



## C.O.R. Supper

March 27, 2001: 4-7:30 p.m.

# School Anthems: Singing Off Key? RAISING OUR VOICES IN OUR SCHOOLS

Location: Queen of Peace HS, Burbank, IL

The last C.O.R. supper of the year was held at Queen of Peace High School in Burbank, IL on Tuesday, March 27, 2001. This final supper of the 2000-2001 C.O.R. series *Voices That Challenge* focused on diminishing the negative consequences of having groups in school communities. Given the recurrence of school violence in the last few weeks, students were eager to discuss the groups at their own schools, how those groups can foster inclusion and exclusion and the feelings that being excluded can engender in students.

The evening began with students pairing up with someone they didn't know and sharing a time when they felt included and a time when they felt excluded and the feelings they had because of those experiences. Students shared those feelings with the larger group, which were then turned into our introductory prayer.

Patricia Nolan-Fitzgerald, Principal of Queen of Peace High School, and Suzanne Wille, C.O.R. Coordinator, led participants in a conversation about why, despite the negative feelings they can create, groups form.

Students quickly identified the positive reasons for grouping - the need to belong, common interests, feeling known, working towards a goal - and Wille and Nolan explained that grouping is natural.

In fact, according to Maslow it is a basic human need. Since we can never rid the world of groups, Nolan and Wille emphasized that we must figure out how to minimize the harm and maximize the harmony of groups. After learning about the psychology of grouping, students identified the groups in their own schools.

After discussing inclusion and exclusion, the psychology of group formation and the different ways teens group themselves, students were then placed into intentionally heterogeneous small groups for further exploration of the group dynamic. In these small groups, a facilitator taught students how to stop stereotyping before it starts by playing the "They/Hey" game (as soon as you hear yourself or others say "they" you interrupt the soon-to-follow stereotype by saying, "Hey, wait a minute . . ."). Students also learned how to evaluate groups by looking at how a group treats its members, how the group interacts with the larger school community and how much privilege the group has within the community. In sum, students learned both how to check their stereotypes while also looking at groups to see if they are truly worthy of respect.

After a lot of hard work in small groups, students enjoyed dinner together and then returned to the chapel to share their learning with students from their own schools. Each school then created a part of the prayer that was read at the closing (see prayer below).

This supper included students and faculty from 12 different schools in the Archdiocese. There were 130 participants.

C.O.R. is sponsored by Queen of Peace High School, a Sinsinawa Dominican-sponsored school for young women, and Angels Studio, a communications ministry of the Chicago Province of the Society of the Divine Word.

C.O.R. is also supported by the Archdiocese of Chicago, the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters, The Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, Inc. and the Norbertine Community of St. Norbert Abbey.