

# Confession is key, priest emphasizes

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — "... I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do ..."

It takes just a few seconds to recite this part of the Mass' Penitential Rite. Yet Father Paul Bonacci devoted much of an hour-long talk to those words as he spoke on the importance of making confession.

Father Bonacci, the first of five speakers at the ninth-annual Marian Conference, held at Rochester's Theater on the Ridge Oct. 12, told his audience that he occasionally presides at Masses for people seeking physical and emotional healing. But there's an even more important kind of healing to seek: "I can't get to heaven if my soul is not healed," he declared.

Father Bonacci, pastor of the Schuyler Catholic Community (St. Mary of the Lake, Watkins Glen, and St. Benedict, Odessa), delved into the types of sins acknowledged in the Penitential Rite:

**In my thoughts:** It's natural to have thoughts that could lead to sinful behavior, Father Bonacci said. However, "What do you do once they're there?" he asked, pointing out the importance of dismissing such thoughts rather than letting them take root.

**In my words:** Father Bonacci noted that gossip is a sinful tendency many people may not even realize they have. While he joked that his three greatest forms of gathering information are "telephone, television and 'tele-parishioner,'" Father Bonacci also asked the audience to consider the personal harm that gossip can cause.

**In what I have done and in what I have failed to do:** Sins committed through some type of action are the most obvious. But citing Matthew 25:43, Father Bonacci noted that people can sin through inaction as

well: "I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me."

Although confession involves the recitation of our shortcomings, Father Bonacci said the process should ultimately be a happy one. He noted Luke 15:7: "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance."

Observing that many people don't make confession more than once a year, Father Bonacci suggested a goal of once per month — once every two months at the very least. He also said people should seek priests with whom they're comfortable, and to use such priests as their regular confessors if possible. In addition, he encouraged people not to be deterred if they're uncertain about the act of making confession.

After his Marian Conference presentation, the priest told the *Catholic Courier* that the sacrament of penance could stand more attention in this day and age.

"Right now our society puts a lot on wholeness and health, and there's a great rise in people who go to counseling. But if we're going to be holistic, we need to look at our souls," Father Bonacci commented.

Other speakers at the Marian conference were Father Albert Shamon, *Courier* columnist and administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel in Fleming; Mother Nadine Brown, founder of the Intercrossors of the Lamb, a contemplative community in Nebraska; Tom Petrisko of Pittsburgh, an author on miracles and Marian apparitions; and Bud Macfarlane Sr. of New Jersey, a speaker on Marian apparitions.

The conference was sponsored by the Queen of Peace Apostolate, a group of diocesan Catholics who promote Marian devotion. According to conference organizers, total attendance for the day-long gathering was approximately 700.



Reuters/CNS

## Bombing victims mourned

Westerners offer a traditional Balinese prayer for the victims of a bomb blast during a vigil Oct. 14 on the beach near Kuta on the Indonesian resort island of Bali. The Indonesian bishops called the bombings "shameful acts."

## Building project begins

Construction has begun on the future home of St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry.

The four-acre site is located at 120 French Road in the town of Pittsford. Michael Tedesco, diocesan director of communications, confirmed that the projected completion date is August 2003.

Sister of St. Joseph Patricia Schoelles, president of St. Bernard's, put the building project's cost at \$2.22 million. Tedesco said funding is coming from the Diocese of Rochester as well as from individual donors.

"It's a big plus for lay ministry that the diocese is endorsing this," Sister Schoelles commented.

Based on the projected decline in available priests in upcoming years, Tedesco said "there will be a

need for a greater number of lay leadership. We certainly value St. Bernard's presence and their ability to prepare lay leaders in our church."

School officials had announced in 1998 St. Bernard's intent to build its own facility, due to steady growth and a wish to become more nationally recognized.

The school was formed in 1981 as St. Bernard's Institute, a graduate school for theology and ministry. It has operated since that time on the campus of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, 1100 S. Goodman St., Rochester. The school's name was changed earlier this year to St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry.

—Mike Latona

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