

College life may strain religious faith

BY RACHEL SHEPHERD
Capital Times Staff Reporter



Amid the challenges of classes, part-time jobs, extracurricular activities and a social life, is there any degree of spiritualism in a college students' life? Some say they have neither time nor interest, however others say without religion they would have no meaning in life.

"Religion plays a pretty active role in my life," said Chris Richelderfer, biology major at Mount St. Mary's College in Maryland. "I used to be a lot more religious... I think that since I turned 18, and wasn't forced by my parents into going to church, I have become more skeptical about religion in general."

He explained that he believes in God, but he is not sure if he is a devout Catholic anymore. "I think it's a stage everyone goes through in which they're not quite sure what to believe."

According to the March 2003 *Johns Hopkins Newsletter*, making the transition from high school to college is difficult for many people. "Dealing with living in a new city, living in the dorms, taking college classes and meeting new friends sometimes puts church at a much lower priority," wrote Peter Zou.

Zou said students don't want to put forth the effort to adjust to yet another drastically different aspect of their life, so they drop religion. Others such as Richelderfer said they only went to church at home because their parents made them.

However, some students say faith has played a crucial role in their life. "Without it, I would not be able to cope with the daily stresses of life including ... schoolwork, friends, family and finances," said Jen Anderson, elementary education student at Penn State Harrisburg (PSH). "When everyone else was stressed, I turned everything over to God."

The Associated Press reported that examples such as Anderson's are com-

monplace as students are turning to religion to find meaning in their lives. Both secular and church-affiliated colleges report rising use of campus centers and increasing attendance in religious activities.

"It makes your college experience complete," said Jennifer Rogers, French major at the University of Maryland. "You have your studies, you have time to go out with your friends, and you have God."

"Interest among students in the offerings of churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples may reflect the increasing complexity of society and the special challenges of modern students' lives," wrote Raju Chebium, Associated Press.

Student loan debt, family separations, and war times are just a few modern problems students face.

Kim Morda, sociology major at Harrisburg Area Community College, HACC, said her family difficulties have led her to God.

"Before recently, I simply went through the motions of church," she said. "But after being sent to a retreat it brought on an entirely different meaning in my life."

However, not everyone has turned to God due to modern complexities. "My parents divorced when I was 10 and since that time, we stopped attending church regularly," said Laura Baron, communications student at PSH. "Since then, I barely have attended church... except for funerals and an occasional holiday."

Baron said that although she doesn't go to church frequently, she still has most of the beliefs she was brought up with. "I don't think attending church is all that necessary."

However, some are hopeful that trend may change.

"Students are hungry for religion because many of them were raised without it," said Vincent Krische, a chaplain and director of Catholic Campus Ministry at the University of Kansas at Lawrence. "I think there has been a failure in passing on meaning and value, he said. "When we fail to pass them on, something internally inspires people to search for them."

Morda, who is now a youth minister, ascertains that God can find anyone. She attempts to stay active with the church, despite having "fallen" a couple of times. But, she said, "God is always there to help me back up."

"Dealing with living in a new city, living in the dorms, taking college classes, and meeting new friends sometimes puts church at a much lower priority." -Peter Zou of the Johns Hopkins Newsletter

Film celebrates Jewish Heritage

BY ROB TRISHMAN
Capital Times Staff Reporter



Jewish culture and music were on display last Monday in the Gallery Lounge. Penn State Harrisburg's Diversity and Equity Committee sponsored the showing of "In the Fiddler's House," featuring world famous virtuoso violinist Itzhak Perlman. This month the committee is "Celebrating Jewish Heritage."

Perlman took viewers to Krakow, Poland, which once boasted a large Jewish population. In a humble courtyard, he discussed the roots of Klezmer music with other Jewish musicians. Klezmer is a Hebrew word meaning "instruments of song." Perlman then brought his talent to a group that featured a stand-up bass, clarinet, and an accordion for a lively "jam session."

Actor Fyvush Finkel, most recently of the Fox television series "Boston Public", appeared in the video and lent his humorous lyrical stylings to a backdrop

of Klezmer. Finkel was hearkening back to his childhood days of Yiddish vaudeville comedy in Brooklyn.

Perlman then met up with pianist Leopold Kozlowski, who was described as "the last Jewish musician living in Poland." They lamented the fact that the Holocaust of World War II decimated most of the Jewish population of Krakow, and that there are so many beautiful synagogues but no people to fill them. "We can't get all of our people back, but we cannot forget," Perlman said. "Life is a gift."

Perlman and Kozlowski then teamed together for a moving piece of music that reflected that lament but also provided comfort. "When you're dealing with music, you're dealing with the soul of a society," Perlman said. "Klezmer music is the soul of Jewish society." The film ended with another lively performance by Perlman and the band "The Klezmatics" in New York City, as well as a quote flashing on the screen, "In the fiddler's house, everyone dances."

"In the Fiddler's House" is available for checkout in the campus library. The next cultural presentation will

be on May 1 at noon, featuring Asian/Pacific-Americans. Committee member Donna Howard said that the series will resume in September 2003, which is dedicated to Hispanic culture.

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