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Saints in the making

Kathy Loney

Who are “saints in the making”? How do we become a saint? Why do we want to be a saint? What do saints do here on earth and what happens to saints in the hereafter? These are just a few of the many questions that were answered at the Senior High Youth Celebration at Napoleon Public School on Oct. 20.

More than 250 participants took a day from their long school break in October to attend this year’s senior high event. To kick off the day, members of the Catholic Youth Advisory Committee, emcees and helpers got students and adults involved in an hour of fun and games, getting to know each other and singing praise to God.

Amanda Bitz, who lives in Dickey and represents Deanery 8, and Myron Wanna, who lives in Fort Totten and represents Deanery 5, were the emcees. Much preparation is needed to lead a day filled with activities, workshops, sacrament opportunities and lots of fellowship time. That is the primary responsibility of CYAC students and advisers and it takes the whole council to pull off a great day like the one we had Oct. 20.

The guest speaker for the event was Scott Anthony, who is the youth minister for two growing parishes in York, Penn.: St. Joseph and St. Patrick. He also has a growing family that includes seven children.

Anthony certainly knew how to connect with our teens and with the adults who were present. He pointed out that the ball is in our court if we are willing to walk the narrow road to greatness, and that narrow road leads us to being saints, getting into heaven and finally being with our creator, God. Anthony was present the entire day, even enjoying the dance led by Catholic Dance creator, DJ Bill Lage.

There were 11 workshops offered in the afternoon. We had one workshop by Shannon O’Connor from Grand Forks on “Incorruptibles,” those saints whose bodies have not decayed but have stayed intact over the years. The “Holy Bones” workshop by Sister Marlyss Dionne from Maryvale Convent in Valley City was about the many relics of saints, why we have them, what we do with them and how they came about.

Father Scott Sautner, pastor of St. Philip’s in Hankinson, led a workshop on the canonization process — what happens to these holy people on earth and what is going to happen with them in the hereafter.

Father Wenceslaus Katanga, pastor of the Catholic churches in Wishek, Ashley and Zealand, gave a talk about his childhood, his time in foster homes, as a runaway, and finally as the great priest that he is today.

Cindy Weigel from Napoleon gave a workshop on the five “Love Languages.” She creatively talked to students and adults about how we perceive these five gifts of love and how we give them to others.

Lori Gross, also from Napoleon, led a workshop and talked about the loss of her oldest son to suicide. She shared information about her road from deep depression to happiness.

Nick Breidenbach from Napoleon, a past CYAC student, presented a workshop on the idea of truly owning your faith and explaining to all that it's not just your parents' faith anymore, it's yours, also.

One of our CYAC students, Matthew Weigrefe, gave a talk on three saints, discussing the kind of life they had before God made an impact on them and turned them totally around.

We had two energetic young adults, Sean Zimprich and Anna Vanyo, come in and talk about life after high school. They spoke about where they were headed and how God has helped them along in their journey.

Tamara Splonskowski, a current adviser for CYAC students, presented a workshop on "Pure Style" — how dressing and acting like the beautiful women they are can be a constant blessing to young women's lives.

Anthony presented a workshop on "Who Do You Follow?" Who are the people in your life that truly impact you? Do you give God a second thought or just pass him by?

Our last round of workshops was given in a general session in which DJ Bill Lage challenged young people and others to take a good look at the music they listen to and what messages they are receiving from it. He encouraged them to think about where their music is leading them in their daily living, and asked them to consider who they support when buying music that is not consistent with their moral lives and their lives with God.

Our day involved reconciliation for all with 13 priests from the neighboring parishes. Eucharistic adoration was available all day in the library, offering everyone the opportunity to visit with Jesus for a while. A eucharistic procession took place right before Mass began at 5 p.m. at the beautiful St. Philip Neri Catholic Church, with Father James Gross as the main celebrant and several other priests concelebrating.

Lage wrapped up the day with a two-hour dance that everyone truly enjoyed.

Our next Senior High Celebration will be Oct. 18, 2012, with Holy Family Catholic Church in Grand Forks sponsoring the event. More information will be available on the youth page of the diocesan website next year.

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