

Surveys cite charity as essential church teaching

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

National survey results this year showed most U.S. Catholics 20 to 39 years old ranked belief in God's presence in the sacraments, charity to the poor and belief in Christ's real presence in the Eucharist high among elements essential to the Catholic faith.

Vast majorities, however, thought the church's teachings that only men can be priests and that workers have a right to unionize were not essential to the faith.

An informal, nonscientific survey of young adult Catholics in the Diocese of Rochester yielded similar results. In the Rochester survey, the church's teaching that Christ calls us to love one another, to forgive one another and to serve one another ranked high.

"It is our duty as humans to keep watch over each other," wrote one respondent, in a comment that typified others from diocesan young adults.

According to *Catholic News Service*, results of the national survey were released back in February by sociologist Dean R. Hoge of The Catholic University of America, one of a team of researchers who commissioned it as part of a larger study of post-baby-boom adult Catholics.

The survey data came from the responses of 701 Americans who identified themselves as Catholic and in the 20-39 age range during a series of national random sample telephone surveys conducted last fall by Princeton Survey Research Associates.

The *Catholic Courier* recently surveyed people attending two events hosted by Odyssey, the diocesan-sponsored young adults network. One event was a June 6 retreat, the other a June 13 picnic. Ten

Catholics filled out the survey forms and returned them to the *Courier*.

The *Courier* asked the young adults to list what they thought were the church's three most important teachings.

In addition to charity to the poor, love of neighbor and the church's openness to all, the young adults in the *Courier* survey listed teachings on the sacraments or the Eucharist, that all life is sacred, that Christ was divine and rose from the dead, and that God's Word must be preached.

Forgiveness from God and of others was considered the second most important teaching by three young adults, and a fourth wrote "love of neighbor" while another put down "the golden rule" and "loving Christ with all of your mind, heart and soul." Other answers included the church's call for all to be in community, the right to life, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and his example in life.

Teachings about the Blessed Virgin Mary drew two responses as the church's third most important teaching. Showing God's love to others; love of neighbor; the Eucharist; the participation of all in "God's body"; and the church's upholding of hope were also listed by at least one respondent each.

As for what young adults thought was nonessential to the faith, the church's teachings about the role of women drew a thumbs-down from almost half the respondents. The fact that the church won't ordain women drew four critical responses from survey respondents. Three specifically mentioned women, while one criticized the church's restrictions on ordination in general.

Meanwhile, one person listed "strict adherence to dogma" as least important, while another wrote "emphasis on the sin of different sexual orientation."



And somewhere out there, a catechist can take heart because he or she inspired one respondent to write: "I don't feel that any teaching of the Catholic Church is not important."

Summer school

Speaking of learning about faith, Odyssey is sponsoring a five-week series of moderated discussions on "Catechesis 101: What Being Catholic Means in Our Lives presented from the Young Adult Perspective." Each discussion runs from 7 to 9 p.m. on the following Tuesdays: Aug. 4, 11, 18, 25; and on Wednesday, Sept. 2.

Participants are asked to donate \$5 at each discussion to defray expenses. For information, call Micaela Gutierrez at 716/325/4456.

The series' schedule:

Aug. 4 at St. John of Rochester gathering room, 8 Wickford Way, Fairport; "In

God's Image"; Sister Kathleen Wayne, RSM, will discuss how we imagine God and other topics.

Aug. 11 at St. Cecilia's Church, Room B, 2732 Culver Road, Irondequoit: "Making Up is Hard to Do"; Father Jim Hewes will look at the sacrament of reconciliation and conflict resolution.

Aug. 18 at the Borromeo Prayer Center, 3011 Dewey Ave., Greece: "Devotions and Mysteries"; Father Doug DellaPietra will explain Catholic devotions and prayer styles.

Aug. 25 at Good Shepherd School, 3318 E. Henrietta Road, Henrietta: "Breaking Bread the Catholic Way"; Father Bob Kennedy will explore the Eucharist.

Wednesday, Sept. 2. at Blessed Sacrament Church, 534 Oxford St., Rochester: "Everything You Wanted to Know About Catholicism and the Mass"; Deacon Patrick Shanley will moderate.

Upcoming events

Odyssey has slated several events for August. For information on all upcoming events, call Karen Rinefield at 716/328-3228, ext. 255, or 1-800-388-7177, ext. 255, or e-mail her at krinefield@dor.org.

• July 31: Registration deadline for day-long "Walking on Water Convention for Catholics 18 to 22" on Saturday, Aug. 8, beginning at 9:30 a.m. at the State University of New York at Geneseo. The convention will feature workshops, entertainment and liturgy designed to show how powerful a force Christian faith can be in your life. Call 716/328-3228, ext. 255, to register.

• Aug. 8: A casual dinner at Runds on the Ridge, 2833 Ridge Road W. in Ridgmont Plaza, Greece. Call Russ D'Angelo at 716/359-8872 to make reservations.

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Sr. M. Brigid
Native of: Chicago, Illinois
Prior Experience: Medical Technologist

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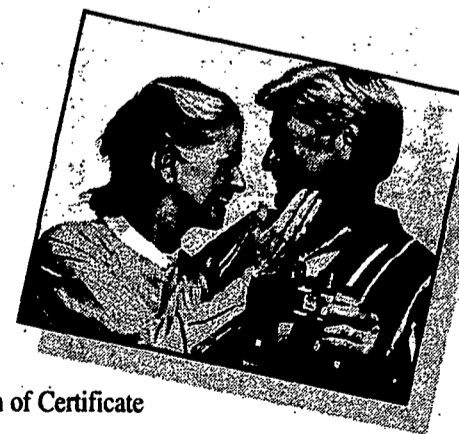
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