

Groton youths offer saintly service

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Of the various foods mentioned in the Gospels — St. John the Baptist eating locusts and wild honey, Jesus feeding a crowd with fishes and loaves of bread — there is no account relating to pancakes.

But for one morning at St. Anthony Church in Groton, flapjacks were the unofficial Food of the Saints. On Nov. 17, the Tompkins County parish's youth group hosted a pancake breakfast with a flair: They all dressed up as saints.

In all, 14 youths and two adults set up, cooked, served and cleaned. The volunteers were outfitted to resemble such saints as St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, St. John Bosco, St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) and St. Patrick — and, of course, the parish's patron, St. Anthony. Some workers had their own costumes created at home; others tapped into the parish's altar-server clothing supply. For example, Cathy Rohde, 17, served at the 8:30 a.m. Mass that morning and simply left her robe on, then added a veil to become St. Catherine of Siena.

Cathy, who collected money, and Matthew Hebdon, who managed the kitchen staff, said many breakfast patrons asked them which saints they were representing. Dressed in a dark brown robe, Matthew, 16, tried to give hints to his "identity" by displaying keys, but few people made the connection.

"St. Peter was given the key to the gates of heaven," Matthew explained.

The breakfast was a smashing success despite poor weather that



Jason Rearick/Catholic Courier

Erika Benson, 16, and Matt Zhe, 15, were among the youth group members at Groton's St. Anthony Parish who dressed as saints while serving a pancake breakfast Nov. 17.

morning. According to Carolann Darling, volunteer youth minister at St. Anthony's, the youth group fed well over 100 people, serving scrambled eggs, sausage, ham, juice and coffee along with the pancakes.

"We ran out of food and I had to make a grocery run," said Darling, who dressed up as St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Darling said that approximately \$200 was raised for the local food pantry as well as Catholic Charities.

The pancake breakfast was part of a regular series of fundraisers by the youth group, which has also staged a Hawaiian luau, spaghetti suppers and sales/raffles of hand-crafted items donated by parishioners. Contributions have netted more than \$1,300 in the last couple of years for charitable organizations, as well as

an additional \$1,100 to help send young parishioners to World Youth Day in Toronto last summer.

The most recent event proved beneficial in another way. In order to determine proper attire for the breakfast, Darling said that youth-group members deepened their knowledge of church history by researching the saints' biographies.

Matthew said he can readily identify with St. Peter because he "was the kind of saint that was very human. He messed up a lot, but on the other hand he did the opposite — sometimes he would come through for Jesus. In that way, I think most people can relate to him."

Cathy said it was interesting to dress up as the saint for whom she is named. In addition, she noted that her family once belonged to St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Ithaca.

Through her research, Cathy said she discovered that St. Catherine of Siena was a doctor who wore a crown of thorns to signify her intense devotion to Christ.

"I didn't want to do that, though," Cathy remarked.

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