

Teens go with the flow at convention

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

Pirates and prayers, friends and faith, reconciliation and the river — these were only some of the elements brought together by this year's 10th Annual Diocesan Youth Convention.

The Aug. 9 and 10 convention, whose theme was "Caught in the Current — Go with the Flow," was held alongside the Genesee River at Rochester's Crowne Plaza Hotel. The theme was meant to compare life events to the stages that can occur along the river of life: stepping into the river, encountering rocks, rough waters, flood waters, droughts and waterfalls, where people learn to let go and follow God's will.

More than 550 teens, young adults and chaperones gathered under the chandeliers of the Crowne Plaza's ballroom for the opening program on the morning of Aug. 9. A band of pirates, bearing a resemblance to Diocesan Youth Committee members, took the stage first, vowing to "search for Jesus on every shore." Bishop Matthew H. Clark, introduced by one of the pirates as "the man who takes the 'sin' out of Sinbad," took the podium to a standing ovation.

"Thanks for being who you are and for being here to share that precious gift with us. The fact remains that you and I all face common challenges, no matter what the number of our years. When I experience how you're doing that, it helps me negotiate the challenges of my own life," Bishop Clark said.

Doug Brummel, a Catholic-Christian comedian, storyteller and teacher, entertained convention participants after lunch by assuming the personalities and appearances of fictional characters of different ages and backgrounds.

"It's just amazing how he can just turn into a character and stick with it. You really get to relate to the characters in many different ways," said 17-year-old Brian Streicher of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Greece.

In the afternoon, youths were invited to think about their faith during a prayer walk along the Genesee River and a reconciliation service.

The same way a river is fed by many different tributaries, the convention was formed by the contributions and talents of Catholics of all ages and cultures from around the diocese. Youths from Immaculate Conception Parish of Rochester entertained participants with a liturgical dance performance, and six urban parishes opened their doors to convention participants. St. Bridget,



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Fifteen-year-olds Elisa Beretone (right) and Jenna Moulta of St. Jerome Parish in East Rochester laugh and sing Aug. 9 as they travel by bus to Rochester's St. Stanislaus Kostka Church for a cultural-exchange dinner. St. Stanislaus was one of several area parishes that hosted cultural meals for the youths.



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Sixteen-year-old Janelle Borkowsk of St. Christopher Parish in North Chili dances Aug. 9 with 16-year-old Melanie Breslawski of Brockport's Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Our Lady of Good Counsel, St. Michael, St. Stanislaus Kostka and Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier Parishes welcomed youths for a cultural meal specific to each parish's heritage. Some parishes gave tours of the church buildings, while others provided cultural music.

On the night of Aug. 9, the Big Daddy Celebration Stage allowed youths to contribute their musical talents to the convention while honoring former youth minister Dennis Reno of the Winton-Culver Parish

Cluster in Rochester, who died of a stroke in February.

On Aug. 10, attendance swelled to more than 650, due in part to a Mass with Bishop Clark and the Diocesan Youth Committee commissioning ceremony that followed it. All former DYC members were invited to attend and stay for the remainder of the convention, which included two rounds of workshops. One of the workshops was specifically geared toward former DYC members.

Many of the teens in attendance are also going to the National Catholic Youth Conference, which will be held this November in Houston.

"We're going to Houston in November so I just thought this would prepare me for it," said Stephanie Regan, 18, a young-adult assistant from Our Mother of Sorrows Parish in Greece.



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Youths sample Polish cuisine Aug. 9 during a cultural-exchange dinner at Rochester's St. Stanislaus Kostka Church.

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