

Catholic D of it!



Father Michael Brown, parochial vicar of Sacred Heart Cathedral, served as celebrant of the Dec. 2 teen Mass at Holy Name.



Parishioners at Guardian Angels Parish, recently helped their youth group set up a Nativity church.

somehow," said Dave, 13, an eighth-grader at Rush-Henrietta Roth Middle School. "If you, like, let it slip out, they could ruin you for your school year. If they were mean enough kids, they would start rumors and ruin your reputation."

Even Shaun, who strongly voices his Catholic convictions, conceded that even though he has never been physically threatened, "there's too many weirdos" who might seek to inflict harm.

Tim Lee, 14, a parishioner at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Greece, said a quarrel over religion could even lead to racial incidents.

Yet this doesn't keep Tim and his friends from discussing religion in the cafeteria at Greece Arcadia Middle School, where he's in eighth grade.

In fact, these chats involve teens of all religious backgrounds, Tim noted.

"We all mix and we have no problems," he stated. "Everybody's got their own feelings. (But) even with the different faiths, we have a tight bond of friendship."

Guardian Angels' Sarah Wray, 11, is another Catholic who's accepting of other people's beliefs.

"The Bible said we're always supposed to treat people the way we want to be treated," said Sarah, a sixth-grader at Roth Middle School.

Eric in Corning also believes in extending tolerance even toward those who mock you for your religion.

"I think people have a fear of anything they don't understand," he pointed out.

Shaun agrees, saying, "The people who really don't care about religion are quiet about it. The ones who go against it feel guilty."

"I think some of them feel embarrassed," Laura of Gates commented.

Tim of Greece suggested that if Catholic teens approach doubters and dissenters with a spirit of evangelization, wonderful results can occur. Some of his friends from school, he said, have even begun attending youth-group events at Holy Name of Jesus — even though they aren't parishioners.

"If you lead, a lot of times people will follow," Tim said.

Story by
staff writer Mike Latona

Photographs by
staff photographer S. John Wilkin

Coming next week

You think Christmas is a crazy time of year? It's an even more unsettling experience for refugees who have only spent limited time in the United States. You'll meet some of those people in next week's Christmas edition and find out how they're adjusting to the American holiday spirit.



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The article was published in the high-school newspaper, *The Lampion*. But the Scripture references were deleted, Shaun noted, due to the school's policy against open practice of religion.

Shaun said he was disappointed about the deletions, but went along with the decision for two reasons: to avoid having the entire article withheld, and to lessen the likelihood of offending non-Christians.

"Maybe more people who don't believe in Christianity would read the article," he reasoned.

Parishioners at Church of the Resurrection, on the other hand, had the chance to read Shaun's story in full. Father Louis A. Vasile, the parish's pastor, recently ran the piece — unedited — on the church bulletin's front page.

Carrie Pascale, 15, can sympathize with Shaun's plight. She said it's a tough adjustment to speak one way at church, but not to be able to say the same things at

school.

"You've got to watch what you say," remarked Carrie, a parishioner at St. Helen's Church in Gates. "You can't talk about Christmas, because some people don't celebrate Christmas. If you said you went on a retreat, they don't want to hear about God."

Carrie is a sophomore at Gates-Chili High School, as is Laura Murrer, 16. Laura, who attends Holy Ghost Church in Gates, said conversation about personal religious beliefs is off-limits in her classrooms.

"If you talk about it, the teacher says, 'Talk about it during your free time,'" Laura remarked.

Dave Redlinski, a parishioner at Henrietta's Guardian Angels Church, admits that he's hesitant to say anything about his faith because of potential problems.

"If someone overheard what I was saying, it might get out and it might hurt me

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