

# on the MOVE

## Not-so-ancient history

Caitlin Northrup is aware of John F. Kennedy's 1963 assassination. The Beatles' 1964 debut in the United States also rings a bell with her.

However, Caitlin is rather hazy when it comes to details about one of the most significant events in Catholic Church history, an event that also occurred during that period.

From 1962 to 1965, thousands of bishops and cardinals, with the pope and later his successor, convened in Rome for the Second Vatican Council (or Vatican II) and went through an elaborate process to renew and modernize church laws and customs.

Such events as the Kennedy assassination, Caitlin said, "I learned through American history."

But, she added, "You couldn't expect the public schools to teach church history."

Nor, however, has Caitlin learned about Vatican II through her parish.

"When we go to church and youth group, we study the history in the Bible — but not the history of the church," said Caitlin, 15, a parishioner at St. Columba/St. Patrick Church in Caledonia and Mumford. She attends Caledonia-Mumford High School.

Similarly, Jill Yanus said Vatican II is an event of which she has little knowledge.

"I've heard about it, but I can't tell you very much about it," said Jill, 15, from St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Irondequoit. She attends Irondequoit High School.

For instance, Jill had not known

only place I heard about it," she said. Knowledge about Vatican II need not only be learned through school or at

that the sign of peace at Mass grew out of Vatican II. Meanwhile, Caitlin was surprised that lay people were not permitted to receive the blood of Christ for many centuries prior to Vatican II.

Liz Osborn, on the other hand, studied Vatican II as part of her theology curriculum last year at Our Lady of Mercy High School in Brighton. She said it was interesting to learn that the Mass was celebrated in Latin prior to Vatican II, and only came to be said in people's spoken languages after the council.

"It's said in the language of the people. That's definitely a plus," Liz said.

She also likes the fact that the priest now faces the people, whereas prior to Vatican II, the priest celebrated the Mass with his back to the congregation.

"The priest is one of the people now, and not superior," Liz remarked.

But when Liz shared with peers details of what she had learned concerning the council, she found that Vatican II was a foreign subject to them.

"All my friends that go to public school, they looked at me like, 'What are you talking about?' They thought I was making it up," said Liz, 14, from St. Christopher's Church in Chili.

Liz added that without the course, she probably would have known little about Vatican II herself.

"As far as I can remember, that was the

church, however, as evidenced by St. Thomas the Apostle's Jarod Gabello. He said he has examined Vatican II through discussions with his parents and personal study.

"If you really care, if you try hard enough, you can get to know about it," said Jarod, 17, who attends Irondequoit High. He added that he finds Vatican II interesting because it coincided with a period of widespread political and social upheaval in America.

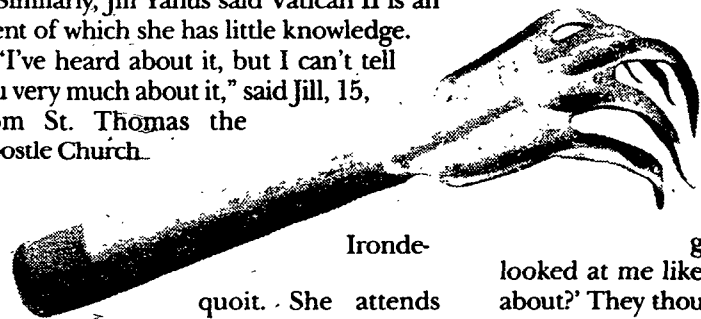
"It was an age of controversy. It was a time when everything was starting to change," Jarod said.

Yet one religious-education coordinator said most teens are not interested enough about church history to study Vatican II in detail, even though the council convened less than 40 years ago.

"You're lucky if you get them to look back a few years. If you think they're worried about the '60s, boy, you're really behind the times," said David Higbee of St. Thomas the Apostle.

Higbee said that he prioritizes faith formation above church history education. He noted that most teens — as well as many adults — are still in that formative stage.

"Until we get serious about the functions



Story by Mike Latona • Photos by Greg Francis

Some of the significant changes that arose as a result of decisions made at the Second Vatican Council:

- Mass is said in the vernacular languages (English, Spanish, etc.), rather than Latin.
- Celebrant faces the congregation, rather than having his back turned.
- Addition of the sign of peace.
- Restoration of the permanent deacons by the church for the first time in many centuries.
- Reception of the cup by laity.
- Emergence of lay eucharistic ministers.
- Increased emphasis on ecumenism, the effort to promote unity among varying denominations.



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