

Galtier Society helps adult Catholics deepen their faith



Galtier Society members Teri Kocourek, left, a member of St. Hubert in Chanhausen, and her sister-in-law, Monica Kocourek, a member of St. Olaf in Minneapolis, help client Ruben Martinez decide on a dining room table at the Catholic Charities Furniture Warehouse in St. Paul. About a dozen members of the society volunteered at the warehouse May 21.

By Maria Wiering
The Catholic Spirit

A new group for Catholic adults has been meeting since October 2004, with activities ranging from Lenten reflection to service projects.

The Galtier Society is named after Father Lucien Galtier, an early missionary priest who helped establish Catholicism on the Minnesota Frontier in the early to mid-19th century.

“The church, by her very nature, is missionary; that is, to take the faith and bring it into the world,” said Father Peter Laird, chaplain of the Galtier Society and a member of its founding committee. “It was because Father Galtier brought the faith to [Minnesota] that, in a way, we are the descendants of that missionary act, and we long to do the same thing.”

With Father Galtier’s mission in mind, lay Catholics formed the Galtier Society to reach out to a



Bill Faulkner loads furniture onto a pickup truck at the warehouse loading dock.

Catholic demographic that often is overlooked.

Designed for Catholics in their 20s to middle age, the Galtier Society is an avenue for faith formation, education and service.

“It’s an association of adult Catholics that are looking to deepen their faith in their everyday lives, to manifest that in their outward actions in conjunction with the needs and the desires of the archbishop,” founding committee member Bill Faulkner said.

The adults who make up the Galtier Society may consider themselves young, but it is not a young-adult group, said Father Laird, the organization’s chaplain. The founding committee lists 15 lay members, some married, some single.

“This will be the next generation of men and women who are leaders in the church,” Father Laird said. “This isn’t a movement. This isn’t a new spirituality. It’s a way for Catholics in the archdiocese to come together on a couple of occasions with the sense that we are adult Catholics in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.”

As a link to people of this age group in the archdiocese, the society is careful not to duplicate existing parish or archdiocese programs, Faulkner said.

“One of the aims is to do just a few events a year, but we want to help support others in a common mission.”

Founding committee member and St. Olaf parishioner Noelle Turner said the Galtier Society has been a good place to meet like-minded Catholics.

“This brings us all from such different walks of life and to people we’ve never met,” Turner said.

The events have enhanced her Catholic faith, she said. “There are things that are really different and unique that the parishes don’t offer that we offer.”

In April, the society held a gala to celebrate its inaugural year. The evening included cocktails, dinner, a speaker and dancing in the James J. Hill Reference Library in St. Paul. Jim Towey, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, was the speaker.

The group also had a Lenten Day of Reflection in February. Presenters spoke about forgiveness and reconciliation.

“I think we’ve had some really good speakers,” Turner said. “Every event keeps getting better and better.”

“One of the key things is that this is a busy group of people, so if we’re going to do something, we need to do it right and make sure it’s meaningful,” Faulkner said. “They can take away something that they can implement or that augments their actions in everyday life and steer us toward being better Catholics.”

Member Vicki Sheaffer, a parishioner of St. Jude of the Lake in Mahtomedi, said the society helps her deepen her faith and understanding of the church.

"I know I left [the Lenten Day of Recollection] feeling like I really learned something," she said.

Sheaffer also is encouraged by the faith of others in the society, she said. "As Catholics, it's always a confirmation that there are other people that are striving to . . . grow and deepen their faith," she said. "We can never go wrong when we are able to supplement and support."

Service to the Missionaries of Charity and Catholic Charities Furniture Warehouse also is important to the society.

"[Service] is rooted in our faith," Faulkner said. "We're designed to help form and develop our faith . . . and have that manifest itself in our actions."

Though the service and education are important, it is essential that the society members incorporate it into their lives, Father Laird said.

"The real fruit will be to the extent of which this helps Catholics continue to integrate their faith and their life," he said.

For more information, visit the Galtier Society's Web site at www.galtiersociety.org.