

To Life! To Life! To Life!

CLE video promotes discussion of issues

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

For five minutes, the television screen is filled with sometimes disturbing images culled from photographs, paintings, newsreels, movies, etc.

The Fall. Cain and Abel. War. Pollution. Poverty. Tim McVeigh. The electric chair. A lynching. But also shown are people feeding the sick, caring for the elderly, cleaning the environment.

The images are accompanied only by questions, leading up to the final question: "Jesus Christ, what are you asking me to do?"

"A Consistent Life Ethic Reflection" is a video produced by the Diocese of Rochester's consistent life ethic office with funding from the Thanks Giving Appeal. Originally produced in 1997, the video was available previously on a limited basis. It is now available for general use through the diocese's AV library, along with a diocesan-created discussion guide.

"We thought we needed an education piece to somehow sum up the message of the consistent life ethic and make it usable for parishes," said Suzanne Schnittman, the office's coordinator. "We wanted it to be a starting point for discussing the consistent life ethic, or acting on it."

Judy Taylor, communications manager for diocesan Catholic Charities and the author of the video's script, noted that parishes had been asking for a video to help with discussion of the consistent life ethic.

"Parishes find (video) a flexible tool," Taylor said.

To help create that tool, in early 1997 Schnittman and Taylor met with a small group of volunteers. The group developed the format, with Taylor suggesting it con-



sist of a series of questions with accompanying images.

Mark Foggetti, president of Great Atlantic Pictures and a parishioner of St. Lawrence Church, Greece, was asked to produce the video.

"The questions came first, because we had certain areas we wanted to cover," noted Foggetti, who donated much of his time on the project. In searching for images, he added, "we just tried to reinforce what those questions were."

Taylor pointed out that the video is not intended for all audiences because some of the images are so strong. Nor can it simply be shown on its own.

"This is not a stand-alone, take-it-home-for-the-family type of video," Taylor said. "It needs a facilitator to introduce it, to prepare the group and to guide the group through the discussion."

A rough version of it was first shown at Keuka Days in August 1997, and a few parishes subsequently borrowed it — sans discussion guide — from the consistent life ethic office.

One of those parishes was the Corning- Painted Post Roman Catholic Community, which showed the video as part of an adult education program.

"I'm the social ministry committee chairperson, and I had heard about the video," explained parishioner Linda Crowe. "We always try to do something special about 'respect life' in October."

"It's very thought-provoking," she said. "I don't think anyone could leave and not be thinking about how they should be acting."



At the same time, Crowe cautioned, the video does need a discussion guide to help with its presentation — she developed one for her own presentations. And, she acknowledged, it will not necessarily change people's minds right away. Its use is in getting discussions started.

Maura Sweeney, young adult minister and Renew coordinator at St. Dominic's Church, Shortsville, found that the video led to sometimes "avid discussions" after she showed it to her Renew group leaders, the parish council and the social ministry committee last fall.

"It's really going to touch people's emotions and you're going to have to be prepared for that," Sweeney cautioned. "It was


the source of a lot of good discussion."

The members of her parish who viewed it, she noted, liked the fact that it asked questions rather than simply stating "here are the answers."

As for herself, she observed, "I really enthusiastically recommend the video."

The new discussion guide will help parishes present the video, Taylor suggested. The goal is to help people move closer to understanding and accepting the consistent life ethic, she added.


"We didn't and we can't assume that it will inspire total conversion," Taylor said. "The discussion that follows will hopefully make them more open to embracing the consistent life ethic."



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