



Kelly Donahue of St. Theodore, Gates, dances with 9-year-old Chad Martinez at Rochester's Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church April 6.



Karen Roth of St. Lawrence Parish in Greece (from left) and St. Lawrence youth ministers Cathie Bianchi and Donna Gray react to freezing drops of holy water being sprinkled on the crowd at the beginning of the convention Mass.



Father Werth sprinkles the congregation with holy water.



Alexis Armstrong (left) of St. Bridget Parish in Rochester hugs Rachael Legere of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Hamlin at the sign of peace during the convention Mass.

visited St. Andrew's Church. Jake likened the experience to a reverse "City Slickers," saying he at first felt out of sorts being away from his customary rural environment. Yet he and Maria said they fit in comfortably by the end of dinner.

"When you talked to the people, you found out they're the same as us," Maria said. Jake also noted that the St. Andrew's folks "served some really good bread and really good punch."

Holding numerous events all over the city was meant to promote understanding between people of diverse backgrounds, said Michael Theisen, diocesan director of youth ministry.

"We were intentionally building bridges — between kids from suburban, urban and rural parts of our diocese," Theisen said.

Greg from Apalachin said he liked "the fact that we were going out into the community. Usually we stay within our walls."

After the dinner gatherings, participants returned downtown and shifted from the Convention Center to the Sheraton Four Points Hotel. There, they enjoyed a Saturday-evening "fun-for-all" that featured such entertainment as dancing, karaoke and comedy acts.

Remarkably, all this activity occurred on just the first day of the convention. The Four Points Hotel was also the site for some intense "challenge sessions" on April 7. The topics were dating and sexuality; violence; friends in crisis; life and death issues; and stereotypes, racism and prejudice. (Further coverage of the youth workshops will appear in the *Courier's* April 18 edition.) There was also a session for adults, "How Parishes Can Form Young Disciples."

Workshops were followed by a late-afternoon closing program in which new members of the Diocesan Youth Committee were commissioned, and outgoing members were acknowledged. Loud clapping and singing, along with lots of hugs and tears, brought an end to the convention weekend.

Theisen said the event went so smoothly that he expects to return to downtown Rochester for the next Diocesan Youth Convention, which is scheduled for Aug. 8-10, 2003.

Regardless of the setting, chances are it will exude the enthusiasm to which Greg has grown accustomed this year and at the three previous youth conventions he attended in Geneseo.

"People are so friendly. Everybody seems to just come together to worship the Lord," he said. "It's such an awesome thing — like a 24-7 adrenaline rush."

your average fast-food fare. The teens visited six churches in Rochester's inner city, where parishioners treated them to food and cultural presentations. Host churches were St. Monica's, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier, St. Bridget's, St. Michael's and St. Andrew's.

Maria Piscitelli, 18, and Jake Fitzgerald, 16, both from St. Patrick's in Seneca Falls, were part of the group that

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