

Awards recognize seniors who serve

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

GREECE — They lend a hand at church through serving on parish council; performing liturgical roles; volunteering for faith-formation programs; and doing youth-group activities.

They lend a hand in the greater community through volunteering at the fire department or ambulance corps; getting involved in fundraisers; joining service efforts at school; helping the poor, elderly and developmentally disabled; tutoring; staging Eagle Scout projects; and even going on mission trips to faraway lands.

On a more intimate level, they're helping hands for family members, friends and neighbors who may be facing such challenges as illness and loneliness.

These hands employ their academic, athletic and musical skills, not to mention their gifts of faith — a faith they defend even in the face of peer pressure, a faith that has perhaps helped them overcome personal obstacles.

From the view of diocesan officials, all the hands share one common link: They are an extension of Christ's hands.

Approximately 1,500 hands — belonging to 750 or so young men and women — were recently honored at Hands of Christ ceremonies, held annually to recognize high-school seniors throughout the diocese for outstanding service. Three gatherings took place this month, with Bishop Matthew H. Clark presiding over each service: at Greece's St. Lawrence Church Oct. 14; Ithaca's Immaculate Conception Church Oct. 18; and Fairport's Church of the Assumption Oct. 21.

This year featured a record number of Hands of Christ recipients. At the start of the Oct. 14 ceremony, Sean Patrick Collins said he was impressed by the high volume of peers who filled the pews at St. Lawrence. Sean's own parish certainly helped in that regard: He was one of 20 recipients in attendance from St. Christopher in North Chili.

"It's a great thing to see all these other young come together. It feels good to know they're doing similar things," said Sean, 17.

Bishop Clark presented each award winner with a Hands of Christ plaque. Upon processing back to their pews, many beaming recipients paused to exchange hugs with family members, youth ministers and friends.

"I was very excited and honored," Kathryn Monahani, 17, said of her Hands of Christ nomination.



Leila Navidi/Catholic Courier

Seventeen-year-olds Christopher Fanning and Grace Lynch, both seniors at Geneva's DeSales High School, sing the closing hymn during the Oct. 14 Hands of Christ ceremony at Greece's St. Lawrence Church.



Bishop Matthew H. Clark presents 17-year-old Michael DiMarco, a senior at Gates-Chili High School, with a Hands of Christ plaque.

Kathryn, from St. Michael's Parish in Newark, said she enjoyed the festivities Oct. 14 despite the long trek to St. Lawrence — "one hour and three minutes," she reported.

Bishop Clark told the young honorees their enthusiastic commitment to service inspires him as well as other adults. He also reminded them that helping others should continue throughout their lives. "It is always in giving that you receive," he said.

Sean, for one, appears to have priorities that would suit him well for adulthood. He continues his longtime roles at St. Christopher Parish in al-

Youth

tar serving, teaching faith formation and volunteering for the annual clothing drive — even though, as he put it, he could be devoting more time to "making more money, doing sports, lots of stuff." Why the continued focus on his parish?

"That's what Jesus would do," he replied.

Kathryn is equally busy at St. Michael's in Newark by teaching faith formation, assisting with con-



Seventeen-year-old Ashley DiPaola, a senior at Rochester's Aquinas Institute, is one of this year's Hands of Christ recipients.

firmation and cantoring. She also takes part in parish and diocesan youth events.

Of her strong commitment to her parish and her faith, Kathryn commented, "It was important to me as a kid, and it's important to me now. Important things, you make time for."