

## REVERENCE AT THE 2016 EASTERN DIOCESE YOUTH RETREAT



“Reverence: Walk His Way” was the theme of the 43<sup>rd</sup> annual Eastern Diocese Youth Retreat. Fifty youth, adults and clergy from 10 parishes across the Eastern Diocese gathered at Camp Howe in Goshen, Massachusetts during the first cool and comfortable week of the summer.

The retreat began with a prayer service on Sunday, August 21, 2016. The theme for the retreat was again done in conjunction with the Year of Reverence across our entire Polish National Catholic Church. An opening prayer service began the retreat where the American, PNCC and youth retreat flags were raised. Everyone gathered in the rec hall for the opening session led by our diocesan youth chaplain, Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich (this was his 20th retreat as youth chaplain). After a quick overview of the week and a review of the camp rules, Joanne Oliveira led the group with some fun and exciting Ice Breakers. The youth had many laughs as each told the group some fun and exciting facts about themselves and their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. After our youth spent time going to private confession they enjoyed Miracle from Heaven at our camp move night. Fr. Calvo led the youth in evening prayer. An incredible storm passed through where inches of rain fell and even a tree across the road into camp – but all survived the deluge and then enjoyed the gorgeous comfortable weather the rest of the week.





Monday began with the celebration of Holy Mass celebrated by Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich. During the Mass + Jason Fairclough was remembered in prayer (it was thirteen years ago that he lost his life as he traveled home from our youth retreat). During a short sermon – Fr. Sr. Rob reminded the youth that “they may be the only Jesus some people see” so they should live accordingly and not miss an opportunity to share Jesus with others. After breakfast, the first session on our retreat theme was given by Fr. Randy Calvo. His session was Reverence for Creation and he stressed the beauty of our earth created by God and reminded the youth that we are all stewards of this great planet not just for ourselves but for future generations. The session was followed

by a nature hike in God’s creation led by Bill Girardi - a member of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in South Deerfield. Bill did a great job and after Bishop Paul asked about a certain type of tree – Bill on his way home spotted one and got a branch from it that was later presented to Bishop Paul.

Fr. Robert Fredrickson (St. Peter) led his session on Reverence and Prayer. St. Peter dressed in modern day fishing garb and with a huge net spoke to the youth about how he was a fisher of men and that it was important for them to pray often and live reverent lives. He spoke about some of his times spent with Jesus and ended up with a net full of fish to share with all present – they were Swedish and delicious.

Following the session, the youth were broken up into groups to brainstorm about different aspects of Reverence. On their understanding of Reverence itself they came up with respect, admiration, appreciation, homage, devotion, honor, high esteem, high regard, worship, adored and loved.

Reverence of Creation – don’t pollute, don’t waste resources recycle and respect nature were a few; Reverence of God – go to Mass, pray often, consider God’s will with every action and word, be thankful for all God has made and given you. Reverence of Church – turn off phone, eliminate distractions, being an acolyte, helping with church projects, pay attention during Mass and worship, go to Church every Sunday and help to keep the Church clean.



Reverence of Family – go to Church as a family, listen to your parents, be nice to siblings, respect your parents, visit grandparents, take care of each other, visit sick family members, go to family members’ special events and respect family pets. Reverence of Others – appreciate what others do for you, respect others differences and be respectful of them, think of and help others and listen to what others have to say. Reverence of Yourself – have positive thoughts, find your way to God, avoid toxic situations, worship God to help find self-respect,



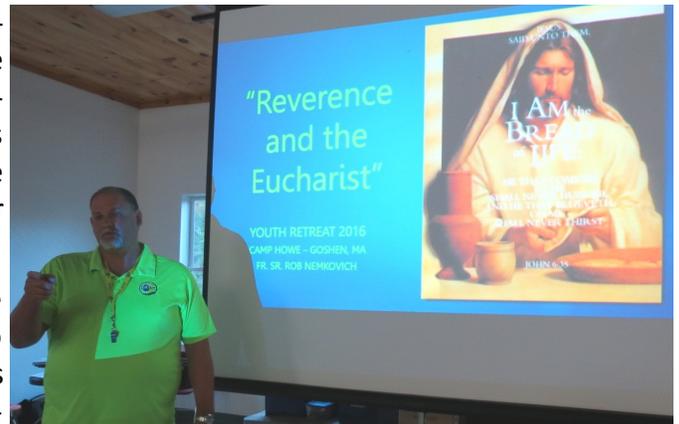
not swearing to yourself, being nice to people, don't be afraid to be who you are, trust in God's plans for you, don't change who you are for other people, develop a relationship with God and find a wise person to mentor you.



After our camp lunch the participants enjoyed an

afternoon of free time. There were many who ventured up the 45-foot-high climbing wall – great job to so many who made the wall look like climbing a ladder. There was time for swimming, kayaking, archery, arts and crafts, four-square and much more. The famous Country Store was opened for business and the youth enjoyed their snacks as always!

Fr. Sr. Rob gave the evening session on Reverence for the Eucharist. He reminded the youth about the importance of the Eucharist and the importance of the Holy Mass for us. Accepting that great gift that Christ gave to His Church – His presence in the Eucharist. Fr. Sr. Rob spoke about how the youth and all should be reverent during the Mass and other liturgical services when giving worship to God.



The youth then enjoyed watching "A Re-enactment of the life of Bishop Francis Hodur" that was presented during Convo 2016 held just a month prior to our retreat. A beautiful job as some of our youth who played various roles in the re-enactment got to see it for the first time. It is available on

the PNCC Future Direction YouTube page. Following this presentation Fr. Sr. Rob presented etched Thank You glasses to members of the Convo 2016 present who played such an important role in having such a successful Convo.

Then presentations were made to Eric Nemkovich – Convo President and Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich – Convo Chaplain.



The campers were then divided into four groups where four prayers blankets were made. Fr. Sr. Rob blessed the hands of all prior to beginning to cut and tie the blankets. One will be given to Fr. Jan Wilczek of the Eastern Diocese and a second to Bishop Thomas Gnat – Bishop emeritus of the Eastern Diocese. During the retreat we prayed at the Masses for both Bishop Gnat and Fr. Wilczek. The other two blankets will be given to people in need of our prayer during their sicknesses. Thanks to Fr. Robert Fredrickson, Joanne Oliveira, Brenda Richard, Donna Sittard and Mary Tudryn for leading these the groups.

Fr. Sr. Joe Soltysiak led the group in evening prayer and the younger campers were off to bed while the older ones gathered around the camp fire and spent some time star gazing on a crystal clear evening up in the Berkshire mountains.

Tuesday began with Fr. Robert Fredrickson leading the morning prayer service during which the youth asked our Lord for help in their daily lives when facing the many choices they have to make with peer pressure they face. Community Service was the morning effort as our youth gave back to 4-H Camp Howe. They cleared brush from around the four square area, and then after taping the outline of the 4 square box – painted it a neon yellow-green.



The youth gave of their time to give back to the camp for all the camp has done for our diocesan youth program through the years. After the second coat was applied the youth enjoyed many team building activities teaching them the importance of depending on one another and being there for others.



After lunch where Fr. Calvo almost broke the corn dog eating camp record, our youth were able to go out in God's creation and enjoy swimming, kayaking, archery, arts and crafts, the ropes course, four-square and

more.

Fr. Michal Gitner presented the next session on Reverence for yourself as a Child of God. Fr. Michal used the Mercy Me song "Flawless" to begin his session and focused on these lyrics with our Catholic understanding – he stressed the importance of the sacrament of reconciliation to keep us on the right path with our God. Here is a portion of the song: "No matter the bumps, no matter the bruises, no matter the scars, still the truth is the cross has made – the cross has made you flawless."

The youth along with our great Camp Howe staff then enjoyed a trip for ice cream sponsored by PNU District 3. The small little country side ice cream stand was taken over in a nice way by our campers and not a drop of delicious ice cream was wasted. The youth gathered in the rec hall to make "Reverence Remembrance" booklet where they





wrote the various aspects of Reverence mentioned above and put these together in a booklet/journal for future reference as they returned home to another upcoming school year so they will live reverently walking Jesus' way. Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich led the annual candlelight service under the starlight. All could feel the presence and power of the Spirit during this sacred time. After our prayer and meditation, the youth enjoyed time at the campfire and

there was some star gazing as well. The bears (Mother and her cub) decided to come by and check out our candle light service and then hopped into the dumpster for an evening snack.

Wednesday began with Fr. Sr. Joe Soltysiak celebrating Morning Prayer. At the conclusion of the service Bishop Paul blessed and said a prayer over the prayer blankets. Those that could put their hands on the blankets did and then everyone else touched a shoulder of those in front – what a powerful moment and prayer. After a bacon packed breakfast our next presentation was on Reverence and the Christian Family. Fr. Sr. Soltysiak did a great job showing how reverence can be done in a proper way in the Christian Family. He used a series of 3 skits with the Goofus and Gallant families; one at dinner, one going to Church and one on vacation. After each skit he had the kids give examples of what was



good and reverent and what they could do as they returned home to their families after this retreat.

It was then off to Berkshire East for a few rides down the exhilarating mountain coaster – most youth and adults enjoyed a gorgeous ride through the mountains. The coaster took them to the top of the mountain and then down at speeds close to 35 mph. All in the vicinity could hear Fr. Calvo's and Donna's praying to God that they would survive this ordeal – we enjoyed the Bishop saying that he would never again follow Fr. Sr. Joe down the coaster because the good senior went a bit too slow. The afternoon was spent in free time where the high ropes, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, archery, arts and crafts and foursquare were bustling. Our campers again assisted the Camp Howe Staff by bringing in the docks for the season—a sure sign the fall is finally coning :)

After Pizza and a smorgasbord supper, Fr. Henryk Wos gave the

final session of Youth Retreat 2016: Being Reverent to God and Church in today's world. Fr. Henryk began with a great video and song the kids knew well: Our God is an Awesome God. He then began with God's creation to Jesus and the Church giving an overview of how we should live today following Jesus in a reverent and respectful way.

Our Reverence groups then gathered for the video presentations on our Retreat and PNCC theme of Reverence. The six groups did a great job of showing reverence in different aspects of their Christian Living and perhaps some of these will be shown in the upcoming presentation on the Christian Family by Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky on October 5<sup>th</sup>.

On the final evening of camp we had our annual Bonn fire. The Camp Howe staff did a great job with skits, songs and stories. The Moose and other camp songs were quite a hit. S'mores and popcorn popped on the camp fire were then enjoyed with the Camp Howe Staff. Then a Chaperone - led even more "Repeat after Me songs" from years past. What a great job by Eric. The youth also spelled out Reverence with their flashlights - so cool.

Bishop Paul Sobiechowski began our final day of retreat celebrating the Mass of the Day. Bishop in his sermon asked the youth to take the important teachings they learned this past week and apply them in their lives. He told them if they could survive the bears at camp this past week then they could take what they have learned this week and share it with others.

We thank Mike Sittard for playing the keyboard for our retreat Masses - a job very well done. At our last meal at Camp Howe for 2017 the participants sang their eleventh and final grace of the retreat to the tune of the doxology: "For food and health and happy days - accept our gratitude and praise - in serving others Lord may we - repay our debt of love to Thee. Amen."



After camp clean up, everyone gathered for our closing session, led by our youth chaplain, Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich. He thanked all the youth for attending, all the chaperones, session presenters and activity leaders for their work for the youth of our diocese. He asked the youth to live reverently: walking in the way of Jesus. The 2016 Camp Spirit Award (that is given each year in memory of Jason Fairclough remembering his camp spirit and looking out for others) was awarded to Karina Tenus from St. Casimir's Parish in Lowell, MA. Her name will be added to the plaque and will be remembered at future Youth Re-

treats. Thanks are given to Bishop Paul, the session presenters, our activity coordinator Joanne Oliveira with help from Mike and Lauren Sittard and Eric Nemkovich. our country store manager – Brenda Richard, Lauren Sittard as camp nurse, to Janice Dzialo for a great job on the backdrop, to our Eastern Diocese Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament Society for their generous annual donation to our retreat and to all the chaperones who gave of their time to make Youth Retreat 2016 an outstanding success! The retreat ended with a prayer service and the lowering of the American, PNCC and Eastern Diocese Youth Retreat flags. We are excited to announce that Youth Retreat 2017 will again be held at Camp Howe in Goshen, Massachusetts beginning on Sunday August 20, 2017. The countdown on a few cell phones to Youth Retreat next year has already begun!

As a reminder to our Youth - our next diocesan youth event will be our Winter Youth Gathering on Thursday, December 29<sup>th</sup> at St. Joseph's Parish in Westfield, MA. God bless and we look forward to seeing you all again at our 44<sup>th</sup> annual Diocesan Youth Retreat beginning next August 20<sup>th</sup>. Walk humbly and reverently with our God.

Reverently in Christ,

*Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich*

