, in her confirmation classes she'll stress the importance of kids valuing each other — even when they don't like someone. That can be a tough proposition when some of her students have to deal with violence from their peers, she ex-

plained.

"It's kind of difficult because they're not always able to see God in everything," she said of the teenagers with whom she works. "They do bring up many situations that are very difficult, but you have to do your best."

Upcoming events

Are you single and looking to discern lifestyle choices? Sister Judy Reger, SSJ, will present a retreat for single men and women on Sunday, April 26, from 1 to 7 p.m. at the Sisters of St. Joseph Spirituality Center, 402 Rogers Parkway, Irondequoit. The retreat is free and includes supper, but reservations are needed. Call Sister Marilyn Pray, SSJ, at 716/235-4068, or e-mail her at praytoo@juno.com for information.

Odyssey, the diocesan-sponsored young adults network, is sponsoring a forum on "The Poverty Puzzle: What Should Be Done To Help The Poor?" at St. Mark's Church, 54 Kuhn Road, Greece, on Saturday, May 2, from 2 to 5 p.m. Rochester community representatives who work with the poor will be on hand to discuss with young adults the moral and practical questions involved in helping the poor. Contact Kate Stanford at 716/352-0287 or Julie Sikorski at 723-9643 to register.

Are you interested in joining a small faith-sharing group? A group of young adults that met regularly during Lent plans to resume meeting biweekly on Wednesday evenings. For information, call Teale Dominas at 716/637-4922.

Do you have an idea for an Odyssey event? If so, contact the following chairpersons of the following subcommittees: social — Mike Latona at 716/723-5328; faith formation — Teale Dominas at 637-4922; service/outreach — Tracy McCabe at 473-5328; and personal development — Micaela Gutierrez at 325-4456.

To learn more about Odyssey, call 716/328-3228 or 1-800-388-7177, then press 1-5-375. Odyssey's Web site is at <http://www.ggw.org/odyssey/>.

Expert: Generation X wants honest witnesses to faith

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — Young people, be they Generation Xers or baby boomers, are not exactly flocking to their Catholic parishes.

And it's up to religious educators and parents to do something about it, said a workshop speaker April 17 at the annual convention of the National Catholic Educational Association.

"In terms of the future of the church, the single most critical problem facing us today is the evangelization of young people," said Robert Ludwig, director of university ministry at DePaul University in Chicago.

Ludwig spoke during the April 14-17 convention that brought nearly 9,000

Catholic educators to Los Angeles.

He said the best way to get young adults back into the church was by showing them a faith that is alive, by giving them what the Second Vatican Council called the church "to be."

As a commentary on how some young people are not even aware of Vatican II documents, he recalled once asking a class of college students if anyone knew what the Vatican council was. To his dismay, he said, the one student who raised his hand responded, "Isn't that the pope's summer residence?"

But the very spirit of Vatican II "reflects the kind of faith young people are looking for," Ludwig said.

They're not going to respond to a series of rules or threats that they could go to hell, he added. What today's young people want is something vibrant, alive and personal, he said. And even though these young adults are suspicious of the institutional church, they are still hungry for spirituality and community and are committed to service and being inclusive, he said.

They'll make the distinction, he continued, between being religious, which they often reject as too formal and institutional, and being spiritual, which they see as important because it's deeper and more personal and stems from one's own heart.

Such a distinction doesn't surprise Ludwig, who has three children of his own in

the young adult category.

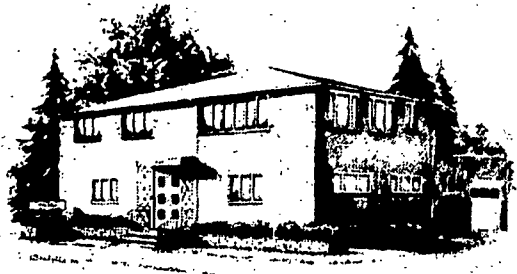
He sees their hunger for spirituality as stemming from the culture they grew up in. Today, more so than in previous generations, youth have been affected by divorce, media influences and a more mobile, unstable society, he said.

The void they've experienced in their own lives makes them look for an experience of God, which, as Ludwig points out, "is what our (church) tradition is about at its core."

To make any inroads, he advises educators and parents alike to share with young people their personal experience of God and to do so honestly, because young people "insist on that."

Michael R. Yackiw Funeral Home

1270 Norton Street
544-5000



Holy Sepulchre Cemetery

2461 Lake Avenue • Rochester, NY 14612 • 716-458-4110

Religious Gifts for All Occasions

Call for our free catalog
1-800-934-6336

1551 Cherry Valley Trpk.
Skaneateles, NY 13152-0569



MAY BINGO CALENDAR

DAY	TIME	LOCATION	PHONE
MONDAY	7:30 p.m.	St. Barnabas Church, 15 Whelan St., Rochester	716-271-1466
TUESDAY	10:00 a.m.	Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Bingo Palace, Rochester	716-467-2725
WEDNESDAY	7:30 p.m.	Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 4419 Dewey Ave., Rochester	716-467-2725
THURSDAY	10:00 a.m.	Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Bingo Palace, Rochester	716-467-2725
FRIDAY	7:30 p.m.	Good Shepherd Church, 3288 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester	716-334-3518