

# Annapolis series taps in political passions, while educating

As people stumbled in and out of busy Annapolis watering holes on a chilly Oct. 7 evening, a group of young adults sat on the second floor of the Dock Street Bar and Grill and just wanted to talk Catholic theology and politics.

It was part of a weekly Tuesday gathering at the waterside haunt called “Theology on Tap,” where burgers, fries and a beer are served with a side of election preparation. The church’s stances on hot-button issues like marriage, health care, war, immigration and abortion are explained by national and local leaders – even as they contend with the reggae music emanating from the first floor and the sounds of inebriated revelers outside.

“It’s kind of a different spin on issues that you’re not going to get elsewhere,” Lori Krause said at an Oct. 7 discussion by United States Naval Academy chaplain Father Aidan Logan on what is a justified war. “There are a lot of hard topics, so just to hear someone in person talk about it, you get a better feel for the issues.”

Ms. Krause, 22, has become a regular at the gatherings, which will conclude Oct. 21 with an abortion talk by Dr. Nancy Paltell of the Maryland Catholic Conference and Oct. 28 with a Faithful Citizenship address by Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, the eastern vicar of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Bishop Rozanski’s speech will dovetail into the Nov. 4 national and local elections.

“Our faith is so deep it has to permeate every part of our being,” Bishop Rozanski said. “We know those who are elected to office chart the course and shape our public policy. We seriously take into consideration how we vote, who we vote for and who represents our values and beliefs.”

Seven different Anne Arundel County parishes joined with St. Mary’s of Annapolis’s Young Adult Ministry to co-sponsor the relaxed seminars for people between the ages of 21 and 40. The “just war” discussion steered clear of the partisan talk which has gripped the country for the last seven years and lacked arguments about the

merits of the surge of troops in Iraq. Instead, it was a civil discussion of war as a last resort.

"I guess I thought more in black and white (before Theology on Tap)," St. Mary's parishioner Joe Mihm, 28, said. "These are great sessions about what the church teaches."

Julie Varner, a member of St. Mary's and the director of social concerns for the Maryland Catholic Conference, said the attendees bring their passions to the table each week.

"We've heard some good questions that are probably indicative of where someone is coming from on a position," she said, "but really it's been very open-minded and very fair."