

Youth projects fill Lenten calendar

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

More than any other time of the year, Lent is when Catholics are asked to focus deeply on their faith. Numerous young people throughout the diocese have apparently taken up that call, based on the high volume of service and worship activities taking place as Holy Week nears its completion.

A popular Lenten tradition for many youth groups is the depiction of Living Stations of the Cross. Several Living Stations will take place Good Friday, April 18, although some parishes have held this event on other Fridays during Lent as well. For instance, Rochester's Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church staged the dramatic re-enactment of Jesus' passion on April 11. Gaby Santos, 13, whose roles included a guard as well as one of the men who nailed Jesus to the cross, said he was moved by the experience.

"It impacted me very hard," he said. "It kept me thinking through the whole play, like you were really there."

Gaby said he had never before taken part in a Living Stations. "I was kind of nervous and I needed some training. So I practiced it with my whole family, and I came out doing it great," he said. Gaby added that he also plans to take part in his church's annual Cross Walk on Good Friday, on the streets surrounding Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

Another busy parish this week is the Exodus Youth Group, from the Roman Catholic Community of the Canisteo Valley in Steuben County. The cluster's teens have raised funds



Rebecca Gosselin/Catholic Courier

Felix Cintron, 17, a parishioner at Rochester's Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, portrays Jesus April 11 during a Living Stations of the Cross presentation by members of the church's youth group.

for Catholic Relief Services throughout Lent, and will hold a 24-hour food fast beginning Good Friday evening at St. Ann's School in Hornell. During the fast the group will engage in prayer as well as discussion about social issues related to the Catholic Church. Participants will also collect food for Steuben County Rural Ministries, and will close out the fast by watching the crucifixion scene from the movie "Jesus of Nazareth." After eating dinner, they will attend the Holy Saturday Mass together.

"It is a very exhausting, fun and prayerful time," remarked Amy Mikolajczyk, youth minister.

Jessica and Nick Cocchetto, from

Youth

Hornell's St. Ignatius of Loyola Church, have been involved in past Holy Week food fasts and will do so again this week. "It's just reaffirming. It refocuses you back on why you go to church ... this gets you to the deeper meaning of it," said Nick, 15.

Nick's sister agreed: "Overnight we're each required to take two half-hour periods of time in the chapel to meditate. That's the most important part to me," said Jessica, 18. As a busy high-school senior, Jessica said

reflection time is a nice contrast to "all the crazy things going on."

St. Mary's Parish in Waterloo is also prioritizing the underprivileged as part of its Lenten activities. From 3 p.m. to midnight on Holy Thursday, the junior/senior high youth group will "reside" in cardboard boxes during a 30-hour fast of their own. As part of this effort, they plan to collect food donations for the poor.

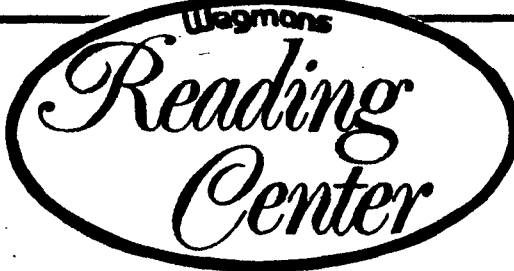
Also focusing on those in need is St. Lawrence School in Greece. Students in grades kindergarten through sixth have collected funds throughout Lent to support St. Theresa's School in Anambra, Nigeria. The school is located in the home parish of Father Christopher Ezech, parochial vicar for St. Lawrence Parish. According to Joe Holleran, St. Lawrence's principal, the fundraising project will extend beyond Lent in an effort to help toward building costs of the partially completed St. Theresa's structure. Classes are currently being held in the basement.

"My teacher said if we all just brought in a nickel a day, that could raise a lot," said Nicole Helfrich, 11, a student in Lyn Lathrop's sixth-grade class at St. Lawrence. "I just think it's nice to be able to help someone out."

Kids' Chronicle

Answers from page 12:

1. T; 2. F (Pentecost);
3. F (Jordan); 4. T;
5. T; 6. F (12); 7. F (John)




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