

PJs rate an A-OK for benefit party

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — Josmary Torres was excited about the prospect of attending a pajama party, but there was a slight problem: She didn't own any PJs.

So she and her sister went out shopping, and Josmary came away with a new Scooby-Doo outfit — complete with Scooby-Doo slippers — while her sister, Jennifer Lopez (no, not *that* Jennifer Lopez) scored a pair of Tweety-Bird pajamas.

"Especially me, I relate to Scooby-Doo because I'm kind of goofy," explained Josmary, a parishioner at Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Josmary, 15, and Jennifer, 17, were among dozens of youths who attended the two-hour pajama party held Sunday evening, Oct. 20, at Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier Church. Josmary said she wasn't the only one with distinctive pajamas: She observed one youth sporting Tasmanian Devil pajamas, and another outfit with a big smiley face.

The party included a mix of reflective prayer along with several fun activities — board games, a raffle, food and music featuring popular Spanish and American tunes. Participants came not only from Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Holy Redeemer/St. Francis, but also from St. Michael's in Rochester as well as St. Margaret Mary in Irondequoit. Yolanda Ortiz, religious formation director at Our Lady of Mount Carmel, said her goal for inviting multiple parishes was to promote stronger relationships, especially with the suburban youths.

Though a church hall is not normally where one would find people clad in pajamas, Dan Rosenberg said he felt fairly comfortable wearing his PJs out in public. "You just got used to the environment," said Dan, 16, from St. Margaret Mary Parish in Irondequoit, who noted that his favorite portion of the party was eating pizza.

People of many ages attended, including Josmary's 15-month-old niece, Jenneliz Toro. In addition, more adults showed up than expected: "Some of the parents stayed; actually some were in their pajamas and participated as chaperones," Ortiz said.

Along with fun and prayer, social service was a key element of the party. Each participant was asked to bring a donation of clothing, which Ortiz said will be forwarded to Cuban refugee families in the



Jason Rearick/Catholic Courier

Omar Maldonado and his brother, Jose, play dinosaur checkers during an Oct. 20 pajama party at Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Church in Rochester. Participants were asked to bring clothing donations for distribution to disadvantaged people.

Rochester area as well as disadvantaged people served through Nazareth College's campus ministry.

"I think just about everyone brought something. I'd have to say there were at least 100 presents — shirts, socks, hats, scarves, pajamas, baby clothing," Ortiz said.

Ortiz said she thought up the idea of a pajama party because it would make a good Works of Love activity. Works of Love, sponsored by diocesan Catholic Charities, promotes the social mission of the Catholic Church through service projects and church teachings. The program operates year-round, yet October is the main focus month for Works of Love projects.

Although it didn't last overnight, as many a pajama party does, Ortiz said the young participants from Oct. 20 wouldn't have complained if it had turned out that way. "They had so much fun they didn't want to go home," she said.

Added Josmary: "When you're, like, into stuff the time just runs out quick and you don't notice it. If we have it again, you can be sure I'll be there."

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