

# Henrietta parish seeks to make dreams reality

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Exactly 10 years ago, the diocesan Synod solicited input from a wide range of Catholics to frame the long-term goals of the Rochester Diocese. Now, a strikingly similar quest is beginning at Henrietta's Good Shepherd Parish.

The initiative, known as "Got Dreams?" seeks to reach every registered Good Shepherd parishioner — as well as Henrietta Catholics with no parish affiliation — through an intense publicity campaign. The parish is asking participants to complete a sentence that begins "It would be a great blessing for Good Shepherd Parish if someday ..."

Responses will be collected at weekend Masses Oct. 4-5 (4:30 p.m. on Saturday, and 9 and 11 a.m. on Sunday), and those who don't attend Mass also may submit "absentee ballots." According to Father Doug Della Pietra, pastor, participants can submit as many responses as they wish. A list of the most popular dreams will be developed from all the responses, and further narrowed by parish vote to three to five dreams.

Efforts to implement those dreams would begin in early 2004 and extend for a three-year period. Similarly, the diocesan Synod saw the emergence of five goals that were implemented over a five-year stretch.

A special emphasis is being made to reach people in the 1,800-family parish who are registered but not active, as well as other Henrietta residents who call themselves Catholic but don't belong to a parish. However, Father Della Pietra stated that "Got Dreams?" does not seek to compete for members with such neighboring parishes as Guardian Angels in Henrietta and St. Joseph's in Rush, and that these parishes are aware of Good Shepherd's initiative.

Father Della Pietra said all ideas for "Got Dreams?" will be considered fair game but "they need to be achievable, realistic." He added that any person suggesting a dream must also be willing to help bring it to re-

ality. Among the dreams Father Della Pietra has already heard voiced by parish pastoral council members are: long-term financial stability for the parish; steadily increasing attendance; and greater participation by parishioners in fundraisers for Good Shepherd School.

Yet the second-year pastor can't predict the response from people who aren't regularly involved in parish life. "To be honest with you, that's where my greatest learning is going to come in," he said. "I or the other parish staff can say what we think people need, and we can create wonderful programs, and we can miss the boat badly. The perception might not be reality."

Father Della Pietra brought the idea for "Got Dreams?" to his parish pastoral council this past spring after attending a pastor's conference in Florida and listening to Msgr. Doug Doussan of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, who originated a successful model in his own parish. Father Della Pietra said "Got Dreams?" is a good way to "identify people's real needs and hopes, and respond to them with wonderful programs and ministries."

Although he hopes the program will spread to other parts of the Rochester Diocese, Father Della Pietra acknowledged that some parish leaders may not want the laity to be so deeply involved in decision making. "We're stepping out there to say this is your parish, not mine as a pastor or staff," he remarked. "There is a sense of letting go in this process."

Jo Coffey, a vice president of Good Shepherd's parish pastoral council, said the council is enthusiastic about "Got Dreams?" because members believe Father Della Pietra is the kind of priest who will follow it though. "When he says 'It's your church, not mine,' he really means it," she commented.

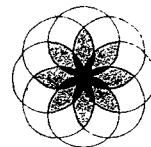
Coffey is also looking forward to the project's results. "I want to see people feel welcomed and comfortable," she said. "Once they do that, then they're going to want to take up the ball and run with it."

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