

Conference hopping...

By Karen Lynn Krugh

We kept our Catholic League national office special assistant busy this month. She attended two conferences of interest to Catholic League members. Here's her report.

October was conference month. In an attempt to keep up on current Catholic issues, including the new Catechism and current perspectives on Catholic philosophy, I spent several days at two very different conferences.

On October 15, the Wethersfield Institute of the Homeland Foundation sponsored a conference with the theme: "Christianity and Western Civilization – Christopher Dawson's Insight: Can A Culture Survive the Loss of its Religious Roots?" Dawson, a Catholic, was an early twentieth-century English philosopher.

Each of the speakers analyzed aspects of Dawson's philosophy under the titles "Religion as the Root of Culture," "Nature and Grace in the Character of Western Man," "Technology and The Demise of Liberalism in our Culture," and "Secularization and Sacralization," and "The Perduring Subversions of Western Culture and Christianity's Reaction." I learned a great deal about Dawson's philosophy and its application and relevance in present-day society.

In late October, I traveled to the Apostolate for Family Consecration's "Totus Tuus: Consecrate Them in Truth" Conference held in Pittsburgh, October 22-24. The featured speaker of the conference was Frances Cardinal Arinze of the Roman Curia. A native of Nigeria, Cardinal Arinze was a delightful speaker whose wit rivals that of the Holy Father. A Marian conference with approximately 4,000 in attendance, the focus was on total consecration to Mary as advocated in the writings of St. Louis de Montfort and the "Be Not Afraid Holy

Hours," videos produced by the Apostolate. The conference also celebrated the 15th anniversary of the solemn inauguration of Pope John Paul II, October 22, 1993. The Pope's motto, *Totus Tuus*, or Totally Yours, was taken as the theme for the conference to emphasize total devotion to the Blessed Mother.

The impressive list of speakers included the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio Archbishop Agostino Cacciavillan, Papal ambassador to the United States, who spoke and celebrated Mass; two area Bishops – Bishop Donald W. Wuerl, Diocese of Pittsburgh, and Bishop Gilbert Sheldon, Diocese of Steubenville; several Monsignors, including our neighbor Msgr. Woolsey, Director of Family Life/Respect Life office of the Archdiocese of New York, Msgr. Luciano Guerra, Rector of our Lady of Fatima Shrine, Portugal, and Msgr. Roger Fays, Vicar General of the Diocese of Steubenville. Other speakers included Scott Hahn, a convert to Catholicism and professor of theology at Franciscan University of Steubenville; Dr. Mark Miravalle, professor of theology and Mariology at Franciscan; and Apostolate co-founders

Jerry and Owen Coniker. Mass was celebrated every day, with Sunday's Mass concelebrated by the Archbishop Cacciavillan, Cardinal Arinze, and other Monsignors and Fathers. Talk about a High Mass!

Though the English version of the new Catechism had not yet been approved by the Vatican, several of those present had read the original French version. Naturally, as this is the first new Catechism since that which followed the 16th century's Council of Trent, much of the weekend's discussion centered around its content. In this area, Cardinal Arinze was the expert. During a lunch-and dinner-time panel discussion, questions regarding the need for a new catechism, the changes between the old and the new, and the ease of use of the new catechism were answered. Other talks dealt with imitating, not just admiring, Pope John Paul; the unifying power of the new catechism; the need for an all out evangelization; and

evangelizing through the media.

The weekend conference left me with a much greater understanding of the church's teachings on the Blessed Mother and an increased enthusiasm for the new Catechism. In fact, I've been so impressed by the speakers at these and other recent conferences that I've begun looking into graduate theology programs for myself.

One closing thought – You know that old joke about Catholics rushing to exit the church parking lot after Mass? Well, the same thing happens when you announce to several thousand Catholics that *Veritatis Splendor* has just arrived and copies are limited ... Of course, I did manage to secure myself a copy!