

on the MOVE



Yolanda Ortiz, religious formation coordinator at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Rochester, shows Matthew Bashaw of St. John of Rochester Parish, Fairport, how to properly move his hips during a Latin dance workshop at the Diocesan Youth Convention Aug. 4.

Esperanza para el camino.

It means hope for the journey, which was the theme of the eighth annual Diocesan Youth Convention Aug. 3-5 at SUNY Geneseo. This year's convention drew about 700 participants and was filled with gatherings of each parish's youth, workshops, keynote talks, music and activities. It also had a second theme - multiculturalism.

"It has always been a priority goal of mine to have our diocesan programs and events and services reflect the cultures of the church of Rochester," said Michael Theisen, diocesan director of youth ministry. "This youth convention marks a big step in taking a deliberate and thoughtful movement towards a multicultural inclusivity and in building a diverse diocesan youth community."

Each parish made signs of hope to hang as part of the "Hope For The Journey" theme. In addition, for every usual sign designating in English

where restrooms, certain buildings and events were, there was also one in Spanish.

"There's been an effort to make (the convention) as much as possible bilingual," said Lynette DeJesus, the new diocesan urban youth ministry coordinator for the city of Rochester, adding that there is a desire "to try and give a better picture of the diocese."

As a part of this multicultural focus, a diocesan-Dominican Republic group led the Saturday morning opening program. It included diocesan youth, young adults and adults who had visited the Dominican Republic. Led by Theresa Fantone, a former youth minister at St. Mary's in Scottsville, their mission

trip through Dominican Kaleidoscope International involved assisting in Cristo Rey ministries.

From the Dominican Republic were Father Rogelio Cruz and 27-year-old Nazra Lopez. They were the only two members of a larger group of Dominicans who had planned to participate in the Youth Convention; the others were unable to obtain visas.

"There are a lot of difficulties getting visas because there are a lot of abuses going on (in the Dominican Republic). When people get the visas a lot of times they don't come back," Fantone explained.

Father Cruz addressed the convention participants in Spanish, asking the diocesan youth to get involved and help the youth of the Dominican Republic, as Lopez translated in English. After hearty applause for his address, the mission group showed slides from its trip.

The slides evoked feelings of home for at least one current member of

the diocesan community. Pamela Cano, 17, is from Colombia and has been in Rochester since Jan. 26 as a part of a year-long exchange program.

"My country is Third World, as well," said Cano, who attends Good Shepherd Parish in Henrietta. "When I saw the slide show, I saw my country."

On Saturday afternoon youth could choose among workshops including "My Hope For The Church," given by Bishop Matthew H. Clark, as well as such multicultural workshops as "Latin Dance: Learn To 'Bilar,'" The Universal Language," presented by Yolanda Ortiz, volunteer religious formation coordinator at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Rochester; and "A Day In The Life: A Multicultural Dialogue," facilitated by Lopez.

The multicultural emphasis was most evident, however, at the afternoon's liturgy, at which Bishop Clark was celebrant and Father Cruz was concelebrant. Brian Johnson, diocesan director of youth ministry in Houston, Texas and Sunday morning's keynote speaker, opened the Mass in a dark auditorium. Carrying a candle, he sang a powerful a cappella gospel rendition of "This Little Light of Mine." He was eventually joined by the guitars, drums, tambourine, saxophone, bass, harmonica, piano and bongos. Many of the Mass lyrics were bilingual, including the weekend's theme song, "Hope at the Crossroads."

Each reading was done once by one youth in English and by another in Spanish. Bishop Clark and Father Cruz each read the Gospel in his own language.

In his homily, Bishop Clark thanked the youth for the "way you animate my own spirit and for your acts of generosity."

The youth proved him right on the latter. Their offertory collection was designated for the Cristo Rey "Children of the Streets" project, and after additional donations came in through the weekend, totaled more than \$2,450.

During the offertory, youth and their parishes also presented "Hope Packages," packages of essentials and nonperishable items that will be part of a cultural exchange with 15,000 migrant workers in the diocese. Gabriela Jaramillo, director of diocesan Hispanic ministry, invited the youth to deliver the packages at Spanish migrant Masses.

Before closing Mass, Bishop Clark asked those visiting from the Dominican Republic and those who worked with them to stand, and blessed them in Spanish.

"It was great! I never expected it," Cano said, referring to the convention's Mass. "It was the first Mass in Spanish I've been to since I got here. It's such a good experience."

Saturday night's "Fun-For-All" included a dance, karaoke, live music, a game room, personal caricatures, face painting and more. The DJ at the dance played some Latin dance music for the crowd, which danced a conga line at one point.

The weekend's multicultural approach went over well with the youth.

"It's good because it allows the church to expand to more people," said David Avery, 14, of St. Patrick's Parish in Macedon, commenting on how the weekend's bilingual aspects opened the convention's door to a greater diversity of participants.

Michael Grenier, 16, of St. Margaret Mary's in Owego, agreed that this effort added to his experience. "It's cool to meet new people from different places," he said.

While this year's youth convention showcased diversity, and its participants spoke different languages, Father Cruz pointed out one major similarity.

"*Todos hablamos el mismo idioma del amor*," he told the youth Saturday morning, which Lopez translated as "We all speak the same language of love."



(From left, in back) Monica DeBergalls, Emily Pulos and Katie Ottavio, all of St. John of Rochester Parish in Fairport, laugh as an attempt to form a human pyramid collapses.

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