

MASS APPEAL OF POP



SINGING ALONG . . . Shay Donohue and Kevin McNamara with the Rathmines Folk Group at the Mass yesterday. PICTURES BY RUTH ROGERS

By VIVIENNE CLARKE

THE recent ban on secular love songs at weddings by the Bishops Conference is being used as an excuse by some parish priests to ban all secular and folk songs from Masses, according to some church folk groups.

Kevin McNamara, of the Rathmines Church Folk Group, maintains that non-religious songs have been virtually banned at Mass in some parishes.

Last night in the Church of Our Lady of Refuge in Rathmines before the weekly folk Mass, Mr. McNamara told the IRISH PRESS that up to 90% of the young people attending would not go to an ordinary Mass because it

FAITHFUL FEAR A TOTAL BAN ON FOLK MASSES

had no meaning for them. "This Mass is relevant to them because we incorporate appropriate modern songs which they associate with."

The theme of last night's Mass was homelessness, and the guest celebrant was Fr. Peter McVerry SJ. Celebrants in the past have included Fr. Paul Lavelle, who spoke of Aids, Fr. Michael Cleary and Fr. Niall O'Brien.

The songs included in the Mass were the Beatles'

"She's Leaving Home", Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young's "Teach Your Children", "Another Day in Paradise", Phil Collins' song about the homeless, "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother", the old Hollies' hit and the American Band Aid song "We Are The World". During the Communion reflection, Simon and Garfunkels "Homeward Bound" was played softly in the background.

"We choose the songs

carefully for their meaning, not just because they are pop songs," explains Kevin McNamara. "Each of the songs in tonight's Mass is relevant to the theme of homelessness and might make young people think about the subject."

The folk group comprises six musicians — keyboards, flute, acoustic and electric guitars — and a choir of 30 singers who come from all over the city for the Mass. There is a waiting list of 20 more singers eager to join.

The young people arriving early for the Mass acted as if it was an event to be enjoyed rather than endured. The church was full before the Mass started and there were very few latecomers and only one middle-aged woman standing in the porch.

David Alexander for Clonskeagh, who is not Catholic, attended with friends. "I came before and enjoyed it. I found the sermon and the theme very interesting."

● The folk Mass is held in the Church of Our Lady of Refuge in Rathmines every Sunday evening at 6 p.m.

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