

BELIEFS Values

Parents must show children way to God



REV. TIMOTHY F. BARCOCK

A recent copy of one of the leading national magazines carried a photo-essay about children's understanding of God, and how they related to God, and how they found God in our world. This brief essay, with excerpts of interviews from children, provided some marvelous insights into a variety of ways in which people understand God and our relationship as human creatures with our Creator. Because they came from the perspective of children, they were simple and direct.

As a priest, and pastor, I have the opportunity to hear often the perspectives of children on God and things pertaining to God. This article simply helped to put many of these into focus, and called some to mind. I hope that many of us were able to see this presentation.

What was clear to me is the extent to which the perceptions of children are so frequently conditioned by their experiences (which is true of all of us), but especially by the adults who are part of their lives. The ability of children to find indications of the presence of God, to trust in God, to relate to God were influenced by the degree of religious experience and practice afforded them by the adults in their lives. Often, though not always, children who came from families where there existed regular practice of religious faith saw and expressed the place of God in their lives, and in our world, differently from children who did not have this experience.

This focuses, I believe, on a very frustrated responsibility for adults who have been blessed with children whom God has entrusted to their care. Experts in the field of religious learning

by children whom God has entrusted in their care. Experts in the field of religious learning by children tell us that faith is "caught" more than it is "taught." This is to say that children learn much more by what they see than what they hear, by what they participate in than by simply repeated to them.

In the baptismal ceremony of the Catholic tradition (and I suspect of other Christian traditions as well), parents are reminded: "Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith; you must also be the best of teachers, bearing witness to your faith by what you say and do." Long before children have the opportunity to experience the religious teaching of any Faith Community or Faith Tradition, they are being taught by the lived experience of their parents and families. This is the foundation upon which their own faith awareness will be built, and from which it will develop.

In a time in which such a large percentage of families have no identifiable practice of a faith, this is a major concern. Parents who think they have no role in this are clearly not understanding its importance in the life and awareness of their children. Spiritual experience is developed out of natural experience. Parents (aided by grandparents and, perhaps, godparents) are the people whom God has placed in our lives to help develop, from our earliest days, our awareness of God, and our relationship with God. No one else can do it to the same extent, or in the same way.

I ask you, parents, to be highly conscious of the role you play in leading your children to God, and enabling them to have a strong, loving relationship with the God who loves them so.

"May you be the best of teachers, bearing witness to your faith by what you say and do." Because of your effort, may your children have a foundation that will enable them to know, love and serve the God we live throughout their lives.

Seeds of Peace

Teenagers offer views during Oakland visit

BY RENA FULEA
SPECIAL WRITER

Two Israeli teenagers, a Palestinian and a Jew, will offer a Middle Eastern perspective at Temple Emanu-El's annual Youth Group Sabbath service this Friday when they begin their six-day visit to Oakland County.

The pair, Shani Raz-Silbiger and Abbasalam Al-Khayyat will give a 20-minute presentation about their affiliation with "Seeds of Peace," a Maine-based camp that aims its summer programs at educating Middle Eastern teens on conflict resolution.

Raz-Silbiger, 14, is a resident of Jerusalem and is active with the Jerusalem Outreach Project, a continuation program for Seeds of Peace alumni.

Al-Khayyat, 16, lives in Nablus, where he hosts gatherings with Israeli and Palestinian alumni. He is also a contributor to The Olive Branch, a Seeds of

Peace news publication distributed in schools in Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan and Egypt.

"I've never heard the perspectives of Palestinian or Israeli teens," said Danya Abt, 16, a student at Cranbrook Kingswood Upper School in Bloomfield Hills. "We're always hearing leaders' perspectives but we never hear from the kids. As a Reform congregation, it's good for people in Israel to come out to meet us and let us know what they think."

As vice president of religious activities for the temple's youth group, Abt was responsible for writing part of the youth-led service selecting the readings and music. The Huntington Woods resident and her 18-year-old brother, Uri, will accompany the lyrics on guitar.

The worship service begins at 8:15 p.m. on Feb. 27, at Temple Emanu-El, 14450 W. 10 Mile Road in Oak Park.

"We're always hearing leaders' perspectives, but we never hear from kids."

Danya Abt
Cranbrook student

"Too often all we know about is conflict in the Middle East. We're not aware of how many programs for peace that there are," said Rabbi Joseph Klein of Huntington Woods, who heads the Oakland County congregation. "We and the secular community at large need to know that there are any number of constructive social and educational programs. What better time to talk about it than when we proudly bring our own youth to the front of the congregation to take leadership responsibilities."

The Temple Emanu-El program is the first of a week-long

series of Seeds of Peace events. Other stops on the agenda include Congregation B'nai Moshe in West Bloomfield, the Bloomfield Hills-based Jewish Federation of Metro Detroit, Partnership 2000 program, West Bloomfield High School and the Southfield Art Center.

The highlight of the week is an "Evening to Remember" at the Tribute Restaurant in Farmington Hills, with presentations by the Seeds of Peace campers. Senator Carl Levin and Seeds of Peace founder John Wallach are the featured speakers at the March 1 event.

The Bloomfield Hills-based Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit is sponsoring the series of events to bring local awareness to the work of the organization.

For more information on the "Seeds of Peace" events, call the Jewish Community Council at (248) 642-5393.

COMMUNITY MESSENGER

Community Messenger features spiritual announcements from Oakland County religious institutions. Write: Community Messenger, c/o Beliefs & Values Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (248) 644-1314.

CIVIL WAR JEWRY

Seth Korelitz, director of the Michigan Region of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and a Ph.D. candidate in Jewish history with Brandeis University, will teach a four-part adult study series on "American Jewry during the Civil War." Sessions meet from 8 to 9 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 25 and

March 4, 18 and 25, at Hillside Day School, 32200 Middlebelt Road, between Northwestern and 14 Mile Road, in Farmington Hills. There is no session on March 11 (Parim). Tuition is \$20 for the series or \$5 per session for members and \$28 for the series or \$7 per session for non-members.

The series is a program of Eilu v' Eilu, the cooperative adult Jewish learning project co-sponsored by Cong. Beth Abraham Hillside, Beth Shalom and B'nai Moshe, Hillside Day School of Metropolitan Detroit and the Women's League for Conservative Judaism-Michigan Branch. For information, call (248) 642-4890 or e-mail torah@eilu.com.

SCHEDULE ON WEB
Eilu v' Eilu, the cooperative adult Jewish learning project of Cong. Beth Abraham Hillside, Beth Shalom and B'nai Moshe, Hillside Day School of Metropolitan Detroit and the Women's League for Conservative Judaism-Michigan Branch, is now posting its schedule of classes, study groups, holiday workshops, programs and special events on the World Wide Web as part of Hillside Day School's home page website. The schedule is updated frequently, and can be found by going to www.hillside.org and clicking on "Adult Education." For more information, or to be placed on the mailing list, call Rabbi Michele Faudem at

(248) 851-3220 or e-mail torah@eilu.com.

JEWISH MUSIC LECTURE
Troy-based Cong. Shir Tikvah invites the public to attend a lecture on Jewish music at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 26, at a congregant's home in Oak Park. The lecture is entitled, "How early Jewish liturgical music was influenced by the time in which it was developed." Dr. Martin Herman, a retired musicology professor from Wayne State University, will focus on Medieval and 17th Century music and is expected to bring tapes and compact discs to illustrate his points. Refreshments will be

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