



the Roman Catholic Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey

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our Diocese

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'Highly Flammable'

Conference sets a spark in young adults to evangelize

By **CECILE SAN AGUSTIN**
Reporter

STIRLING - For young adults "to set the earth on fire," the key is through evangelization according to N.J. Young Adult Conference 2006 keynote speaker Caroline Gambale, youth minister of St. Joseph Parish in Hillsborough. The conference, under the theme "I have come to set fire to the earth and how I wish it were already blazing" from Luke's Gospel, was held June 10 at St. Vincent DePaul Church here.

"Do we need to take today to ask God to give us the power again to give us that fire for evangelization, a fire for the love of God to serve him?" Gambale asked more than 150 Catholic young adults from all over the state of New Jersey.

"As young adults, we are the present - we're not the future, we are the Church. And where you are right now, there are people that you pass in the halls at work every single day that need to hear what you have to say (about God's love.) They are yearning for it. That is what God has put in your life - to talk about it. Now is the time to talk about it," Gambale told the audience.

It was because of Pentecost we are called to spread God's love, said Gambale, "Pentecost is described in the Bible as a strong driving wind coming into this room. And the fire of Pentecost rested upon the disciples and they were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. And then what happened? Enter an amazing miracle of God, they could not contain this experience of God's love and they proclaimed it. Now it is our turn. We are called to evangelize."

In her powerful presentation to inspire her fellow young adults in their 20s and 30s in attendance to deepen their Catholic faith, she continued that fear is the biggest obstacle from not allowing us to evangelize.

"This is not about us. It does not matter if we do a good job or not. A lot of us want to be perfect before we actually do the work of evangelization," said Gambale, "We're never going to be perfect. We can't wait to be perfect."

What is perfect according to Gambale is God's love. "What was that fire at Pentecost? Yes, it was the Holy Spirit but it was the fire of God's love. They say the Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son and the love between the Father and the Son is so perfect and creates the third person of the Holy Trinity."

The conference, sponsored by all of the New Jersey dioceses, the Father Judge Apostolic Center here and Spirit and Truth of Linden, offered many praise and worship opportunities for the young adults. The music ministry was provided by BLD, a charismatic group based in the Diocese of Metuchen. Young adults also were treated to an outdoor barbeque allowing them to meet each other.

The conference offered young adults several workshops to help them "set the earth on fire." The workshops were based on various topics, including "Fire of Love," a presentation on God's plan for love, relationships and sex; "Firewatch," a discussion on the life of Trappist monk Thomas Merton; "Wild Fire," a presentation on Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, Mother Teresa and other luminaries of social justice.

In another workshop, "The Spark that Set the Flame," presented by Trinitarian Father Kent Weidie, director of young adult ministry at the Father Judge Center, showed young adults the many connections through pop culture and the Gospel. Through the music of rock band U2, he played some of their songs to show how their songs are infused with many Gospel themes.

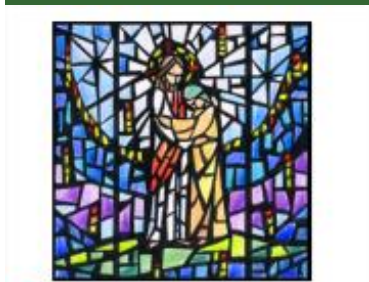


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He ended his presentation with the U2 song, "One" performing for the young adults with a slide show presentation of people from all around the world.

In the workshop on decision-making called "Smoke Detector," Benedictine Father Damian B. Breen, vocation director of St. Mary's Abbey, Morristown, and Sister of Charity Pat Dotzauer, vocation director of the Sisters of Charity at the College of St. Elizabeth, Convent Station, suggested many ideas on how to make the right decisions based on what God wants in our choices.

Father Breen, who in July will also serve as parochial vicar at St. James Parish, Totowa, discussed in his talk the parallels between Abraham from the Old Testament to who we are. Abraham is the father of faith and "he shows obedience, loyalty, faith, assurance and patience to God," said Father Breen who said those same traits will help them in their lives when it comes to making decisions.

Said Father Breen, "God wants us to use our talents and gifts. God does not set out Abraham empty handed on his journey of faith. God gave him what he needed."

Father Breen asked the workshop participants reflection questions based upon the call of Abraham.

Sister Dotzauer discussed in her presentation the five values of Jesus that can help us to make decisions, which are enthusiasm, conversions, reverence of persons, loving service of others and prayer.

"Christian decision making is based on the values of Jesus. The goal of the choices one makes in one's life must be to open oneself more fully to shalom - God's will and work in one's life and God's will and work in others. Jesus is our shalom," said Sister Dotzauer. She explained that every decision is a "yes" and a "no" but she said, "God loves us no matter what we do."

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