

Young adults constitute a caring generation

Gen-Xers have been unfairly charged with the crime of apathy and self-centeredness.

"Your generation doesn't volunteer," a neighbor informs me as he struts back from his hour picking up litter with a few locals participating in GreenScape, a community effort to clean up parks and public property.

"According to a recent study, young adult Catholics are removed from social justice," quips Ira Rifkin, a colleague and friend who just completed a book titled *Spiritual Perspectives on Globalization*. Over coffee, he asked me what 20- and 30-somethings, especially those who call themselves Catholics, thought about globalization.

I'll be the first to admit that I haven't volunteered at the homeless shelter or cared for the dying since my son was born almost two years ago because sleep deprivation has terminated all acts of kindness and compassion beyond changing diapers. But I haven't forgotten about the less fortunate in our country and abroad, and neither have the many young adults I encounter.

Interestingly enough, when compiling the essays and quotes for the book *I Like Being Catholic* that I co-edited with Michael Leach, social justice emerged as the foremost reason why young adults feel committed to their



Therese J. Borchard

Our turn

faith.

"I like being Catholic because of the rich tradition of effort on behalf of social justice," wrote Trace Murphy, a young book editor at Doubleday Religion. "This tradition goes back, of course, to the essence of the Gospel, but I also take particular strength from the example of leaders closer to our own time such as Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin and Jesuits Daniel Berrigan and John Dear.

"A key element to this experience of Catholicism," Murphy contended, "has been an emphasis on our shared humanity with all people — a recognition that our concept of 'neighbor' must be all-encompassing, not limited by physical proximity, faith, culture, ethnicity, gender or economic status. I take pride in and strength from the lineage of those people who have lived this message, offering not ideology but themselves."

Elizabeth Collier, director of the Crossroad Center for Faith and Work in Chicago, Ill., is in her 20s

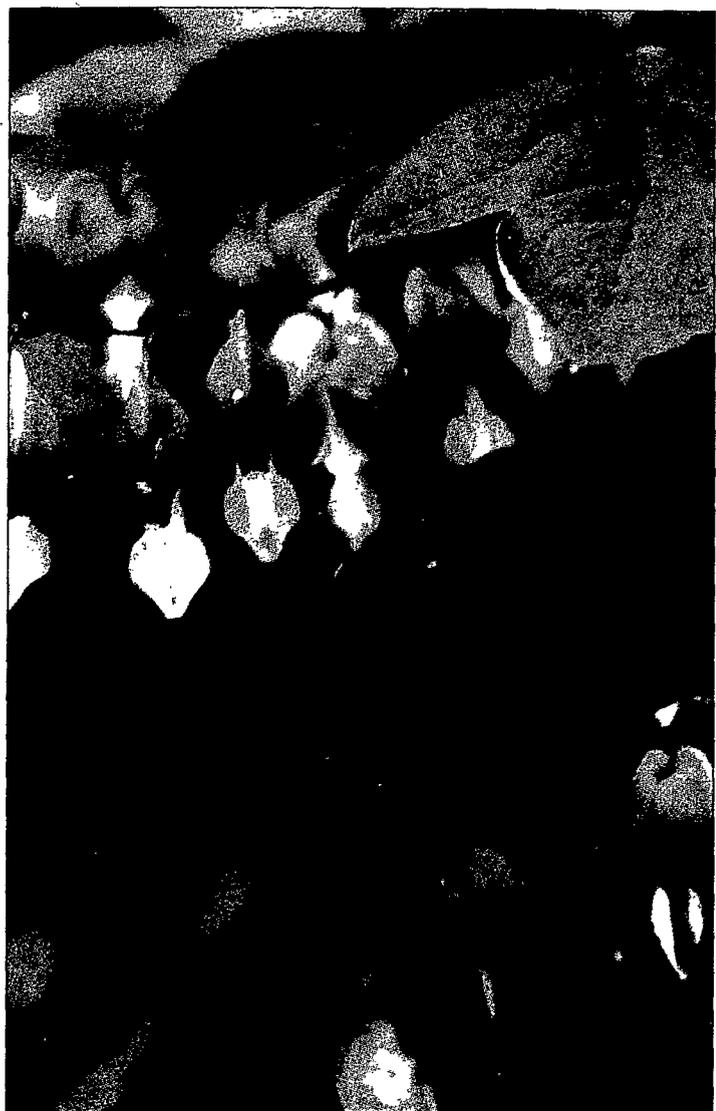
and also defies the self-centered, eternally drifting reputation young adults shoulder in today's media, research studies and casual conversations among Baby Boomers and older generations.

"As a young adult Catholic, one of the most important contributions that the faith of the church has made to my life is its commitment to justice and solidarity with the oppressed," says Collier. "Throughout the past 10 years I have had the opportunity to work with different Catholic organizations or individuals that take seriously this aspect of our faith tradition."

If the pundits were correct in their assessment of young adults, I wouldn't have wanted to know more about globalization, my colleague's research or the pursuit of justice among the world's religions. Instead, I sit with his words and decide to spend my wad of cash at the neighborhood deli to support the family-owned business instead of heading toward the McDonald's drive-through that is so convenient and cheap.

If social justice means the pursuit of dignity for all people — no matter how small a gesture — then I can't think of a generation who cares more than young adults.

Therese J. Borchard is a columnist for Catholic News Service.



Rebecca Gosselin/Catholic Courier

MORE LETTERS

studying for the priesthood, one from Rochester with the traditionalist Fraternal Society of St. Peter, and the other with his home diocese of Scranton, Pa. Another member of the Community recently applied for the diaconate here in Rochester.

Our Community is very grateful to God and to Bishop Clark, our clergy and St. Stanislaus Kostka parish for providing the beautiful and consoling traditional Latin Mass here in Rochester and cordially invites all both to our anniversary Mass and to all of our Masses.

Peter B. Luskey
 Surrey Road
 Rochester

Ardent saint offers model

To the editor:

I am an American of Hibernian descent and in respect to the political and religious strife today I

wanted to mention the life of a great and ancient saint, Gregory of Tours.

St. Gregory was English by birth and evangelized in what was Gaul at the time. He was a contemporary of Clovis I and Aetius, the last true Roman. He was a zealous preacher and worked to convert heathens to Christianity, as well as authoring some of the only extant records of that time. He worked so hard in fact that he earned the censure of the Pope for his determined efforts to reform his Irish monks. He paid the ultimate price for his faith being martyred by Pagan Frisians at a confirmation of young Frisian converts.

He loved his God too much to be separated from Him any longer than He could bear. I think the lesson his life teaches us is that if we love each other as much as he loved God we would please God as he did.

Jeremiah Hickey III
 Rochester

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