

Parishes link up for youth Mass

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Up until recently, Peter Corina had never been inside a Catholic church in Tompkins County other than his own. But now the 16-year-old, from Immaculate Conception Parish in Ithaca, hopes to tour all five Tompkins churches within the next year or so.

Peter's motivation stems from the two regional youth Masses he has attended this year, with the most recent one taking place Sept. 27 at Holy Cross Church in Dryden. Nearly 50 young people, representing close to half the overall congregation, were spotlighted during Holy Cross' weekly 5:30 p.m. Mass.

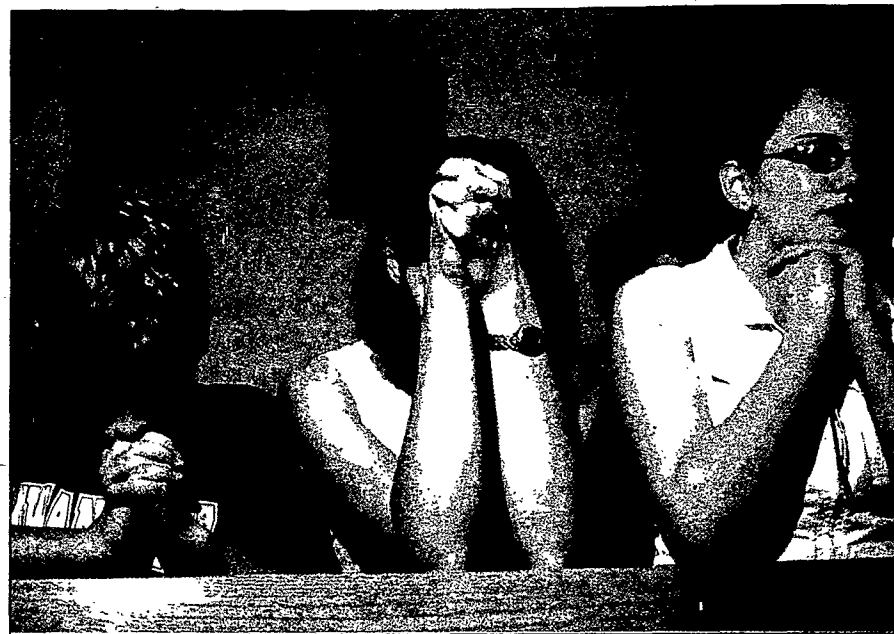
To accentuate the day's focus on youth and multiparish representation, young people from each Tompkins parish carried out liturgical roles. Ushers, greeters and altar servers were provided by Holy Cross; gift-bearers were from St. Anthony's in Groton; lec-

tors came from St. Catherine of Siena in Ithaca; eucharistic ministers were from Immaculate Conception; and general intercessions were handled by All Saints in Lansing.

"It's exciting. It brings everyone together under God and shows how the youth can participate in Mass. There's a lot of opportunities," said Ed Carey, 15, a longtime altar server from St. Anthony's. Ed and his brother Eric, 11, were gift-bearers for the youth Mass.

Carolann Darling, St. Anthony's youth minister, said the special event was held as part of a regularly scheduled liturgy "so it would be inclusive, intergenerational and family friendly — so the faith communities could come together to witness the young people's presence and ministries and affirm them as full members of the church."

Serving as celebrant was Father Peter Abue, an extern priest from Nigeria who is assisting at St. An-



Leila Navid/Catholic Courier

Nine-year-old Phillip Cornelius (left) joins his mother, Kathy, and 13-year-old sister, Anna Kate, in prayer Sept. 27 at Dryden's Holy Cross Church during a regional youth Mass for Tompkins County parishes.



thony's and Holy Cross parishes while attending Cornell University. Father Abue encouraged youths and adults in attendance to continue supporting and taking part in youth activities, both within their parishes and across the diocese.

Peter, remarking upon his first visit to Holy Cross, said the church — located approximately 14 miles northeast of Ithaca — is much more compact than his own. "It was small but very active," he said, noting that congregants responded with enthusiasm to Father Abue's hand-clapping during youth-oriented music provided by St. Anthony and Immaculate Conception adults. Spirits remained high after the Mass, as community-building activities prepared by youths from St. Catherine's helped participants get to know each other better.

The Mass at Holy Cross was a follow-up to a regional youth liturgy held last March at Immaculate Conception. Regional youth ministers said response has been so solid that they're hoping to begin offering a youth liturgy every three or four months, rotating among all the Tompkins churches.

"I think that's a good idea. You meet new people of all ages and see the different ways a priest does the Mass," said Peter. He lectured at the March liturgy and is also a regular lector at his parish.

Rich Rasmussen, Immaculate Conception's youth minister, said the Masses are good examples of how Tompkins parishes follow the spirit of the diocesan pastoral-planning process, in which groups



Ten-year-old Jesse Betrella of St. Anthony's in Groton participates in the Mass.

of parishes are called to share their activities and resources.

"It really gives the kids a larger sense of the church community and what church is. We get so stuck in our own routines at our own churches," Rasmussen commented. "The energy and enthusiasm behind all the youth ministers is really great. We do really well down here; we all really enjoy each other and are committed to trying and get the kids to do things together."

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