NCEA Indy 2008 ~ Challenge Met at the Crossroads

“The people were nice, the sessions were great and the evening events were terrific! The liturgies were beautiful! I think Indianapolis should host more often!” ~ An NCEA Participant

On March 25-28 the Archdiocese of Indianapolis sponsored the 105th National Catholic Educational Association Convention and National Association of Parish Catechetical Directors Convocation at the Indiana Convention Center (NCEA Indy 2008). In this issue of the Good Word we want to publicly thank our many sponsors and local volunteers who made the convention such a great success. Conventioners found that our Hoosier Hospitality is real! Below we have captured some comments from the participants, some statistics – NCEA Indy 2008 by the Numbers – and, some excerpts from the thousands of welcome letters our students wrote to the participants. Inside we feature our sponsors, our local recipients of national awards and a reflection by Mickey Lentz on a successful convention.

...“Visiting St. Mary-of-the-Woods was wonderful! The day was beautiful and to walk in St. Theodora’s footsteps and learn about her faith journey absolutely was the best experience!”

“The track (IMS) was phenomenal! It was wonderful to get to go on the track and see the cars. I am so glad that we came to Indianapolis!”

Catholic educators attending NCEA Indy 08 received with their registration materials, welcome letters from students throughout the archdiocese. Some had “kid friendly” suggestions as to the “Best Places to Eat in Indy.” Many guests told us how much they appreciated these friendly messages.

Some excerpts from student letters:

~ Welcome to Indianapolis, Thanks for teaching in our Catholic Schools ...we love you!

~ Oh, don’t forget to visit the INDY 500! Reesie, Grade 3

~ Eat at RED LOBSTER, Their bread is AMAZING! Grace, Grade 4

~ Thank you for coming to the Conference. May St. Theodora Guérin watch over you during your stay in Indianapolis. God Bless you. Alaina, Grade 2
The Holy Father on Catholic Education and Evangelization

In his address to Catholic Educators on April 17, Pope Benedict XVI shared some thoughts regarding the nature and identity of Catholic education today. At two points in the Pope’s remarks, the audience broke out in spontaneous applause:

The first was when he thanked those present for their dedication, generosity and selfless contributions – and specifically, “the dedication of those working in inner-city schools which serve both your country and the Church. For this I express my profound gratitude.”

The second applause came when he said to religious brothers, sisters and priests: “Do not abandon the school apostolate. Indeed, renew your commitment to schools especially in poorer areas. In places where there are many hollow promises which lure young people away from the path of truth and genuine freedom; the consecrated person’s witness to the evangelical counsels is an irreplaceable gift.”

The Pope noted how St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. Katharine Drexel devoted their lives to educating those others had neglected – African Americans and Native Americans. “Catholic schools have helped generations of immigrants to rise from poverty and take their place in mainstream society. No child should be denied his or her right to an education in faith, which, in turn, nurtures the soul of a nation.”

“The Church’s primary mission of evangelization, in which educational institutions play a crucial role, is consonant with a nation’s fundamental aspiration to develop a society truly worthy of the human person’s dignity.”

The Holy Father concluded by focusing specifically on the importance of the educator’s own professionalism and witness within our Catholic universities and schools. “We have the duty and privilege to ensure that students receive instruction in Catholic doctrine and practice. This requires public witness to the way of Christ which shapes all aspects of an institution’s life, both inside and outside the classroom.”

“To all of you I say: bear witness to hope. Nourish your witness with prayer. Account for the hope that characterizes your lives (cf. 1 Pet 3:15) by living the truth which you propose to your students. Help them to know and love the One you have encountered, whose truth and goodness you have experienced with joy.”

Papal Visit Pilgrimage

April 17-20, 2008, 50 Catholics from the archdiocese – seven adults and 43 high school youth – made a pilgrimage to New York to see Pope Benedict XVI at a special youth event during his visit to the U.S. Our journey began with an early Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral before boarding the bus. We arrived twelve hours later at Sacred Heart High School in Yonkers, NY, where we stayed.

Friday, we arose early for sightseeing in New York City. We rode a train into Manhattan and took the subway into downtown. After mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, we visited Times Square, Ground Zero, St. Peter’s Church (the first Catholic Church in New York), the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Statue of Liberty and Rockefeller Center. It was a full and fun day!

Then we had the awesome opportunity to be in the presence of our Holy Father! We arrived at St. Joseph Seminary early on Saturday. We spent the day enjoying the music and dancing prior to the Pope’s arrival. Many different bands, musicians, and dancers performed throughout the day.

Upon his arrival, the Pope talked to us about four main topics: prayer, liturgy, charity, and vocations. He said we all need to take time each day to be in total silence to build our relationship with God. “There, is where you can hear God through a whisper,” he said. About liturgy, he stressed the importance of attending mass and participating in the Word of God. He challenged us to participate in acts of charity and not just when we are asked. He invited us all to pray about our own vocation – as married, single, consecrated or priest.

Filled with the word of our Holy Father, we headed back to Yonkers for a pizza party and a good night’s sleep. Early Sunday we packed up and headed home. We visited the beautiful replica of the Our Lady of Czestochowa Shrine in Doylestown, PA, where we celebrated Sunday Mass and had brunch.

By Kelsey Wilson, Junior, Cardinal Ritter High School, Indianapolis

Congratulations! Catholic High School Grads

During the month of May and June 762 seniors will graduate from the seven interparochial high schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis: Bishop Chatard, 183, Cardinal Ritter, 92; Roncalli, 274; Fr. Thomas Scecina Memorial, 68; Our Lady of Providence, 125; Seton Catholic, 4; and, Shawe Memorial, 16.

Approximately 559 additional students will graduate from three private high schools in the archdiocese: Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory, 192; Cathedral, 314; and Oldenburg Academy, 53. The fourth private high school, Providence Cristo Rey, has only freshman and sophomores this year.

Our latest graduation rate using the new 4-year cohort method was 97 percent with 94 percent of graduates continuing into some type of higher education.

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Archdiocese of Indianapolis Receives District Accreditation

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has received District Accreditation from AdvancED. This is a new unified accrediting organization incorporating the North Central Association with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to create the world’s largest educational accrediting community. It includes over 23,000 public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, the Department of Defense, and 65 countries (Latin America) with over 15 million students. AdvancED, is committed to advancing excellence in education by providing district accreditation and continuous improvement services.

This accreditation was based upon a visit by a team of educators to the archdiocese in February 2008. The review team commended the archdiocese for:

- Vision, leadership, and commitment;
- Use of data for continuous student learning and school improvement;
- Quality professional development;
- Transformative effects generated by Project EXCEED and TAP.

The review team recommended that the Archdiocese of Indianapolis:

- Develop strategies to recruit and retain effective teachers, principals, and central office administration;
- Create a long range, system-wide marketing/branding plan;
- Develop funding strategies.

This makes the archdiocese the first Catholic diocese in the North Central Association region to receive this distinction. Our schools will still keep their individual school accreditation. The difference is that the archdiocese will be able to direct and review the school’s improvement efforts with both with the Indiana Department of Education and AdvancED.

Symposium on Urban Ed Models in Indy

On March 28, 2008, the day after the National Catholic Educational Association Convention, Indianapolis was the location of an important inaugural event in the field of Catholic education. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis and Mother Theodore Catholic Academies sponsored a Symposium on Catholic Urban Education Models at the Indiana Convention Center.

This first (and hopefully, annual) symposium brought together 15 Catholic dioceses from throughout the United States to reflect on the words of the keynote speakers and to share their successes and challenges with others who are walking in their shoes. Superintendents and other administrators met in one group, while urban teachers met together in a second strand.

Rev. Ron Nuzzi, PhD, served as the keynote speaker for the symposium. Father Nuzzi is Director of Catholic Leadership Programs in the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) Program at the University of Notre Dame. While at the University of Dayton, he helped establish the Center for Catholic Education and the Lalanne teacher program for urban Catholic schools around the country. He was also director of the Catholic Leadership Program at Saint Louis University.

The afternoon speaker was Rev. Joseph M. O’Keefe, S.J., Dean of the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. He has published widely on issues related to urban Catholic schools. He co-authored Sustaining the Legacy: Inner-city Catholic Elementary Schools in the United States. Father O’Keefe also served as the director of the National Center for Research in Catholic Education.

The TCE Fund

The Total Catholic Education Endowment Fund supports the professional training, education and staff development of Catholic educators, catechetical leaders and youth ministers in the archdiocese. An average of $148,000 has been distributed in each of the last five years. The Fund supports Group Project Grants and Individual Forgivable Loans (i.e., for a Master’s Degree program). Deadlines are October 1 and March 1 each year. Details at www.archindy.org/ocf, Items of Interest, Forms, or contact Theresa Brydon at tbyrdon@archindy.org.
Celebrating Catholic School Values 2008

The Celebrating Catholic School Values: Scholarship and Career Achievement Awards dinner is our premier event each year for showcasing our Catholic Schools. Mark your calendars for Wednesday, November 5, 2008, 6:00 p.m. at the Indiana Convention Center, and plan now to bring your group to the celebration.

Each year we honor four Catholic school graduates with Career Achievement Awards. A fifth person receives the Community Service Award. Many of our recipients from past events tell us they consider their award the greatest honor of their life. They cherish it above all others because it represents the values they espouse every day in their lives as a result of their education in Catholic schools.

Since 1996 the event has featured nationally recognized keynote speakers, showcased the effectiveness of our schools, and honored some 65 servant-leaders for their values and accomplishments.

We are busy planning for the 2008 Celebrating Catholic School Values: Scholarship and Career Achievement Awards dinner with the Office of Stewardship and Development. We are excited to announce that this year’s keynote speaker will be popular author, Mary Higgins Clark. She is the writer of 27 suspense novels, three collections of short stories, a biographical novel and her own memoir. Her first children’s book, Ghost Ship was published in 2007, and she has co-authored four additional novels with her daughter. Her newest suspense novel, Where Are You Now? just hit the bookstores in April. Active in Catholic affairs, she is a Dame of the Order of Gregory the Great, a papal honor. She is also a Dame of Malta and a Lady of the Holy Sepulcher among her many other Church and secular honors. She is an advocate of and participant in literacy programs.

Corporate, foundation, parish, school, agency and individual investments in our mission through this event have totaled $3.86 million to aid our most needy elementary and high school students in southern and central Indiana. This spring, over $200,000 in assistance will be distributed from the extremely successful 2007 event.

Please address questions to Joe Peters at the Office of Catholic Education, jpetersons@archindy.org, 236-1437 or (800)382-9836, ext. 1430, or Rosemary O’Brien in the Office of Stewardship and Development, robrien@archindy.org, 236-1568 or (800) 382-9836, ext. 1568.

Guidelines for Sexuality Education in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to be revised

For the past 14 years in the Office of Catholic Education (OCE) my work has promoted the beauty of our Church’s teaching on chastity and sexuality. Thousands of high school students have presented the chastity program called “A Promise to Keep” (APTK) to tens of thousands of younger adolescents. Over the years, APTK has received many accolades and program effectiveness has been assessed. But, the success of APTK lies in the witness of peer mentors as positive role models who publicly proclaim their personal commitment to live chaste lifestyles.

Archbishop Buechlein served as Chair of the U.S. Bishops Committee on Catechesis that developed the “Conformity List,” which, among other things, provides direction for sexuality resources. Early this year, the Bishops ratified new guidelines for Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living. These guidelines were designed for publishers, but they can also provide direction for the faith formation of God’s people.

Between 1979 and 1984, Pope John Paul II gave a series of 129 lectures now published as the Theology of the Body. These writings explain the Church’s teaching on sexuality in a new language. The writings propose a vision of love and life that resonates with teens and adults in a profound and positive way. I have witnessed first-hand the excitement of both youth and adults when they begin to understand the depths of authentic love as described by the Holy Father.

We are currently revising the archdiocesan Guidelines for Sexuality Education so this document will better reflect the language of the Theology of the Body. The Bishops’ Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living will also be included as an appendix and all sexuality resources will be recommended from the Conformity List.

Faith must be integrated into every aspect of life. If we are to respond to the challenges facing our families, it is important to help students and families grow in knowledge and understanding of our Church’s teaching on sexuality and what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God. The revised guidelines will assist parishes and schools to integrate the Church’s teaching on creation into all aspects of education and faith formation.

~ Margaret Hendricks, Coordinator, A Promise to Keep ~ mhendricks@archindy.org

New Article 7 Helps Catholic School Kids

Article 7, Indiana’s new special education rule, has been sent to the Indiana State Board of Education for final approval. The new rule requires some level of service for any Indiana non-public school student who has been identified with a special education need. Article 7 also provides for Service Plans for all eligible non-public school students and strengthens the ability of our principals to negotiate for special education services for our students. Several schools in the archdiocese have already used the provisions of the new law and rule to challenge some decisions that have been made about services to students by their local educational agencies (public school districts). Associate Director of Schools, Kathy Mears, was on the state task force that recommended the new rule and has been assisting our schools in receiving the services they have a right to receive. In most of these cases, archdiocesan students and schools have prevailed, and are now receiving better services. Catholic schools in the archdiocese serve approximately 2400 students with special needs (about 10 percent of our students) in all categories of disability. Our schools continue to strive to help all students reach their potential through a variety of instructional strategies and accommodations. The Office of Catholic Education will persist in our efforts to work with the Indiana Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Learners, and the LEAs to increase benefits for our students. Contact Kathy Mears, kmears@archindy.org.
This year’s Archdiocesan High School Youth Rally was called “Infinite,” for our Infinite God who always takes care of us. This was one of the best youth rallies, yet. Having both attended and also helped work at a rally, working at one is more strenuous, and more fun. It took lots of planning and hard work to put this rally together, but in the end, it turned out better than expected. We had more teens turn out for this rally than any previous one.

Our keynote speaker was Steve Angrisano. He is one of the best known Catholic singers and storytellers and one of the best speakers I have ever heard. The youth seemed to really look up to him and paid close attention. It truly showed how the youth of the archdiocese really want to learn more about our faith and want to be a part of it. To be in the presence of someone with that much faith was very inspirational.

There were also breakout sessions where teens could go and listen to other Catholics speak about aspects of the Catholic faith, like the session about exorcisms.

We also celebrated mass together and, as a server, I looked out to see the whole church packed with youth and felt awestruck.

This event was an awesome chance for teens to spend some time with God, worship Him, and thank Him for whatever He has done in our lives. It also gave us the chance to spend time and share experiences with other Catholics from all over the archdiocese. This is ultimately good, because sometimes Catholics forget that their faith is bigger than their parish alone. A High School Youth Rally would be a great experience for anybody who wants to feel unity with Christ and with their fellow teens.

By Kirk Meyers, Annunciation Church, Brazil

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LOCAL AWARDS AT NCEA INDY 2008

We are very proud of the following national awardees from Indiana:

- **F. Sadlier Dinger Award**, William H. Sadlier, Inc.
  Annette “Mickey” Lentz
  Executive Director, Catholic Education and Faith Formation

- **Catholic Identity Awards From William H. Sadlier, Inc.**
  Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, OSB
  Mr. and Mrs. Jim Morris, Indianapolis
  St. Mary School, North Vernon
  St. Joan of Arc Parish, Indianapolis
  Guardian Angels Guild, Indianapolis

- **NCEA Sister Miriam Joseph Farrell Distinguished Teacher**
  Susan McGregor, Science Teacher,
  St. Simon the Apostle School, Indianapolis

- **NCEA Department of Secondary Schools Award**
  Jo Hoy, Principal
  Cardinal Ritter High School, Indianapolis

- **NCEA Outstanding Board Awards**
  St. Luke School Commission, Indianapolis
  Our Lady of Providence High School Board of Trustees, Clarksville

- **NPCD Mustard Seed Award**
  Ann G. Northam, Director of Religious Education
  St. Augustine & Sacred Heart Parishes, Jeffersonville

- **NCEA Special Educational Choice Award**
  The Educational CHOICE Charitable Trust
  Robert Hoy, Executive Director, Indianapolis

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School Safety Planning Progress

School safety is an ever present concern. We know that, in general, our Catholic schools are safe. All have good emergency plans in place. But, there is no question that safety and security concerns have risen in the past few years. Our schools exist in the “real world” with all of its dangers and we must be prepared for any emergency.

The Indiana Department of Education has provided both public and non-public schools in Indiana with state-of-the art “all-hazards” safety planning templates (on CD-Rom) with training from Jane’s/Safe Haven, Inc. These are designed by school safety experts to be as comprehensive as possible, but fully adaptable to local needs, and would cost over $10,000 to purchase. Local planning is based on an extensive “Tactical Site Survey,” and covers four phases of safety planning: Prevention and Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery.

So far some 73 people in teams from 28 schools have attended the training workshop offered by OCE. Some 43 of these people have taken expanded training and can assist other schools by facilitating a Tactical Site Survey. All schools will be required to complete the process with the goal of having customized state-of-the art Emergency Operations Plans in every school by the end of 2009. Contact Joe Peters for information at jpesters@archindy.org.
Thoughts from Mickey

Once again we end another program year, and what a year it has been!!! I am sure you can say the same. When all is said and done, we accomplished a great deal this year in our schools, parish faith formation and youth ministry programs as well as the CYO and St. Mary’s Child Center.

There were two major events this year which certainly impacted my own life and my educational journey – hosting the NCEA/NPCD Convention and the Papal visit. These were two very different opportunities with one common result — an even stronger commitment to Catholic education in its broadest sense. I have a great feeling of peace and contentment in having chosen this ministry.

I am so proud of our education and faith formation leaders, teachers, volunteers, parents and students as well as our archdiocesan Church and the Indianapolis community, for seizing the opportunity to host NCEA Indy 2008 and meeting the challenge so successfully. Together with our corporate sponsors, we hosted major local events, organized beautiful liturgies and provided genuine Hoosier hospitality for 7000 guests. Please see my formal thank-you letter in the May 7 Criterion or online at www.archindy.org/ncea/.

Meeting Pope Benedict XVI was an awesome experience for me. I felt affirmed, inspired, holy, and at peace with his words and his presence. I loved being there, feeling the synergy surrounding us as we listened to his message. He brought joy and happiness to my life in so many ways. I represented all of you and I have tried to convey his message to as many of you as I could — the Holy Father realizes the sacrifices we all make to deliver the very best to our youth.

During these busy days, please take time to reflect on your commitment to Catholic education and faith formation, and to thank God for leading you throughout the year. And, be sure to find time to refresh and renew yourselves both spiritually and physically this summer.

God bless.

Mickey

Office of Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Indianapolis
P.O. Box 1410
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410