

Confirmation of young people important part of bishop's work

Bishop W. Francis Malooly may handle numerous duties from his seventh-floor office at 320 Cathedral St., but one of his greatest joys has been working with the youth of the archdiocese.

"He said the vicar general administrative component of being a bishop was a day job, but he lived for his night job, which was confirming young people," said Kristen Witte, coordinator of pastoral care for the archdiocese's division of youth and young adult ministry.

To illustrate the importance of the sacrament, the bishop would often turn to Lee Ann Womack's song, "I Hope you Dance," said Mark Pacione, head of the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

He said that during his homily, the bishop would call on those about to be confirmed to do three things: give faith a fighting chance, spread joy and strive to be holy.

"He tells them, 'Strive to be holy in your life - in your choices,' " said Mr. Pacione.

Kristen Fisher, director of middle school ministry at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Ellicott City, said the kids "love him."

"He always comes to meet them as they're sitting in the hall before the actual confirmation, and he's able to remember their names, which makes them feel important," she said. "He's so real and holy - it's very easy and exciting to want to be Catholic."

Bishop Malooly has also played a major role in the deaf community, confirming Catholic teens who are deaf, and sharing their confirmation letters with those gathered.

Eric Griswold, a deaf 19-year-old St. Joseph, Sykesville, parishioner and Carroll Community College student who was confirmed by the bishop, described him as "a

great man and a great person.”

“He connects with young people on a very distinctive level, and I believe that young Catholic kids look up to him,” he said. “I believe that he is a mentor to our society’s next generation of Catholics because he believes that these kids will become the face of our Catholic society.”

His mother, Cathy, said thanks to Bishop Malooly and Eileen Colarusso, coordinator of deaf ministry for the archdiocese, “for the first time in Eric’s life, we began to feel a sense of connectedness with the church, and Eric began feeling as if he belonged.”

This year, Bishop Malooly confirmed a group of deaf individuals at St. Ignatius of Loyola, Ijamsville.

“He is very at ease with young people, very comfortable with them,” said Ms. Colarusso.

She said he sat around a table with the young people before their confirmation for 10-15 minutes, answering their questions about the crosier and what it means to be a bishop. He also took the time to learn how to sign various parts of the Mass.

“I always feel like he goes out of his way to do those kinds of things to give them his time,” Ms. Colarusso said. “He’s just very approachable.”