

Youths enrich church with their gifts

Emily Brasley and Sarah Pavlina proclaimed the Word at their fathers' ordination to the permanent diaconate (see photos, page 4) at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Saturday.

Their contribution provided a special moment in a most joyful liturgy. These teenaged girls rose in the midst of several hundred people and commanded the rapt attention of all. They were clear. They were strong. There were poises. I listened to them with gratitude and a deep sense that they believed what they read and were happy to share what they believed. My best guess is that the other members of the assembly thought the same thing.

Such moments are not unusual in our diocese. An ever-growing number of parish communities realize that all are enriched when we encourage our young people to identify, develop and share their gifts with the community.

These parishes work to create an environment in which young people who wish to place their gifts at the service of others have an opportunity to do so. Pastors, youth ministers and parents work with the young to help them find good



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

matches between their gifts and the needs of the community. They provide solid training to young people in preparation for their service and offer them appropriate opportunities to reflect on what such service means in their lives.

The weekend carried another opportunity to be with the young church. "Urban FaithFest," a Saturday gathering of teens from parishes in the City of Rochester, placed special emphasis on the diversity that is so much a part of the reality of the church in our country today.

The faces of the young people ranged from light to dark with

many shadings between the two. A trio of African-American boys from Joseph C. Wilson High School called The Wolf Pack Step Team entertained with a series of short rhythmic dances. Percussionist Sunshine Perez and a young dance troop gave us a taste of another culture. Sal Solo, an Englishman now living in Chicago, was the main presenter of the day. He had a wonderful ability to engage the kids with visual images, music and a challenging message.

I think "Urban FaithFest" was an important event. It provided an opportunity for some who may never have had one before to share their faith with persons of a different race or ethnic background. It also modeled an awareness that we need constantly to nurture — in other words, that we are all God's children, equal before the God who gave us life, sisters and brothers to the Christ who redeemed us.

As I shared a part of the day with these young people, I wished that all of our gatherings could shine with such a beautiful spectrum of color, that the many races and ethnic groups that are our church could be as much at ease with one

another as those kids were on Saturday afternoon.

"Urban FaithFest" was the fruit of planning and hard work. But to me, at least, the experience was well worth the effort. It was good for the kids who attended and, I hope, provided a good foundation for additional growth in living the diversity of races and cultures with which God so graciously gifts the church.

I finish writing this in St. Cecilia's Church in Irondequoit a couple of hours before my final confirmation of the Easter season. One part of me is happy that I will have a summer respite from such activity. A much larger part of me will miss the great privilege of anointing our beautiful young people in confirmation.

In sacramental moments, and at so many other times, our kids remind me of God's fidelity and generosity enriching the church with their faith, gifts and generosity.

In the next day or two, please make it a point to compliment, thank, encourage, praise, console or otherwise build up a member of the young church.

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CORRECTION

A photo caption on page 11 of the *Catholic Courier's* May 29 edition incorrectly identified Keith Osgood, a member of the Diocese of Rochester's Select Concert Band, as Charles Belfield. We regret the error.

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