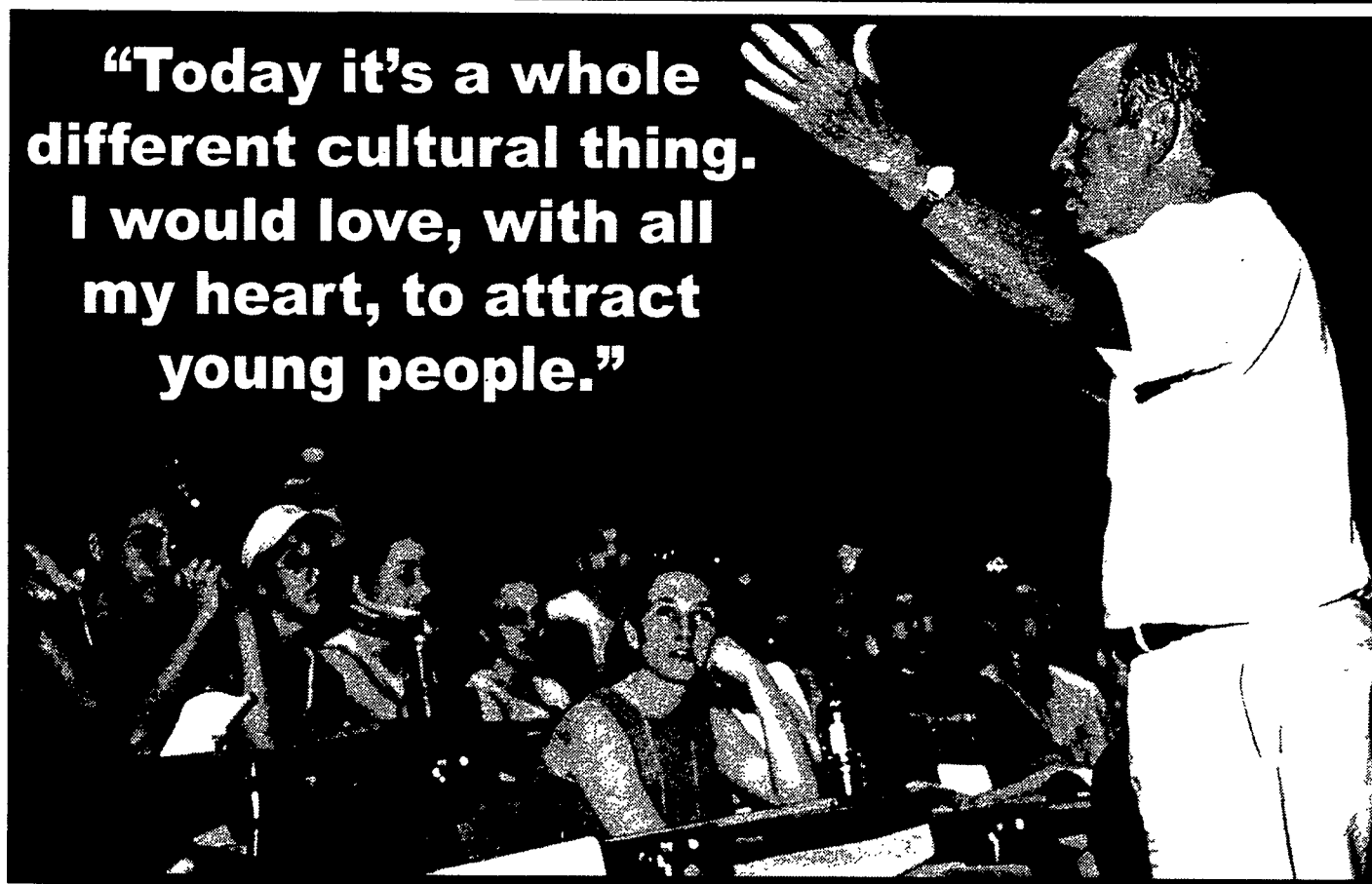


# On the MOVE

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Bishop Matthew Clark answers questions from teens at the Diocesan Youth Convention at SUNY Geneseo Aug. 4.

## Bishop urges teens to get involved

A famous quote by John F. Kennedy goes, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

Replacing the word "country" with "church," Bishop Matthew H. Clark would like to convey the same message to diocesan teens.

Mixing serious points with candid humor, the bishop gave two workshops titled "My Hope for the Future" Aug. 4 at the Diocesan Youth Convention. Early in his presentations, he asked the teens what improvements they'd like to see in their parishes. Rather than simply offer his authority as bishop to bring about change, Bishop Clark reminded participants that they, too, play a role. For example, Lacey Johnston of St. Theresa Church in Stanley said she perceives

a lack of interaction between teens and adults in her parish. Bishop Clark urged her to take action.

"Would you be willing to talk to somebody in your parish?" he asked.

"I can tell you're a very personable young woman. Get at it, won't you?" he added with a grin.

When another young woman said she doesn't think her parish is fully carrying out the Gospel message, Bishop Clark encouraged her to raise the issue with parish officials. Asked if this meant talking to her pastor, the bishop replied, "Oh, sure!"

The crowd chuckled after he added, "If you are not received with respect, just give me a call and let me know."

One girl complained there are too many old people in her church. Bishop Clark countered by saying this also means there aren't enough young people. He drew another laugh by noting that young people went to church more regularly "a hundred years ago, when I was your age." (Bishop Clark is 64 years old.)

At one point, the bishop paused in mid-sentence to shake hands with Michael Groom, when he saw that the 17-year-old was wearing a New York Yankees cap.

"I sort of knew he'd like the hat," remarked Michael, from St. Michael's Church in Penn Yan, who said he learned of Bishop Clark's devotion to the Bronx Bombers at last year's convention.

Along with the lighthearted moments, Bishop Clark raised some unfortunate trends in the modern Catholic Church. When the bishop asked how many people know how to say the rosary, slightly more than half the youths raised their hands. Far fewer hands went up when he asked who knows how to make an act of contrition before receiving penance.

He also noted that today's teens are less adherent to their Sunday Mass obligation — and adults are less strict about enforcing it — than when he was growing up.

"We were there at Sunday Mass. And even if we weren't, we were reminded," he recalled. "Today it's a whole different cultural thing. I



would love, with all my heart, to attract young people."

Toward the end of his second workshop, Bishop Clark repeated his hope that teens will get more involved and realize "a deep sense of the importance of your contribution to the church." He encouraged them to remain loyal to their faith by considering whether actions influenced by peer pressure or media "would honor Christ or not."

Bishop Clark also remarked that participants should be prepared for a Catholic Church that is always changing. "You're going to live it out and understand it and interpret it in a style different from your grandmother," he said.

One major change, he said, is the increasingly limited number of available priests serving in this diocese.

"Some people still think the priest can be at everything that happens, and there's no way he can do that," the bishop said.

After the bishop's workshops, Lacey, 18, said she's impressed how a dignity such as Bishop Clark can dialogue so candidly with a group of young people.

"It makes it more real," Lacey said. "It was nice to actually have a discussion instead of being lectured. I was surprised, he's so cool. He wasn't just talking, but really understanding."



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