

'Good' overflows at national youth meeting

How does one express in just a few hundred words the wonderful richness of the National Catholic Youth Conference in St. Louis last week? I know I cannot do it justice. There were too many stories, festive celebrations and incredible kids to do so.

The best I can do here is to give you some feel for the event from my perspective and then hope that you will hear of it from one or another of our delegates when they return to their parishes in all parts of the diocese. (See related story, page 6.)

Let me give you some sense of my experience through the following notes:

1. Our large delegation was also a very spirited one. I think that was due to the spontaneity of our teens and the excitement of the event. I have a sense that their happiness and ease find their roots in a confidence born of your support for them.

I mean things like supporting, as you did so generously, the fundraising efforts that made it possible for most to come here. But I refer also to your continued efforts to encourage our young friends to participate as fully as possible in the life of the parish. That encouragement means the world to them and does more than you can imagine to strengthen our church for today and tomorrow. So let me encourage you once again to work toward an environment in all of our parish communities that clearly says we value the ideas of the young, we rejoice and need their gifts, we want to share our own gifts with them.

2. The 20 or so bishops who attended NCYC spent the bulk of our time at a Conference on Sacred Scripture with 200 youth delegates drawn from the larger con-

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

vention. Four came from our diocese: Grace Dudek of St. Pius X, Chili; Michele Gamma-riello, of St. Patrick, Macedon; Jen LaFlam of St. Anne/St. Gregory, Palmyra/Marion; and Brian King of St. Rita's, Webster.

I went to the event with the certain knowledge, based on past experience, that I would come away from it enriched by the teens. I was. For some of them their familiarity with Scripture is limited to what they have heard at the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy. Others regularly pray the Scriptures because they were introduced to that practice by their families or youth groups, or simply because some personal grace drew them in that direction.

Whatever those differences among them, I noticed these things that they held in common: familiarity with prayer and an openness to God; a thirst to know the Scriptures more deeply; and, a willingness to learn from those who are older than they are.

When the two adults and seven teens at my table shared our experiences of how the Scriptures challenge us and give us strength to practice the faith in daily life, I was amazed that the commonality of themes — the call to act justly, relationships, suffering, difficult

choices, values to be cherished.

The hours I spent in the conference encouraged me that we can reasonably hope to provide similar forums in our parish communities — occasions in which there is inter-generational prayer and sharing of our stories of faith. I certainly hope that we can because it is an incredibly rich experience.

3. The experience puts me in touch with two biblical images — the sower and the seed, and the reference to one planting, another sowing, another tending, etc.

Who knows what will happen in the lives of the kids who came to St. Louis because they came here and because you helped them to do so? And who knows what influence for good they might exert in the lives of others because of all of this?

I certainly don't. But I do have a deep conviction that the NCYC will make a difference in the lives of most. It may be because something new is begun. It may be because some quiet growth already stirring in them is taken to a deeper level. When people take on their life experiences in a spirit of faith — as our kids did in this case — good things always happen in them. And our young friends are already wise enough to know that such gifts are never fully received until they are shared with others.

I write these words on the Sunday before Thanksgiving on the way home from St. Louis. I'll be thanking God for many good gifts this week. High among them will be to have had this privileged time with such beautiful young people. Also there will be your loving encouragement of their growth.

Happy Thanksgiving and Peace to all.

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The Monthly Prayer Request For Priests

THE BEAUTIFUL HANDS OF A PRIEST

We need them in life's early morning,
We need them again at its close;
We feel their warm clasp of true friendship,
We seek them when tasting life's woes;

And when we are taking life's partner,
Other hands may prepare us a feast,
But the hands that will bless and unite us
Are the beautiful hands of a priest.

When we come to this world, we are sinful,
The greatest as well as the least;
And the hands that make us pure as angels,
Are the beautiful hands of a priest.

And when we are tempted and wander
To pathways of shame and of sin,
'Tis the hand of a priest will absolve us
Not, once, but again and again.

God bless them and keep them all holy,
For the Host which their fingers caress;
When can a poor sinner do better
Than ask Him to guide them and bless?

When the hour of death comes upon us,
May our courage and strength be increased
By seeing raised over us in blessing
The beautiful hands of a priest.

Prayer Suggestions: Mass, Rosary, Fasting, Day Offering, Eucharistic Adoration, Offering Sufferings, Divine Mercy Chaplet

December, 1999

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			Revs. 1 Frederick F. Eisemann	2 Lewis E. Brown, CDR	3 John F. Gagnier	4 Bishop Matthew H. Clark
5 Pope John Paul II	6 Sabbatical Priests	7 Robert C. MacNamara	8 Richard J. Shatzel	9 Francis G. Fusarc	10 Donald McCarthy, C.S.R.	11 John A. DeSocio
12 John L. Hedges	13 Daniel T. McMullin	14 Ronald P. Harley	15 John L. O'Connor	16 Charles E. Curran	17 Joseph M. McNamara	18 James F. Slattery
19 Michael R. Borwn	20 Joseph T. Gaynor	21 Richard M. Murphy	22 Bartholomew J. O'Brien	23 Paul R. Schnacky	24 Lance M. Gonyo	25 William McCusker, SJ
26 Bernard T. Celso	27 David M. Murphy	28 Daniel F. Holland	29 Vocations	30 Seminarians	31	

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