

Catholic Courier

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Day to focus on welcoming and engaging

By Amy Kotlarz/Catholic Courier

Parishes that reach out to welcome new people also need to focus on getting the newcomers involved, according to Dominican Sister Donna Ciangio.

That is the message she will deliver to area pastoral leaders during a keynote talk at the diocesan Evangelization and Stewardship Day 2012 on April 28 in Mendon.

Sister Ciangio will speak about "Welcome and Engagement: The Dynamic Duo of Discipleship" during the annual event, which will take place from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena Church, 26 Mendon-Ionia Road, Mendon. Sister Ciangio will repeat her talk at 1 p.m. April 28 at the Our Lady of Peace Parish Center, 130 Exchange St., Geneva, for those unable to attend the morning session in Mendon.

Sister Ciangio was invited to speak at the suggestion of Karen Rinefierd, support ministry liaison for diocesan Parish Support Ministries, who had heard her speak during a conference.

"She gave practical strategies on how do we better welcome people in our community and how do we engage people in the mission of the church," Rinefierd said. "That engagement part is a very important piece of stewardship."

Rinefierd said Sister Ciangio, a church-leadership consultant, professor and pastoral associate, has been especially successful at engaging young adults in the diverse New Jersey parish where she works.

"I think it is exciting to hear about what the Catholic Church can accomplish and is accomplishing in various places," Rinefierd said.

A local priest also will share his parish's successes with evangelization and stewardship. Father Ed Palumbos, pastor of Fairport's Church of the Assumption and director of the diocesan department of Priest Personnel, will speak about how his parish has engaged parishioners in using gifts of time, talent and treasure.

"Stewardship is finding the gifts present in the community and asking folks to share what resources they have," Father Palumbos said.

At Assumption, for instance, the parish's marketing committee has helped lead an effort to advertise the parish throughout Fairport using Quick Response (QR) Codes, which can be scanned by the cameras in Web-enabled mobile phones. Once scanned, the codes direct users to a website listing Assumption's parish information and Mass times and an invitation to visit the parish. Assumption has placed the codes on fans given out at the annual Canal Days festival, on placemats at Fairport restaurants and in the parish bulletin.

Yet simply reaching out to get people to walk through the church doors is not enough to build a parish, Father Palumbos noted. The Assumption Welcoming and Engagement team (AWE) works to help people get involved once they are there, so that they can live out their call to stewardship.

"The more we are able to engage the community of faith in its understanding that it is not so much a club that people belong to but a living organization which we are a part of, the more we are driven by our mission to be Christ in the world," he said.

The priest is not the only Palumbos who will speak during the event. His nephew, Michael Palumbos, who is a family wealth adviser, also will give a presentation during one of the day's bonus vendor workshops. These workshops will offer ways in which parishes can motivate parishioners to consider planned giving, which is when parishioners donate to parishes and other nonprofits through their wills. Planned giving is sometimes underutilized by parishes, noted Mark Clark, associate director of the diocesan department of Stewardship and Communications.

"As far as the parish level, we need to do more to encourage parishes to get the message out (about planned giving), to plant the seed," Clark said.

The other bonus vendor workshops are "Offertory Solutions Plus" by Our Sunday Visitor; "Is it Really Possible?" by Cunneen; and "Standing in the Wind" by Cathedral Corp. Those who attend the 45-minute workshops may also enjoy a complimentary light lunch.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Registration for Evangelization and Stewardship Day is due by April 18. The cost is \$10, which includes a continental breakfast; registration after April 18 costs \$12 per person. Visit www.dor.org/sd for details or call 585-328-3228, ext. 1297. Registration also is required for the "Welcome and Engagement" talk in Geneva. Contact Karen Rinefierd at krinefierd@dor.org, 585-328-3228, ext. 1255, or 1-800-388-7177, ext. 1255.

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