



CNS/Reuters

Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles delivers the invocation at the opening session of the Democratic National Convention Aug. 14. In his prayer, he urged the party to protect the poor and vulnerable, including the unborn.

Cardinal tells party to protect life

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles opened the Democratic National Convention Aug. 14 with a prayer calling delegates to commit themselves to protecting the life of all people, from unborn children and the elderly to those on skid row and death row.

"God of life and love ... we pray that your spirit will inspire all candidates, regardless of party, to embody in their words, actions and policies values that protect all human life, establish peace, promote justice and uphold the common good," he said.

He called on delegates to work on behalf of immigrants and those who are poor, hungry and suffering, and

to promote equal access to health care and education.

"In you, O God, we trust ... that you will keep us ever committed to protect the life and well-being of all people but especially unborn children, the sick and the elderly, those on skid row and those on death row," he prayed.

He also prayed for "a new kind of politics, focused more on moral principles than on the latest polls, more on the needs of the poor and vulnerable than on the contributions of the rich and powerful, more on the pursuit of the common good than on the demands of special interests."

A day earlier, Cardinal Mahony urged delegates attending a Mass he

celebrated to keep God in their hearts when the lives of America's children "are threatened both in the womb and in our neighborhoods."

"It is the church's special prayer that during these days of important deliberations for the good of our country God will be present in your hearts to guide you for what is truly in the best interests of all our people," he said at the Mass.

The next afternoon, as he welcomed convention delegates to Los Angeles and began his prayer, he said he came to the proceedings "out of respect for our nation's democratic traditions."

"I come as a pastor, not a politician; an advocate of values, not candidates," he said.



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HELP WANTED:

Position will have full responsibility for the total youth-ministry program for three parishes. This includes recruiting, training and supervising volunteers; managing the office; planning programs for the youth of the parishes; acting as parish resource person; and developing a youth-advisory board. This position will also be responsible for implementing a comprehensive program that will include the following components: catechesis, evangelization, social action, community building, spirituality, liturgy, guidance, enablement and advocacy.

Youth ministry: Many challenges, many joys

Story by Mike Latona



Andrea A. Dixon/Staff photographer

Kitty Peterson (right), youth minister at St. Patrick's in Seneca Falls, dances with teens from her parish during the Diocesan Youth Convention, held Aug. 4-6 at SUNY Geneseo. From left, they are Maria Piscitelli, Dan Lazzaro and Carla Lorenzetti.

The job notice above is an actual advertisement for a full-time youth ministry position in the Rochester Diocese. Many such ads could also say that youth ministers must be willing to:

- Work long hours for modest pay.
- Conduct programs on evenings, weekends and possibly overnight.
- Spend entire weekends away from home at retreats and conventions.
- Attend weekly parish staff meetings.
- Attend all, or most, weekend Masses.
- Be prepared to answer the phone any time of the day to listen to a teen, and potentially help solve a crisis.

Welcome to the world of youth ministry. It's an area that is taking on increasing importance in the Rochester Diocese and was a high priority for parishes during the diocesan Synod and the Pastoral Planning for the

New Millennium process. Michael Theisen, diocesan coordinator of youth ministry since 1992, said that approximately 100 of the nearly 160 diocesan churches are served by a full-time, part-time or volunteer youth minister. This is a sharp rise from 1993, when, according to Theisen, only 35 churches had youth ministers.

"The level of knowledge of youth ministry, and the appreciation of it as a profession, has grown each year," Theisen said.

In fact, so many parishes are offering youth ministry at this point that it's become hard to fill openings. Diocesan parishes have several full- and part-time positions that have been open for months. As of mid-August, at least nine youth ministry positions — three of them full-time — remained unfilled.

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