

# Young Catholics

## Catholics express care for creation

ROCHESTER — According to the Book of Genesis, when God finished creating the earth, he looked upon it and "found everything he had made very good." Years later, on April 24, 1999, 6-year-old Michael Kusmierz turned over some of that earth God created, and he also found it was "good."

The earth Michael turned over lay in a plot on the border between Blessed Sacrament Church's parking lot and Monroe Avenue, and Michael expressed his approval of it as he shoveled it. Michael was one of several Blessed Sacrament parishioners planting a flower garden.

However, Michael did express preference for some portions of God's creation as opposed to other segments. For example, when asked whether he preferred shoveling dirt or removing squirming grubs from the soil, Michael quickly replied: "Dirt."

Michael had two groups to thank at Blessed Sacrament for his environmental awareness moment that day — Crossroads, the parish's 150-member young adults group, and Young Families, a parish group of about 20 young adult couples and singles with small children.

Chris Hood, 26, pastoral associate at Blessed Sacrament, oversees both groups. He called on them as well as the parish as a whole to participate in an "Earth Day Clean-Up" of the surrounding neighborhood. About a score of parishioners participated in the event, which took place two days after the official Earth Day, April 22. Earth Day was founded by former U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson in 1970 to raise awareness of environmental concerns.

Hood said he wanted to celebrate Earth Day for two reasons — to let the neighborhood know that Blessed Sacrament cared about it, and to deepen a respect for God's creation in parishioners. To that end, he and the participants picked up garbage around Monroe Avenue, and also planted the flower garden.

"I'm discouraged by some of the in-

Story by  
Rob Cullivan



Ellen Swanger and her son, Benjamin, plant flowers in front of Blessed Sacrament Church.

Susan Mack, left, waters the garden in front of Blessed Sacrament Church, Rochester.

Photos  
by Greg  
Benenati

creasing violence in the neighborhood," Hood said, listing a recent spate of muggings and shootings. "We have to have a presence in the neighborhood."

Michael's mother, Rachel Kusmierz, 36, shared Hood's sentiments.

"(Blessed Sacrament) is a church that needs committed parishioners," she said, noting she belongs to Young Families. She added that the Earth Day Clean-Up was a good way to bind children to their young parents.

Gary Avery, 36, a member of St. Ambrose Church, Rochester, said he learned

about the Earth Day event through Odyssey, the diocesan-sponsored young adults network. Avery added that he has helped out at Blessed Sacrament's soup kitchen, and wanted to lend a hand to the clean-up as well.

"I enjoy the fellowship of other Catholics," he said. "It's a nice day out, and it's a good way to meet people and socialize."

Carlos Swanger, 35, and his wife of nine years, Ellen, also participated, bringing along their two sons, Benjamin, 4, and Alex, 5. He said he and his wife joined the Young Families group so they could strengthen their relationships with other parish families. He added that the Earth Day Clean-

Up served both a social and spiritual purpose.

"It sets a great example," he said. "I want to make sure the kids understand that we need to take care of our planet, and to take care of what God has given us."

### Events

Unless otherwise indicated, for information on the following events, call Odyssey, the diocesan-sponsored young adults network, at 716/328-3228 or 1-800-388-7177, ext. 375. You can also check out Odyssey's Web page at <http://www.ggw.org/odyssey/>, or e-mail Liz Webster at [emw@rocsoft.com](mailto:emw@rocsoft.com).

● **Friday, April 30:** Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata, co-directors of Diocesan Catholic Gay & Lesbian Family Ministry, will speak about various issues related to their ministry at a Catholic Leadership Forum Luncheon from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., Genesee Valley Club, 421 East Ave., Rochester. \$12 per person. Call Nancy Nash at 716/328-3228, ext. 278, for details.

● **Saturday, May 15:** "Leap of Faith" — a joint event with Quest, the Diocese of Buffalo young adults network. Participants will experience both the low rope and high rope courses at Camp Stella Maris on Conesus Lake. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Meet at Van Zandt Road entrance at 8:45 a.m.; \$25 per person. Reservations needed by May 3.

● **Thursday, May 20:** Dinner at the Elmwood Inn Restaurant, 1256 Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester, at 7 p.m. RSVP by May 19.

● **Friday, May 21:** Paul Pasqualoni, head coach of the Syracuse University Football team, will speak at a Catholic Leadership Forum Luncheon. Call Nancy Nash at 716/328-3228, ext. 278, for details.

● **Saturday, May 22:** Hike in the Thousand Acre Swamp, a protected natural sanctuary, at 9:30 a.m. Take 590 North from Rochester to the Browncroft Blvd. exit, turn right onto Route 286. Drive about seven miles to Jackson Road, and take a left. Look for Thousand Acre sign on left just after ambulance office. Parking lot is at the end of the drive.

● **Friday, June 4, to Sunday, June 6:** "We Are The Body Of Christ" retreat at Camp Casowasco, Owasco Lake. Arrive on Friday at 7 p.m., depart on Sunday just before noon. \$80 per person, cost covers meals and lodging. If your registration and \$35 non-refundable deposit are received before May 14, the cost is \$76. Call the Odyssey hotline and leave your name, mailing address and phone number, and someone will get back to you.

● **Saturday, June 26:** Third Annual Odyssey Picnic and Mass at Mendon Ponds Park, Mendon. Call Odyssey for details.

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