

NCEA celebrates 100th anniversary

Catholic educators gather in St. Louis for week of sharing

ST. LOUIS (CNS) — More than 14,000 Catholic school teachers, administrators and parish catechists gathered in St. Louis April 22-25 for inspiration and encouragement in their work; shared camaraderie; practical tips for the classroom, school board and parish; and souvenirs of giveaway markers, pencils, rulers and stress balls.

Your work influences millions of people, Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, told participants at the opening session of the National Catholic Educational Association's convention.

"You are the key to the church's ability to accomplish its goal ... to pass on the faith to the next generation," he said.

This year the NCEA went back to its roots, holding its 100th convention at the place where it all started — St. Louis, where the organization held its first convention in 1904. At that time, the delegates were all men and predominantly priests.

At this year's convention, with the theme, "Dream by the River: Faithful Past, Faith-Filled Future," the delegates were primarily lay women with a fair number of women religious and a small percentage of men.

At the general sessions, the NCEA delegates were praised for the good work they have already done and encouraged to expand their roles even further.

Margaret O'Brien Steinfelds, author and former editor of *Commonweal* magazine, urged the educators to consider how Catholic education "must enlarge its mission, extend its reach, enrich the Catholic community and thereby enrich the culture. Do more, for more people."

Carl Anderson, supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus and keynote speaker during the convention's closing session, urged the educators to take pride in their heritage as Catholics and Americans and to "take the new generation by the hand" to transform the modern world.

In the workshops offered during the convention, NCEA delegates learned about ways to encourage preschool artists, cure senioritis and reach the adults in their parishes.

They also were able to glean helpful hints on everything from ways to make math, science and reading more fun to how to steer youths away from sexual harassment and abuse and teach peace in the modern world. They discussed sacramental preparation, legal issues, finances, the Internet, urban schools, marketing strategies and everything in between.



Reuters/CNS

Protection from SARS

Wearing masks to protect themselves from Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, Catholics pray at the cathedral in Hong Kong April 18. More than 60 deaths in the territory have been attributed to SARS.

Protester pleads guilty

Shelter worker ordered to pay fine, court fees

Catholic Worker Sarah Brownell, one of 13 protesters — mostly Catholics — arrested during an Ash Wednesday sit-in at Rochester's Federal Building, pleaded guilty to the reduced charge of a violation in Rochester City Court April 22.

Judge Ann Pfeiffer ordered Brownell, a staff member at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, a shelter in Rochester, to pay a fine of \$100 plus \$60 in court fees. Brownell and other protesters had been arrested after refusing to leave the entranceway to the Federal Building as part of their March 5 protest against the then-looming war in Iraq. She is the first of the "Ash Wednesday 13" to be sentenced.

Brownell said she accepted the plea bargain because she was slated to travel to Haiti in mid-May to work on a water-purification and sanitation project. The original charge of third-degree criminal trespass carried a maximum sen-

tence of 90 days in jail.

The remaining dozen protesters — who are affiliated with such Catholic institutions as St. Joseph's, the House of Mercy outreach center and the peace group Pax Christi Rochester — are slated for court dates throughout May.

At her sentencing, Brownell read a statement that noted she was "guilty" of various actions, including civil disobedience.

"I am guilty of turning people away from shelter," she said. "As money is funneled to the war, it is taken away from social services at home."

Brownell also noted she was guilty of allowing the federal government to erode privacy and civil liberties in its ongoing effort to track terrorists, as well as witnessing poverty and destruction in the Third World while government monies go to war efforts.

"I am guilty of knowing all this and having only offered a few prayers at the Federal Building on Ash Wednesday," she concluded.

— Rob Cullivan

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