

# Works of Love tie social justice with service

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

**HENRIETTA** —With the support of nearly 7,000 people, Works of Love Week, Oct. 21-27, is making a strong debut in the Rochester Diocese.

Sponsored by diocesan Catholic Charities, this first-year initiative promotes loving one another through service and social justice. Diocesan parishes held commissioning and blessing ceremonies for volunteers at Masses Oct. 20-21.

Volunteers were to engage in more than 100 Works of Love projects, including visiting senior-citizen centers; cleaning up neighborhoods; volunteering at soup kitchens; collecting clothing and supplies for migrant workers; collecting food for

the poor; assisting women in crisis pregnancy situations; and participating in Crop Walks.

At Good Shepherd School in Henrietta, fifth- and sixth-graders collected new toys for Catholic Family Center's Women's Place, an emergency shelter for women and their children. Bishop Matthew H. Clark met 14 of the students during a press conference Oct. 22 at Good Shepherd, and commended the young people for their care and concern. Diocesan officials held the press conference to announce Works of Love to the general public.

"You'll learn a great deal as you interact with one another as well as those you serve,



probably taking away as much as you put in," Bishop Clark told the children.

Also during the press conference, Ellen O'Connor, Catholic Family Center's manager of agency volunteer services, explained to the students how Women's Place operates. She reminded the

children that God did not put his own hands on this earth, so we must use our own hands to do God's work.

Most Works of Love projects are being performed by students in diocesan Catholic schools, as well as young people in parish faith formation programs and youth groups. Bishop Clark told the *Catholic Courier* that Works of Love gives

young Catholics the opportunity to perform "an act of loving service. It also offers a chance for them to reflect on this act."

Through their charitable efforts, the bishop added, youths will have greater appreciation for "serious challenges in the lives of other people."

Along with the emphasis on young people's involvement, Ruth Putnam, who serves as coordinator of Works of Love, said that many adult Catholics, such as parish social-ministry committees, are taking part in the initiative as well.

Putnam, noting that Works of Love could expand to more than a one-week celebration, said, "We want to ... connect Catholic social teaching with service activity and Catholic Charities."



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## Sacraments: Restoring order



Father Joseph Hart, vicar general, says a blessing over Elizabeth Plum, 14, of St. Patrick's Parish, Victor, as she is confirmed Oct. 10 at St. Mary's Church, Canandaigua. Her sponsor, Catherine Kennedy, is at left.

Trumpet and harp music, as well as a homily about a brother and sister, are elements 7-year-old Mary Woodruff says she remembers best about the Oct. 10 ceremony in which she and brothers James, 12, and Thomas, 13, received the sacrament of confirmation. Mary and James made funny faces at each other during the homily and since have enjoyed retelling it — at least the funny parts — to other people.

The ceremony at St. Mary's Church in Canandaigua combined confirmands from four parishes: St. Mary's, St. Bridget's/St. Joseph's in East Bloomfield, St. Patrick in Victor and St. Dominic in Shortsville.

The Woodruff children's mother is convinced that confirmation — a gift of the Holy Spirit to strengthen the baptized to give witness — was never intended to be held off until a child's teen years.

"I'm all for it," Colleen Woodruff said of the diocesan guidelines that children may be confirmed as young as the age of discretion,

or 7. Getting Mary involved at such a young age "catches her attention more so, and gives her the opportunity to realize this is a serious thing in her life," the mother said.

### Age differences

Depending on the parishes and dioceses in which they were raised, most parents attending confirmation-preparation meetings these days were confirmed anywhere from third to 12th grade, according to Sister of St. Joseph Karen Dietz, diocesan coordinator of sacramental catechesis.

The church has not determined a universal confirmation age for people who were baptized as infants, according to Father Paul Turner, writing in *Confirmation: The Baby in Solomon's Court*. "Thus, the decision regarding the age of confirmation falls to a conference of bishops," he stated. Through the years, bishops have been unable to

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