

## How do we reach our young Catholics?

I enjoyed my chat with Abby Rose before the Red Wings game yesterday (Aug. 20). It was Catholic Diocesan Family Day at Frontier Field. As part of that observance, this beautiful young woman from St. John's Parish, Spencerport, was to sing our national anthem a cappella before the game. I was to throw a ceremonial first pitch.

While we waited for the Red Wings staff to lead us to our assigned places, I asked Abby if she was at all nervous about singing before thousands of people. She smiled a very peaceful smile and said, "A little bit." I said I would have been surprised if she had responded otherwise, and confessed that I was nervous about my assignment, too. What I did not tell her was that last year, doing the same thing at the same event, my pitch wiped out a family of earthworms on its way to the catcher. I did not want to do that again.

As it turned out, Abby's rendition of the song was just beautiful. And, although I could never describe my pitch as beautiful, I did manage to get the ball into the catcher's mitt without destroying any wildlife in the process. I do credit and thank Abby, whose calmness and peace in the face of an assignment much more difficult than my own did so much to relax me.

Even as I write about Abby, I think of the Father Richard McBrien's recent "Essays in Theology" column (*Catholic Courier*, August 10) in which he argued that newspapers are not effective means of communication with the young people of today.

### along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

Noting that surveys indicate diocesan newspapers attract an older readership, Father McBrien maintains that "... the Catholic press, and diocesan weeklies in particular, are not going to attract a younger audience simply by adding some youth pages or running more photos of young people." All of the evidence, he suggests, indicates that the best way to reach younger people is through the Internet.

Father McBrien's piece is on target, in my opinion, and I am happy to tell you that we have been thinking about these issues for some time. Our paper is read mainly by people of my generation and the ones just before and after mine. We are also aware that our readership grows older each year. While deeply grateful for the loyalty and support of all of our readers, we need to face the hard fact that, unless we make some changes, we run the risk of not connecting as effectively as we would like with our gifted and faithful younger sisters and brothers. Failure to find such ways to share our faith and encourage one another would be to the detriment of us

all.

I agree with our columnist friend that we will not meet this need by adding youth pages or printing more pictures of our young people. I hope you will agree that there is much exciting youth ministry going on in our diocese these days, and that the *Catholic Courier* does a very good job in covering our youths and their activities. And yet we know that we are not realizing our desire to connect with them as consistently and effectively as we would like.

To get back to Abby for a moment and, through her, to the kids I meet all year 'round: They are just great. They're gifted, generous and faithful. They have much to give to the community and generous spirits for the giving. But they also need and welcome the support of the community as they deal with the many complex issues they have to deal with in this day and age. They are wise enough to recognize that the road can be hard, and are humble enough to welcome our encouragement, support and guidance along the way.

The experience with Abby yesterday reinforces my conviction that we need to be concerned for one another and share our gifts as best we can. That certainly includes, but is not limited to, consistent, loving and respectful communication across generational lines. Yesterday I tried to help Abby. I know she helped me. We need to explore all possible ways, including the Internet, to connect with the young. Just think of the future without them.

Peace to all.



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—Marguerite "Peg" Pinney  
Irondequoit, New York

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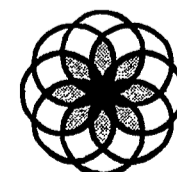
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