

## Team calls parishes to empower young adults

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

GENEVA — If you're a parish leader and you want to destroy young adult ministry at your parish, it's pretty easy — do for young adults what they can do for themselves.

Just ask Jim Schmitz, a member of the social subcommittee for Odyssey, the diocesan-sponsored young adult network.

In talking to young adult Catholics throughout the diocese, Schmitz said he and other Odyssey members had found that the young adult parish ministries that lived the shortest time were those that gave the least power to their ministry targets.

"One of the main complaints that (young adults) had given is that they couldn't really do something," Schmitz said.

Schmitz's remarks came during an Aug. 13 afternoon workshop Odyssey members led on "Becoming A Young Adult Responsive Church" at "Leadership Days '98," a pastoral leadership conference presented by the Diocese of Rochester and its Parish Support Ministries office at Hobart and William Smith Colleges Aug. 11-13.

Schmitz presented the workshop, attended by 15 people, with Micaela Gutierrez, who chairs Odyssey's subcommittee on personal development; Teale Dominas, who chairs Odyssey's subcommittee on faith formation; and Karen Rinefierd, diocesan coordinator for adult, young adult and family faith formation.

Schmitz and his co-presenters stressed that parishes need to aggressively draw from their rich and diverse young adult talent pools if they want to ensure the Catholic Church keeps Catholics in their 20s and 30s.

Schmitz noted that some parishes see their young adults as simply good for doing such things as manual labor around the parish. Other parishes, rather than specifically targeting young adults, place them on parish boards that already exist, instead of creating new ventures that young adults can own.

Like Schmitz, Gutierrez stressed empowering young adults by asking them to plan social and spiritual events at their parishes.

"Have (a young) adult run the event themselves," she said. "It's not the greatest model to have a staff person say: 'We're going to run an event.'"

Rinefierd said parishes need to examine how they welcome young adults who want to get married. How a parish staff treats such a young couple can often make or break that couple's decision to join that parish, she noted.

Young adults who feel they aren't needed by their parish — or respected by it — will eventually seek support for their spiritual endeavors at another parish or even another denomination, the Odyssey members noted. Parishes can show respect for young adults by promoting their events through regular bulletin and pulpit announcements, posters and direct mailings, they noted.

Gutierrez added that parishes should not be afraid to schedule social events that include serving alcohol.

"Punch and cookies is not always an adult event," she said, though she added that not every event need have alcohol. Serving it, however, shows a parish trusts its young adults to behave responsibly, she said.

Dominas explained that parishes can ask young adults to plan Lenten Stations of the Cross and other events to inspire their participation in the church. She summed up the thrust of the workshop in these words:

"If you expect the best from your young adults ... you will get the best."

### Upcoming events

For information on the following events, or for a list of upcoming Odyssey events, call Karen Rinefierd at 716/328-3228, ext. 255, or 1-800-388-7177, ext. 255, or e-mail her at krinefierd@dor.org.

• Interested in taking a canoe trip down the Erie Canal? Odyssey will sponsor a trip at 1 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 29, at Oak Orchard Canoe, 40 State St., Pittsford. Participants will rent canoes, paddle down the canal and meet for dinner at Schoen Place afterward. You can meet



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## Bubbling over

Martin Keill entertains Karen Wahl with some bubbles during a break in a young adults workshop at the SUNY College at Geneseo Aug. 8. The workshop took place during the daylong "Walking on Water Convention for Catholics 18 to 22." The convention featured workshops, entertainment and liturgy for young adults. Martin is a parishioner of St. Louis Church, Pittsford; Wahl is parishioner of St. Pius X, Chill.

the group just for dinner if you can't make the canoe trip.

• Odyssey's Faith Formation Committee will conclude its summertime "Catechesis 101 Series" with a discussion on "Everything You Wanted to Know about Catholicism and the Mass" on Wednesday, Sept. 2, from 7 to 9 p.m. at Blessed Sacrament Church, 534 Oxford St., Rochester. Moderator Deacon Patrick

Shanley will lead participants in a question/answer forum.

• A panel of married couples will lead a discussion on "Giving the Love You Want" on Tuesday, Sept. 15, from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at a location still to be selected. The discussion will examine such questions as: How do we create life-giving relationships, and how do we involve God in them?

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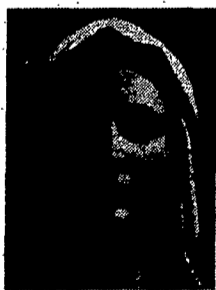
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