

Catholic Courier

■ DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

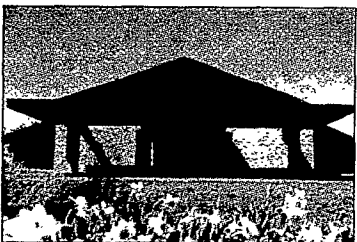
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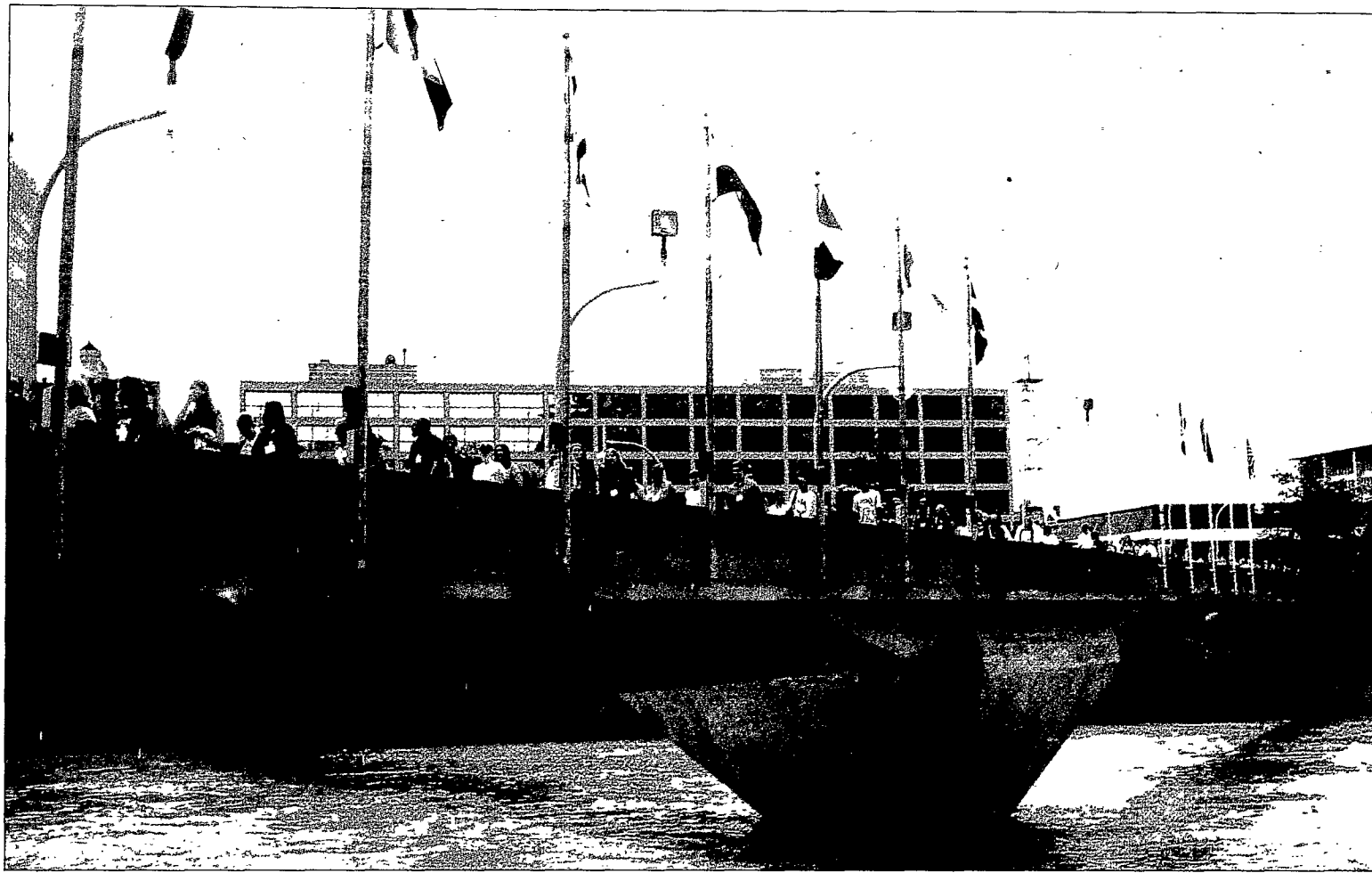
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Diocesan Youth Convention participants take part in a prayer walk Aug. 9 along the Genesee River in downtown Rochester.

Colossal youth events abound

Pope John Paul II's historic trip to Denver was still a year off back in 1992, when Michael Theisen began as Rochester's diocesan youth-ministry coordinator. As a result, the pope's upcoming visit to World Youth Day wasn't an urgent subject when Theisen was reviewing his new job responsibilities with his supervisor, Mari-beth Mancini, diocesan director of evangelization and catechesis.

"She said, 'Oh, by the way, we're making you the World Youth Day contact.' I said 'OK, whatever that means,'" Theisen recalled.

He quickly found out what it meant. Starting out in the hope of attracting 200 pilgrims, Theisen instead wound up overseeing a contingent of more than 500 teens and adult chaperons who traveled west to see the pope preside at World Youth Day,

an international gathering the pontiff established in the mid-1980s.

World Youth Day took place in Denver from Aug. 9-15, 1993. In the decade since, WYD '93 has frequently been cited as a catalyst for a sharp growth in youth ministry in the Rochester Diocese. Large numbers at diocesan youth events lend solid support to that assertion:

- The Diocesan Youth Convention, begun in 1994 with 350 people, has averaged more than 500 high-schoolers annually. It drew nearly 700 for the 10th annual convention this Aug. 9-10 at the Rochester Crowne Plaza Hotel. The Junior High Youth Rally, a similarly structured one-day event begun in 1993, annually draws hundreds of participants as well.

- Diocesan participation in the National Catholic Youth Conference, held every

two years, jumped from 292 participants in 1997 to 615 people two years later, and to 950 participants in 2001. Rochester's representation at the 2001 NCYC in Indianapolis, Ind., was the highest from any diocese in the country except for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis itself. This coming Nov. 15-18, an estimated 900 delegates will attend the NCYC in Houston, Texas.

- An overnight excursion to World Youth Day 2002 in Toronto, which took place last August with the pope, drew more than 1,000 people from the Rochester Diocese. Even though WYD '02 was geared more toward young adults than was WYD '93 in Denver, most of the Rochester delegation's 2002 throng consisted of teens.

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Story by Mike Latona • Photo by Leila Navidi

