



Quality education in a faith based environment

Contact: Meredith LaCorte
908-889-1600

Union Catholic and Congregation Beth Israel Participate in Student to Student Dialogue

Scotch Plains, NJ, December 10, 2009 – On December 3rd twenty-five junior students from Union Catholic High School visited Congregation Beth Israel in Scotch Plains to meet, share a meal and engage in dialogue with students from Beth Israel. Upon arrival students participated in a “human bingo” game encouraging a question and answer session among participants. “It was a fun way to get to know the students from Congregation Beth Israel” stated UC student Erin Farley, a member of St. James Parish in Woodbridge, NJ. She added, “We were all surprised that we knew so many of the answers in the ‘human bingo’ game and that we shared a lot of common interests.”

The agenda for the student to student dialogue was initiated by Allan F. Wright, a teacher at Union Catholic and member of the Archdiocesan Commission for Inter-religious Affairs and Betty Lynn Golub, Director of Religious Education at the Conservative Jewish Synagogue. Both Wright and Golub saw the need for a program which would allow students of different faiths to come together to get to know each other and allow them a chance to discuss their faith in a respectful environment.

As part of the program, students met with Rabbi George Nudell who pointed out basic beliefs of Judaism and identified items found in a synagogue and their significance to Jewish people. Rabbi Nudell also invited the Union Catholic students to view the Torah Scroll. Allan Wright then offered a brief explanation of the basic Catholic beliefs and the importance of the person of Jesus and the Eucharist in Catholic worship.

Both groups of students had a number of questions for both the Rabbi and Wright. Michael Marciano of St. Michaels in Union asked about the importance of the Hebrew language. “Whether you are in Israel, Spain, Russia or the U.S.A., those of the Jewish faith can speak to each other in the Hebrew language and that makes us feel like family,” replied Rabbi Nudell. When asked about why there is so much kneeling in a Catholic service, Wright stated, “Body language can reflect what is in the heart. When a Catholic is in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, it is only right that our body conform to our belief. Jesus knelt to pray, as did St. Paul, so we have the New Testament and the tradition of the Church to guide us in liturgical worship.”

It is the hope of both Wright and Golub that this experience can be replicated by other Catholic and Jewish schools to foster better understanding and lasting friendships among each community.

Pictured left to right: Union Catholic students Kyle Cieri of Union and Joe Landry of North Plainfield with Carly Grossman and Seth Schlisserman of Congregation Beth Israel.

