

St. Clare's cited for its embrace of technology

Education group chooses parish's program as one of the best in the nation

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

St. Clare's R.C. Church in Great Kills has been chosen by the National Catholic Educational Association and Boston College as a Selected Program for Improving Catholic Education (S.P.I.C.E.).

Only six programs in the country have been chosen for the 2007 focus area, "Kids at the Edge: The Perils and Potentials of the Media and Technology in Catholic Education."

The citation means that St. Clare's commitment to incorporating technology and media into its educational, catechetical, service and liturgical ministries makes it a model for parishes and schools throughout the United States.

Members of St. Clare's will make presentations at Boston College's "Conversations in Excellence" symposium in June, and at the National Catholic Education Association's convention in Indianapolis in March 2008. St. Clare's has sponsored a number of events addressing the concerns of protecting children. Both the school and religious education program have held informational sessions for parents and children, educating them about social networking sites, cyber-bullying and Internet misuse.



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Part of the Catholic education team at St. Clare's R.C. Church in Great Kills gather for a portrait. They are, from left, parish school Principal Jo Rossicone, Youth Minister John Gillen, Monsignor Joseph Murphy, pastor, and Adult Faith Formation Director Fred Herron.

While remaining cognizant of the dangers of the Internet, the parish also takes to heart the late Pope John Paul II's call to see it as "a summons to the great adventure of using its potential to proclaim the Gospel message."

The parish maintains an extensive Web site, www.StClareSI.com; uses e-mail and telephones to send out daily reflections by and for parishioners; provides links to online courses for adults and

families, and offers monthly Webcasts and discussions on topics of interest to today's Catholics.

The confirmation program incorporated Internet technology in innovative ways, and students in the Robotics program develop high-tech skills to use in the service of children with special needs or to address environmental issues.

"The Internet is an important tool for evangelization,"

said Fred Herron, director of adult faith formation for the parish. "It helps us to connect our parishioners to the church and the church to them."

The parish's focus on technology was prompted by its pastor, Monsignor Joseph Murphy.

"I challenged our staff to make every effort to employ information technologies to support the full and active participation of all our parishioners in the life of this parish," the monsignor said.

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