## Education '98

## SBI road series draws enthusiastic response

By Mike Latona Staff writer

When Pat Albrecht became pastoral associate at St. Mary's Church in Waterloo in September 1997, she sought to expand adult education at her parish - so she decided to bring St. Bernard's On the Road to St. Mary's.

By the time the educational series chugged into Waterloo this past March, no less than eight Finger Lakes parishes had become involved in the effort.

According to Albrecht, parishes in Seneca Falls (St. Patrick's), Geneva (St. Francis de Sales and St. Stephen's), Interlaken (St. Francis Solanus), Ovid (Holy Cross), Stanley (St. Theresa) and Rushville (St. Mary's) helped plan the two programs and their topics - Who Is a Catholic? and Cafeteria Catholicism.

"There were 100 people each night, and the mix was excellent," Albrecht recalled.

This success suggests the drawing power of St. Bernard's on the Road, a continuing series of lectures on issues pertinent to today's Catholics. The programs are held at Catholic parishes in all parts of the diocese.

St. Bernard's Institute, the Rochester Diocese's graduate school for ministry and theology, began On the Road in early 1995 as a response to the 1993 diocesan Synod's first goal — lifelong religious education.

A total of 95 parishes now take part in planning On the Road programs, according to Judith Kollar, SBI's director of continuing education. More often than not, Kollar said, parishes become interested in the series by simple word of mouth.

"It has spread people-to-people, priest-topriest, religious education director-to-religious education director," Kollar remarked.

Attendance at these lectures has averaged approximately 150 people, Kollar re-



Deacon Steve Graff, SBI's dean of students and director of admissions, lectures at a 1995 On the Road program.

ported. Admission, determined by regional planning teams, varies. Some lectures are free. At others, an admission fee is charged or a freewill offering requested.

All On the Road programs are either taught by SBI professors or speakers approved by SBI faculty. One person who gained such approval is Bishop Matthew H. Clark, who drew large crowds this past year to St. Louis Church in Pittsford, St. Mary's in Rochester and St. Anthony's in Elmira for his lectures on "The Pastoral Exercise of Authority." Bishop Clark is also due to speak on "Catholicism Today" Oct. 28 at St. Pius X Church în Chili.

A typical On the Road session includes a talk by one or two presenters, then a coffee break followed by a question-and-answer session. Kollar said that some speakers have encouraged small-group discussions, and others have implored participants to interrupt at any time with questions.

On the other hand, Sister Patricia Schoelles, SSJ, president of St. Bernard's Institute, acknowledged that some On the Road sessions have been the occasion of spirited debates and even brief shouting matches. However, she said, this can happen at any public discussion on religion.

"We're not without controversy. For the first time, people in

the audience are seeing just what theology can be like," Sister Schoelles said. She herself is scheduled to preside at two On the Road programs this fall: "Balancing Obligations to Family, Jobs and God" (along with Deacon Thomas Driscoll) Oct. 14 at St. Boniface Church in Rochester; and "Forming a Conscience and Moral Decision Making" Nov. 3 at St. Mary's in Waterloo.

Sister Schoelles noted that On the Road is educational for instructors as well as participants.

'It's good for theologians to know what the questions are, for the faculty to go back to classes and say, 'This is what I learned,'" Sister Schoelles commented. "It's not about what we think people ought to know. It's about what they want to know.

On the Road's fall 1998 lineup of 19 programs in 16 parishes - beginning Sept. 28 - will contain some new wrinkles. For instance, two programs in southeast Monroe County will target young adults: "Young Adults Today: Gifts/Challenges/Pastoral Needs", Sept. 28 at Church of the Good Shepherd in Henrietta; and "The Church of the Future: So I Believe in God, Now What?", Nov. 17 at Church of the Transfiguration in Pittsford.

The series will also visit St. John's Home in Rochester on Oct. 20 for a presentation aimed at senior citizens: "Prayer in the Afterglow Years." Kollar said the upcoming session was inspired by the success of a similar program last March at St. Ann's Home in Irondequoit - the first time On the Road had visited an adult care facility.

On the Road will also make its first foray into ecumenism when a three-day series, "The Gospel of John," is held Oct. 13-15 at St. Patrick's Church in Owego. Jack Evans, an adult education committee member at St. Patrick's, explained that his parish was anxious to host an ecumenical gathering because St. Patrick's has taken part in such past ecumenical efforts as vacation Bible schools and Thanksgiving

Evans added that both Catholics and non-Catholics can learn from each other by discussing such topics as the Gospel of John. "It's all for the good," he said.

Be it young adults, senior citizens or ecumenical gatherings, Kollar said that On the Road will continue its educational mission "until people stop asking us to come.

"It won't stop as long as the people have questions," Kollar added.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For a complete listing of St. Bernard's on the Road programs this fall, call fudith Kollar at 716/271-3657, ext. 292, or Crys Cassano at 271-3657, ext. 290.



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