

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Speaker encourages catechists to evangelize

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Religion, to be taught effectively to today's young Catholics, must reach their souls as well as their heads.

Thomas Zanzig emphasized that point repeatedly during his lecture, "Catechesis for Today's Adolescent," on June 27 at Colgate Rochester Divinity School. Zanzig maintains that it's imperative for religious education and evangelization to walk hand-in-hand.

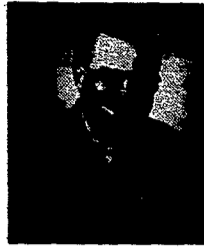
"Are we into teaching about religion, or forming faith?" he asked rhetorically. "What I'm saying is, I want kids to freely participate rather than be forced. What we try to do too often is catechize people who have never been evangelized."

Zanzig's two-hour seminar was attended by 25 adults involved in religious education, youth ministry and other areas of catechesis. The evening talk followed a June 26-27 symposium on adolescent catechesis led by Zanzig, a national speaker and author/editor from St. Mary's Press in Winona, Minn. The events were cosponsored by the diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis and St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry.

Zanzig referred to traditional religious education as "religious instruction," in which the goals are for teens to acquire information, focus on facts, memorize data and perform rituals in a controlled-behavior setting. A more effective model in this day and age, Zanzig said, is faith formation, which encourages teens to experience content, focus on attitudes and values, internalize data and mature morally.

Though "religious instruction" was effective for its time, Zanzig said it wouldn't work as well in today's church because so much has changed in society.

"Some people think if the church went back to the old way, everything would be all right," he remarked. "But there have been deep, deep cultural shifts in the last 25 or 30 years, and the church can't help



but be affected."

For instance, he said we've moved from an era in which religious values were upheld in the entertainment industry and public institutions. Nowadays, he

pointed out, Catholics in the United States are viewed — frequently with disdain — as countercultural. Whereas a legal challenge of public prayer in schools would have been unthinkable 25 years ago, today "all you have to do is put up the Ten Commandments in a school and there's a lawsuit," Zanzig said. Adding to the dilemma, he said, is the fact American culture has become so diverse that the parish is no longer the center of family life.

All these trends, he asserted, leave too many families viewing religious education as a choice rather than an obligation, and resisting a ritualistic approach to catechesis. That's a profound change from when Zanzig began teaching religious education 35 years ago, when he was fresh out of college. "Those were the days kids would show up even if you didn't know what you were doing," he said.

Based on such challenges, Zanzig suggested how catechists can bring young people into the faith by evangelizing, rather than simply teaching. This involves going out and finding young people rather than waiting for them to show up, developing trusting relationships and listening to their stories as much as adults want to tell theirs.

Zanzig offered a cyclical model of conversion to hold out to young people: It begins with a hunger, followed by a search, then an awakening, and finally a response. For example, a young Catholic may return from a teen retreat saying "I don't know what that was, but I want more." That teen has acquired a hunger, he said.

Ideally, Zanzig added, the adolescent will arrive at a crucial moment. "Conver-

sion, personal encounter with Jesus, the lights go on. ... I prefer to call this a moment of recognition," he said. "It's knowing something that I may have been introduced to before — the church was people over there, now I'm in it. ... God was talking to a lot of old folks like Moses, but wait a minute. God's in my life. I like it here, I like what's happening here, and I want it to continue."

An emphasis on evangelization is not re-

ally new; in fact, Zanzig observed, it's as old as Christianity itself. He cited the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), noting that Jesus' appearance left the disciples with a fire burning inside — a fire so intense that early Christianity spread into an extremely forceful movement.

"Out of that, in a matter of decades, they turned the Roman Empire upside down. Something happened — Jesus happened," Zanzig said.



Karin von Volgtlander/Staff photographer

## Celebrating the Fourth

Spectators gathered on Rochester's Ford Street Bridge had this spectacular view of the city's July 4 fireworks extravaganza.

## Button Brigade off to Toronto

By Jennifer Burke  
Editorial intern

Youths and young adults from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Hamlin and St. John the Evangelist Parish in Spencerport will be among thousands traveling to Toronto for World Youth Day at the end of July. Tucked among their backpacks, water bottles and sleeping bags will be several hundred buttons to trade.

Participants at youth-oriented national or international Catholic events — such as World Youth Day and the National Catholic Youth Conference — traditionally bring items to trade with participants from other regions or nations. These items often include buttons, clothespins and holy cards, usually decorated with the names and locations of the parishes trading them.

This year, the World Youth Day pilgrims of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish and St. John the Evangelist Parish chose to take part in the Button Brigade, a worldwide effort to encourage Catholic vocations and Christian fellowship. The buttons, which are black with red lettering, are inscribed with the words "Spread the Love." Underneath those words is the Web address for Catholic Cards, an Internet site where people can send free electronic Christian greeting cards and inspirational notes.

Both the Catholic Cards Web site and the Button Brigade are results of the efforts of Sister Patricia Proctor of the Poor Clare Monastery in Spokane, Wash. Sister Proctor credits the Blessed Mother

with inspiring her and providing support and guidance for the Button Brigade and its message.

"In this time of crisis in the Church, when so much negative is being spread about our priests and our religious, we need to spread as much positive as we can. The branches of our vine have been pruned. Now it's time for new and healthy growth," Sister Proctor said.

All of Sister Proctor's 250,000 buttons have been sent to parishes and individuals in 25 different countries who wish to help distribute them before or during World Youth Day.

"We are super happy with our response. It is definitely a grass-roots movement, (and) it seems to be spreading rapidly," Sister Proctor said.

When Cindy Lazzaro, youth minister at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, found out about the buttons, she thought it would be a good project for her group to participate in for several reasons.

"We have no idea how the Spirit works in calling people to vocations, but it is my experience that the Holy Spirit often uses us to notice, to invite, to encourage those who are called to ministry," Lazzaro said. "We are willing servants, that's all. I had planned on using the buttons as a way for our teens to affirm someone they met who showed them an example of God's love over the weekend."

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** To find out more about the Button Brigade or to become a part of it, visit the Catholic Cards Web site at [www.catholiccards.org](http://www.catholiccards.org) or e-mail Sister Patricia Proctor at [srpat@calledbyjoy.com](mailto:srpat@calledbyjoy.com).



[www.catholiccards.com](http://www.catholiccards.com)

## MISSION NEWS

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