

# On the MOVE

## Powerful, prayerful pilgrimage



Provided photo  
Emily Bonsignore, Jake Smith, Johanna O'Connell, Ben Allen and John Mulvihill recite prayers at the Scala Santa.

STORY BY MIKE LATONA

**7th Step**  
My Jesus! by the insults You endured when dragged on the Sacred Stairs, have mercy on me!

**11th Step**  
My Jesus! by the pain You suffered on being scourged, when Your body was covered with wounds and bruises, have mercy on me!

**21st Step**  
My Jesus! by the pain You suffered, when fastened with nails to the cross, have mercy on me!

— Scala Santa prayer book



The experience was tiring, Emily Bonsignore recalled. She had already climbed numerous steps, pausing at each one to kneel and pray. Yet she dutifully maintained silence.

"I wanted to complain about my knees hurting, but Jesus never complained about that stuff," said Emily, 16.

Emily was praying on the Scala Santa (Holy Stairs), a 28-step monument to Jesus' crucifixion. The stairs, located at St. Anne de Beaupre Shrine, highlighted an intense three-day pilgrimage to Quebec by teen parishioners at Holy Trinity Church in Webster.

Emily, 25 other teens and seven adult chaperons from the "BOC" (Body of Christ) youth group visited numerous shrines Aug. 5-7. Their trip was marked by a steady stream of prayer, adoration and meditation.

"It really moved me. It made me feel stronger about my faith and feel good about the people around me," said Scott Pinkney, 17.

The group left Holy Trinity early Aug. 5 and rode seven hours to Montreal, where they stopped at St. Joseph's Oratory. Then it was on to an overnight stay near the Notre Dame du Cap (Our Lady of the Cape) Basilica, where they took part in an evening Mass and candlelight service.

On Aug. 6, following Mass and rosary, the group traveled two hours further east

Holy Trinity youth-group members kneel in prayer on the Scala Santa, a 28-step monument to symbolize Christ's meeting with Pontius Pilate.

along the St. Lawrence River to St. Anne de Beaupre. The complex features a shrine, convent, monastery and outdoor Stations of the Cross with life-size images. The teens took part in the stations as well as another evening Mass and candlelight service.

Following morning Mass on Aug. 7, the group visited the Holy Stairs and other monuments at St. Anne de Beaupre before making the long ride back to Webster, arriving at midnight.

The Holy Stairs, with statue images of Christ's passion at the top step, resonated strongly with Johanna O'Connell.

"It was really heavy on your heart, because you realized how much Jesus gave up for us. You almost felt like you were walking with him," said Johanna, 19.

The stairs were constructed in 1891 as a monument to the original 28-step Scala Santa, which Jesus ascended on his way to meeting with Pontius Pilate.

As a whole, the pilgrimage gave the youths a fresh focus on their faith.

"It kind of helped us to have a better feel for the Mass. You're able to understand it more, and why you do it," said Stephanie Haley, 17.

"You're not just reciting," Emily added.

"This was one time we were really able to concentrate. When you're going to church, how often is it that you're really praying and meditating?" Johanna said.

Scott said the pilgrimage will help him be more expressive during Sunday Mass.

"Before, I wouldn't really open up to prayer," Scott said.

During the trip, Johanna noted, the group reflected deeply on the Our Father. "We really realized that this is the prayer that tells us how we're expected to live our daily lives," she said.

Holy Trinity adults were impressed with the teens' conduct during the trip. Co-organizer Mary Smith noted how reverent the youths were, while another chaperon, Donna Albert, said they constantly offered to push her wheelchair.

"They were fighting over it," said Albert, who has multiple sclerosis.

Participants said they expect the pilgrimage to have long-lasting effects. Johanna's father, Tom, a co-organizer, said the group was still on a spiritual high for several days after they returned home.

"You made a real connection in your heart," Tom O'Connell said.

To remind themselves and the parish of that connection, the teens brought back a 3-foot rosary with large wooden beads that they made on the trip. They plan to display it in Holy Trinity Church and have it blessed at a youth Mass in September.

The teens also came away with enhanced friendships, as well as new ones. They wrote affirmation letters to each other throughout the trip, and they switched seats frequently on the ride home to promote wider interaction.

"I definitely got to know some people better than I wouldn't have known otherwise," Emily said.

### CATHOLIC CHARITIES USA 1999 ANNUAL CONFERENCE October 2-4, 1999

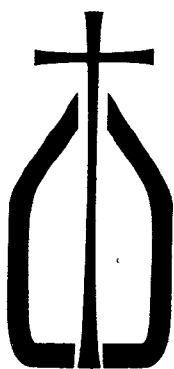
#### IMAGES OF OUR ROOTS VISIONS OF OUR FUTURE

ROCHESTER RIVERSIDE CONVENTION CENTER

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2  
ROCHESTER DAY  
10:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.

Opening Assembly  
Lunch  
Keynote Address  
Millard Fuller, CEO Habitat for Humanity  
Workshops (19 choices!)  
Conference Liturgy

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3  
Featured Speaker  
ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU  
Noon Seating  
Luncheon 12:30 p.m.



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COMING NEXT WEEK: Teen rape victim