

# Young

## Student hopes peers pray as well as they party

NIAGARA FALLS — "Back to school" doesn't always mean "back to weekly Mass attendance" as well for young adults who live on college campuses. At college they are free of parental oversight and can skip liturgies whenever they want.

But Katherine E. Adams, 19, a sophomore at Niagara University, a Catholic institution run by the Vincentian Congregation, sees no excuse for skipping Mass at school. A campus ministry volunteer, she wants her fellow students to take their faith as seriously as they do their social life.

"College is party-hearty," she said during an interview in the Gallagher Center on campus. "But sometimes you've got to step back and say 'Do what you want on Saturday night, but be sure you're at Mass on Sunday.'"

Even though Niagara provides students three options for Mass on Sundays, with services at 11 a.m., 4:30 p.m. and at 10 p.m., many of the school's 2,200 full-time students still don't attend the liturgies regularly, she said. Mary Beth Coates, campus ministry director, said that the 4:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. Masses draw the largest number of students, about 130 total between the two services each week. She added that more than 60 percent of Niagara's students have told the school they're Catholic, though she believes the figure is higher since revealing one's religion on school forms is optional.

Adams attends Mass at St. Paul's Church, Webster, and St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Irondequoit, when she's home with her family in Webster.

A 1999 graduate of Our Lady of Mercy High School in Brighton, she wants to work with campus ministry staff and volunteers to increase Mass attendance by 50 percent this year at Niagara. She and fellow student, Clinton Brooks, also a Webster resident and a junior, were inspired to set this goal after attending the Campus Ministry Leadership Institute July 1-8 at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind.

The institute was sponsored by the United States Catholic Conference, the National Association of Diocesan Directors for Campus Ministry and the National Catholic Student Coalition, and drew campus ministry representatives from 14 secular and Catholic higher education institutions throughout the country.

At the institute, Adams said she came to appreciate the fact that she attends a Catholic university, especially after talking to students from secular schools where they didn't even have their own



John Powell/Photo intern

Katherine Adams, shown in the chapel at Niagara University, Niagara Falls, on Aug. 24, is a sophomore and an active volunteer with the school's campus ministry.

meeting place for worship. Students at Niagara take for granted the school's devotion to Catholic ideals, she said.

"They should see the Catholic part as a bonus," she said.

At Notre Dame, she and Brooks attended workshops on enhancing campus ministry, and came back having set several goals to improve Catholic student life at Niagara. Among the suggestions they've already shared with campus ministry staff are giving name tags to Mass-goers so that can get to know one another, inviting liturgical dancers and planning after-Mass socials. Last

year, she and other campus ministry volunteers would put up posters around campus encouraging students to go to Mass. The posters used such phrases as: "He gave you a week ... Give Him an hour" and stated Mass times.

"Basically, what we want to do is get people to tell people you're a Catholic," she said. "Act it. Show it."

However, Adams acknowledges that many young adults question their faith in college, and therefore, might not want to be too active in the church.

"College is a time for exploring and finding yourself," she said. "You have

your questions: What is God? Is there really a God? Look at my grades, there really isn't a God!"

She added that she feels fortunate that she's never had her faith tested by tragic life circumstances as some of the people she knows have. She also pointed out that she tries to live out her faith by volunteering for such social service projects sponsored by the college as working in soup kitchens and spending time with community children who need adult friendship. A social work major, Adams spent time on one service project at an agency that helped people fill out welfare forms.

"It's addicting," she said of volunteer work.

Adams is a member of the university's cross-country track team, and is attending Niagara on a combined athletic/academic scholarship that covers 75 percent of her tuition. She sees part of her mission as a Catholic to gently evangelize her fellow athletes, and has been known to "drag my teammates to Mass." Adams considers herself a role model when it comes to her faith, and takes that position seriously.

"People look to me as an example, and I don't ever want to let them down."

### Events

For information on these events, call the hotline for Odyssey, the diocesan-sponsored young adults network, at 716/328-3228, ext. 375 or 1-800-388-7177, ext. 375, or visit the Odyssey Web site at [www.ggw.org/odyssey](http://www.ggw.org/odyssey).

● **Saturday, Sept. 23:** Naples Grape Festival. Meet in Wegmans Food Market parking lot at 1750 East Ave., Rochester, at 10 a.m. to carpool.

● **Thursday, Sept. 28:** Dinner at the Elmwood Inn Restaurant, 1256 Mount Hope Ave., Rochester, 7 p.m. RSVP by Wednesday, Sept. 27.

● **Saturday, Sept. 30:** Second Annual Maze Craze, a joint event with Quest, the Diocese of Buffalo's young adult outreach group. Meet at noon at Long Acre Farms, 1342 Eddy Road, Macedon, Wayne County. Navigate a cornfield maze that consists of two miles of paths. Admission is \$6.75 per person. Bring a bag lunch, or buy snacks on site. From Rochester, take 490 East, get off at exit 23, go left onto Route 441, go right onto Gananda Parkway and travel for three miles until you see Long Acre Farms on your right.

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