



Leila Navidi/Catholic Courier

Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Shannon Loughlin, diocesan director of young-adult and campus ministry, chat Aug. 3 during a picnic for young adults, held at St. Thomas More Church in Brighton.

Bishop joins in for picnic, Mass

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

BRIGHTON — The word “explosive” is often used in a somewhat exaggerated sense to hype a product or event. Shannon Loughlin, on the other hand, was being quite literal when she employed that term to sum up a young-adult picnic on Aug. 3.

Having Bishop Matthew H. Clark on hand certainly fueled excitement for the picnic, which took place at St. Thomas More Church. Yet the explosiveness reference by Loughlin, diocesan director of young-adult and campus ministry, had to do with actions from an even higher authority.

Events

■ **THU, SEP. 18 — Odyssey dinner:** for Catholic young adults married & single ages 25-45; Woody's 2, 2758 W. Henrietta Rd., Henrietta; 7 p.m.; RSVP: Laura 585/621-5672, Roger rscalzo1@aol.com.

■ **WED, SEP. 24 — Discussion:** “Starting the Journey”; Mercy Sister Kathleen Wayne, speaker; Johnny's Irish Pub, 1382 Culver Rd., Rochester; happy hour 6:30 p.m., discussion 7:30 p.m.; first of six-part Theology on Tap series on “Living the Christian Life”; additional sessions will meet Oct. 1, 8, 22, 29 and Nov. 5; all gatherings at Johnny's at 7:30 p.m.; 585/328-3228, ext. 1375.

Young Adult

Early in the afternoon a strong thunderstorm whipped through town, causing the young-adult crowd to grudgingly halt its outdoor barbecue and lawn games to take refuge in the parish center. Moments later a spectacular lightning bolt paid a visit to the parish grounds, likely ceasing any complaints about having to move indoors. The bolt set off alarms and took a chunk out of a large tree, leaving splinters on the lawn and smoke in the air.

But participants got right back on track, thanks largely to the availability of such card games as euchre, Uno and Skip-Bo. Other young adults opted to converse while spreading out on sofas and lounge chairs.

In mid-afternoon Bishop Clark showed up, fresh from his annual vacation that spans the month of July. He immediately began working his way around the room, striking up talks with many of the approximately 40 attendees. One of those people was Kevin O'Geen, 22, who said the bishop caught him off guard at first.

“He said ‘Hi, I'm Bishop Clark,’ and I was like, ‘Oh my gosh,’” O'Geen recalled.

O'Geen then spent several minutes chatting with the bishop, telling him he recently graduated from college and would soon be starting a new job. This kind of casual banter left him impressed: “It was like he was one of my closest friends —



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Jamie Fazio (left), Amanda Rayburn, Andrea Castro, Mike Thibault and Margot Van Etten talk before the picnic's closing Mass.

someone you could talk to. He was really nice,” said O'Geen, a parishioner of St. Mark's in Greece.

O'Geen's friend, Dave Liana, who later joined the conversation circle, agreed that the bishop “was down to earth.” Liana, 22, is from Greece's St. Charles Borromeo Parish.

The afternoon ended with picnic-goers moving to the church for a 5 p.m. Mass celebrated by Bishop Clark and concelebrated by Father Lee Chase, pastor of St. Thomas More. Music was provided by the contemporary ensemble from Rochester's Blessed Sacrament Parish.

During his homily Bishop Clark acknowledged the busy lifestyles of young adults, advising Mass-goers to let God set the pace. “When do we stop and let the Lord take over?” he said, adding that he, also, struggles to slow down. “We have to trust in God, and in that trust we will find direction in our lives.”

After Mass the bishop told participants that although the day had yielded poor weather, he was “glad that it didn't dampen your spirits.”

Big thumbs-up for the picnic and Mass were issued by O'Geen and Liana, who said they had found out about it through attending the popular coffeehouse and “Theology on Tap” discussion series that have been offered through the diocese in recent months. The talks have featured guest speakers on issues pertinent to Catholic young adults such as love, sex and relationships; celibacy; the Bible; the pope; and homosexuality.

“It gives me an opportunity to meet people my own age,” O'Geen said of the events.

“It's a pretty good idea for people who are in a younger age group with a common interest,” Liana agreed, adding that this is an important link for him because many of his peers are not interested in church.

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