



**ANCHOR PERSON OF THE WEEK** — Lauren Dykas.

## Faith in action: The life of Lauren Dykas

By Deacon James N. Dunbar

TAUNTON, Mass. — If there's going to be a comeback to young Catholics regularly attending Mass on Sundays it's going to happen because they have been taught how important the Eucharist is in their lives, as well as the accompanying action of the Holy Spirit to spur them on, says one young Faith Formation teacher.

"But all I can really do right now is teach them as best as I can all about the Mass ... and I do see more of them coming to Mass than before," reported an optimistic Lauren A. Dykas.

Asked how she feels about what's she's finding, the 15-year-old Faith Formation teacher of grades one and two students who are candidates for first Communion at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Taunton, said, "really pleased."

"I know some students are attending Mass regularly and some are not so regular. It seems the older they become the less they attend. So it becomes more important that they gain an understanding of how the Mass plays an important part in their lives. I try to do this," she said.

That her young charges "correctly answered all the questions" when tested on their knowledge of the faith and about the second of the initiating sacraments they were about to receive, "was one of the most satisfying things and very rewarding personally," Dykas explained.

That one so young is *The Anchor's* Person of the Week, doesn't surprise Father David M. Stopyra, OFM, Conv., pastor of Holy Rosary Parish, who nominated her.

"I have always been impressed by Lauren's sincerity, poise and mature behavior," he said. "She displays many fine qualities of a Christian teen-ager. She is polite, courteous, trustworthy and respectful. She is a member of a devoted parish family who participates fully in the services and activities of the parish."

Her service to the Church and her parish began in the second grade when she became what Father Stopyra recalls as "a devoted, most dependable and faithful altar server."

That commitment continued until grade seven when she took upon herself the ministry of lector.

"After enjoying serving at the altar, it seemed that becoming a lector or reader was the next step I looked forward to, and after receiving confirmation it seemed that becoming an extraordinary minister of holy Communion at Mass was next for me," she told *The Anchor* in a recent interview. "They have been high points of my life."

She said she assists distributing holy Communion at Saturday's 4 p.m. Mass, "But I don't yet go out to the nursing homes or the homebound. However I really look forward to that," Dykas, who doesn't yet drive a car, explained.

"I'll be driving soon," she said excitedly.

Her ministry in Faith Formation is wider than simply teaching.

She is called sometimes to substitute for the Faith Formation coordinator in preparing for the classes on Mondays that involves approximately 60 students encompassing grades one through nine.

"It includes such things as getting the textbooks ready, taking attendance and some planning, and I look forward to that responsibility when called," she added.

To that task she has added a personal touch: getting the Faith Formation program online by making use of her computer skills.

"It's not so much," she said playing down her input. "It's just getting the names and the programs and other things set up on the computer."

Does she have a teaching vocation in mind?

"Most definitely," she readily acknowledged. "For some long time I have thought I would enjoy being a principal too."

This fall, when she returns to Coyle and Cassidy High School in Taunton for her junior year, Dykas will resume a series of Christian Life ministries that most high schoolers would find daunting in addition to academics.

"I am very fortunate and very grateful to have been accepted as an honor student by the National Honor Society," she reported.

As a member of the Campus Ministry Team she has been involved in such service projects as mailing cards to U.S. troops serving overseas, and more locally to sick children.

She's involved in planning activities, prayer services and mentoring her peers.

Yet another: "One Saturday a month I coordinate our school's food pantry that provides for 300 people. It means planning in advance for the amounts of food needed, and weekly we get different things done," she explained.

Another project she's into as a member of the "Green Team," involves positioning recycling bins for cans and papers in encouraging green activities.

What spurs her to getting so much accomplished?

"It's a lot of work. But I love doing it. The past two years have been very meaningful for me in whatever I've become involved in — in the Church and in my student life," she emphasized.

But just as important to any success, she added quickly, "is the heavy and strong support of my devoted parents, James and Susan Dykas, who are police officers in everything I do. They are behind me every step of the way. They set an example for me, and without their support and endorsement I would not be able to do anything."

As to being nominated *The Anchor's* Person of the Week, Lauren Dykas said, "it is a great honor, but at the same time very humbling."