

Families join in push for vocations

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

GREECE — Whereas National Vocations Awareness Week is celebrated Jan. 12-18, folks at St. John the Evangelist Parish are aiming to promote religious vocations throughout the year.

Beginning this past fall, the parish has highlighted family involvement to get the word out. Each week a different family says daily prayers for vocations in the presence of a statue of the Holy Family, provided by the parish.

Toward the end of a designated weekend Mass, the celebrant calls forth the family that has reserved the statue for that week. The priest blesses the family members; they then keep the statue until the following Saturday. Families can use prayers suggested by the parish or create their own rituals.

"It's a good public way of heightening awareness, knowing that vocations come from the family," said Father Michael Volino, parochial vicar at St. John the Evangelist, who helps coordinate the effort.

"Vocations are encouraged and nurtured in the family," agreed Patricia Finnerty, diocesan director of vocations awareness.

Angelo Zegarelli said his family planned to pray the rosary every evening during the week of Jan. 5. In light of the urgent need in the Catholic Church for more vocations, Zegarelli said that "it's a small commitment to make" for himself, his wife Eileen and their three teenaged children in creating extra prayer time.

"Families have to get together and realize how important this is," added Eileen Zegarelli, who said that if more priests were available, "we wouldn't have to worry about closing down churches."

Ryan Zegarelli said he doesn't mind rearranging his normal activi-



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Eileen Zegarelli, a parishioner at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Greece, kneels in her home Jan. 9 to pray for vocations. Joining her in prayer are her husband, Angelo, and their 13-year-old daughter, Kristen.

ties to make time for the evening prayer. "It'll be harder to pray every day, but if God hears our prayers then we will get more priests," said Ryan, 15.

"I think it's important for us to have priests, so we can have Communion," said his sister Kristen, 13. She and Ryan also have a brother Daniel, 17.

Kristen added that "it's kind of exciting because we get a statue for the week." As her father held the statue of Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus, Kristen observed, "It's a nice family, a happy family — and we're a family praying together."

Meanwhile, Ryan described the Holy Family as "the perfect family



— an example for other families."

The vocations-awareness effort was launched in October at St. John the Evangelist. Every week has been filled thus far on the sign-up sheet, with families having reserved the statue well into the winter months.


Finnerty said a similar program is beginning at Greece's St. Lawrence Parish, which has teamed with St. John the Evangelist to form a vocations-awareness program. Finnerty said she'd like to see the idea catch on throughout the diocese, perhaps through a religious-education pro-

gram or a parish school.

Father Volino said that because St. John the Evangelist has two full-time priests, some parishioners may not realize that numerous parishes in the Rochester Diocese don't have even one resident priest. "I don't think they see we really do have a vocations crisis," Father Volino said.

Whether a vocation will emerge from the Zegarelli family — or one of the other families from St. John the Evangelist — is hard to say. But efforts such as the statue certainly can't hurt, Finnerty said.

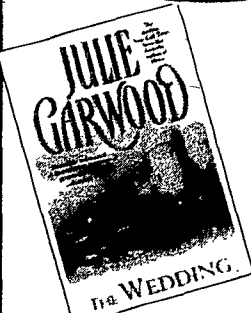
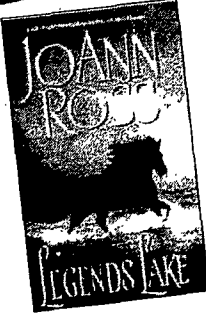
"We encourage parents to talk to their children about vocations, to plant seeds. Then the Lord takes over the work," she remarked.



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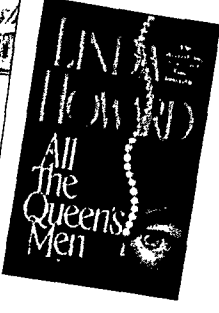
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