

“FAITH AND FAMILY” AT THE 2018 EASTERN DIOCESE YOUTH RETREAT

“Faith and Family” was the theme of the 45th annual Eastern Diocese Youth Retreat. Nearly 50 youth, adults and clergy from eleven parishes across the Eastern Diocese gathered at Camp Howe in Goshen, Massachusetts for a wonderful, inspiring, and faith filled retreat. We enjoyed beautiful cool crisp mountain air with very little humidity – another blessing after a hot and humid New England summer.



The retreat began with a prayer service on Sunday, August 19, 2018. The theme for the retreat was again done in conjunction with the Year of the Family across our entire Polish National Catholic Church. During the service 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. 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, their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and their families. A special Penitential Service for youth with the Sacrament of Penance was celebrated by Fr. Sr. Rob – the theme for the service was set with the opening song “Forgiveness” by Matthew West. All of the youth and some of the adults went to private confession during this appropriate time of the service. After giving out the 2018 Youth Retreat T-shirts our camp movie night featured

“The Ant Bully” and popcorn. This movie gave a great message not to bully and how if we all work together we can overcome. After evening prayer there was some time around the campfire and the card game “spoons”. The campers got to experience many creatures during the evening with several field mice looking for food and a few chipmunks finding their way into the cabins.





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 fifteen years ago that he lost his life as he traveled home from our youth retreat). During his sermon – Fr. Sr. Rob encouraged the youth to serve as an example to others by the way they live their faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. After breakfast with ample bacon, the first session on our retreat theme was given by Bishop Paul Sobiechowski on Joseph and his brothers. Bishop first spoke about his 7,733-mile vaca-

tion and his encounter with wild donkeys, then to the story of Joseph from the book of Genesis and how mean his brothers were to him yet God used him to help those brothers later on in life. Bishop taught the youth never to give up on God and to also see the bigger picture of being family. The first activity was led by Bob and Doreen Bradbury and Joanne Olivera. The youth created tiles – one with the Children’s Prayer from our PNCC Prayer Book and others with various images of the Holy Family. All had 2018 Eastern Diocese Youth Retreat on them serving as great mementos from the retreat.



Our second session was presented by Kathy Nemkovich on “Jesus on the family”. Kathy had Dylan come forward and list the five people he loved the most and then list them in order of importance. Kathy made the point that Jesus had to come first – even before Mom and Dad as our Lord said “My mother and my brothers and sisters are those who hear the Word of God and do it.” The participants were then broken up into groups and given some yarn to put together to make something to keep our bishop warm in the cool Goshen mountains because no one really wanted him wearing his Steelers jacket. The groups on their own could not do much but when it was all added together then a beautiful blanket was able to be made for our diocesan shepherd.



After our group picture with our 2018 Youth Retreat shirts (great job Paul Gorgol!) Joanne Oliveira led the group in our second activity. The youth were broken up into five groups and had to match popsicle sticks with various messages. One group was on Christian Values - some of these were: "I should always practice the "two commandments of love"; "Always say.... Yes to God"; "I should always bekind, respectful, honest and trustworthy"; "My role model should be.... Jesus". Another group had the Holy Family – some were "We honor Mary for....her obedience to God's will"; "Theotokos means....Mother of God"; "The Holy Family has given us.....a model of Family life". The third group was on Church Family "On Sundays and Holy Days....I should go to Mass"; "During Mass I should....listen to the Gospel and sermon to live as Jesus wants us to"; "Altar Servers say....Yes to God". Home was the theme for the fourth group – a couple of those matched up were "Pray to God.....by yourself and with your family Always!"; "Write little notes to....Mom and Dad thanking them for all they do"; "Before I go to bed....I say my prayers". The theme for the fifth group was Friends and School – a couple were: "I should treat everyone.....with kindness and consideration"; "When we are wronged....we should forgive each other's faults"; "Don't hurt....other peoples feelings". Then all the groups shared these values to live by based on our Faith in Jesus.



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! During the afternoon Prime Bishop Mikovsky arrived at our retreat and the excitement spread throughout the camp with amazing speed as our youth welcomed their Prime Bishop.

Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich gave the evening session on The Holy Family. He spoke to the youth about Jesus, Mary and Joseph and how they all said "Yes to God" by doing his Holy Will in their lives: God tells us that Jesus is His beloved Son at his baptism and at the Transfiguration and that we should "listen to him". Joseph listening to the angel to take Mary as his wife, Mary saying to God "Here I am the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said". The participants were reminded that our families should be modeled on the Holy Family. The presentation concluded with a beautiful song and video "The Holy Family" by Danielle Rose - this showed images of the Holy Family and of many Christian families throughout our world today. The song was then sung by our participants at the concluding retreat Mass of the Holy Family on Thursday.





Joanne led the group in a third activity where they were broken up into groups and had to put verse from the Holy Scriptures on the family into their own words: Colossians 3, John and others. For instance, Proverbs 6:20-23 the youth said “Your parents take care of you and are always with you. Don’t rebel against your parents. The Bible wants us listen to, be obedient and respectful of them.” The groups then shared their understanding of these important Scripture passages everyone.

Christian Olympics followed. Thanks to Joanne, Bob, Joanna and Brenda for leading these games of the 45th camp Olympiad: Chair basketball, Lemon roll, sack races, wheel barrow, dress up and others.

Fr. Adam Piekarszewski 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. Sr. Rob Nemkovich celebrating Holy Mass for Vocations. He spoke about the importance of service for all in the Church but in a special way for those men who are called to serve as priests and deacons. Vocations fliers were made available to our young men and boys.

Community Service was the next morning effort as our youth gave back to 4-H Camp Howe. They did some much needed clean up after several severe storms went through the camp the past couple of weeks. What a great job they did. The youth gave of their time, giving back to the camp for all the camp has done for our diocesan youth program through the past 24 years. Once finished the youth enjoyed many team building activities teaching them the importance of depending on one another and being there for others. Thanks to the great Camp Howe staff for teaching





such important lessons of working together and depending upon one another to accomplish a given task. Some great life skills for our youth.

After lunch our youth were able to go out in God's creation and enjoy swimming,

kayaking, archery, arts and crafts, the adventure ropes course, four-square and more.

Brenda Richard presented the next session on St. Paul and the Family. Brenda gave an overview on the life and missionary journeys of St. Paul. She focused on the passage from Colossians 3:12-17 as an example for us to always live our Christian lives in this manner. After it was off to Williamsburg and the Greenhouse Ice Cream stand where our Youth Retreat participants and the Camp Howe staff enjoyed Ice Cream and time in fellowship and fun. Thank You to District 3 of the Polish National Union of America for sponsoring our annual ice cream social during the retreat.



When we got back up the mountain to Camp Howe Joanne led the evening activity. The youth were broken up into two groups and played a word search game. The words were all based on St. Paul writings for how we are to live as family of



faith: kindness, patience, faith, obedience, respect, gratitude, forgiveness, trust, humility, gentleness, thankful, sharing, charity and compassion. Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich led the annual candlelight service and with a weather front coming though the winds hit us from every direction. It was a challenge to keep all the candles lit but we did manage to do so with help from each other. The youth then enjoyed some time around the camp fire and of course playing "spoons" and they



even got Bishop Paul to play.

Prime Bishop Mikovsky celebrated Holy Mass for the Solemnity of the Christian Family to begin Wednesday at Camp Howe. Bishop Paul and Fr. Sr. Rob concelebrated this Mass. Prime Bishop spoke to the participants reminding them that faith is much than mental ascent, it is our actions – it needs to be lived in our individual families and Church family. After Camp Howe breakfast sandwiches our next presentation was on Bishop Hodur and the Christian Family. Prime Bishop Mikovsky spoke about the Institution of the Solemnity of the Christian Family in 1914 and what Bishop Hodur said the importance of the family in Church life and in a lived Christian Catholic

faith. The youth were reminded of their responsibilities to the individual family, the church family and the great family of the communities in which they live.

It was then off to Spare Time Bowl for a couple of strings of bowling. The youth and adults had a wonderful time bowling and laughing and having great fun. Another big Thank You to District 3 of the Polish National Union



for sponsoring this bowling trip. There were many strikes made and our younger ones found creative ways to use the bumpers to get those scores up. 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 and football season is finally coming :)

After pizza, Fr. Sr. Joe Soltysiak gave the final session of Youth Retreat 2018: Living as a Christian Family today. Fr. Sr. Joe got their attention quickly with a bang and used bricks and various



animals to speak about how we need to live as family united in faith in Christ and His Holy Church each and every day of our lives.

Our cabins then gave their skits on a theme for the retreat. They were “Honor your Parents”; “Mary did you know”; “Jesus in the Temple” and “St. Paul’s rap”. The youth showed an understanding of these themes presented during the retreat. We hope and pray they live them faithfully.

Fr. Sr. Rob and Bishop Paul spoke to our youth and encouraged them to sign the “PNCC Youth Pledge against Bullying”. This was recommended in the August 2018 message from the PNCC Future Direction committee and it is a great way for our youth to live their faith in Christ in a concrete way and show their love for their family. Several of the participants signed this pledge. On the final evening of camp, we had our annual Bonfire. The Camp Howe staff did a great job with skits, songs and stories. The Moose, Beaver, repeat after me songs 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. At the end of the camp fire Charles Vasas personally thanked the camp Howe staff and gave them all a bracelet he made to show his appreciation.

Bishop Paul Sobiechowski began our final day of retreat celebrating Holy Mass for the Solemnity of the Holy Family. This Mass was concelebrated by Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich, Fr. Paul Lukaszewicz and Fr. Adam Piekarszewski. Bishop in his sermon spoke about the importance of family life and being there for their families as he spoke of the care he was





privileged to give his own father in his later years. Thanks are given to Cleric Justin Davault who assisted at all the Retreat Masses and offered the second reading and to Bob Bradbury who is studying in our deacon program and proclaimed the first readings of the Mass. Thanks also to our Altar Servers: Dylan, Gaby, Jakeb, Zack, Vicki, Kaylana and Aiden.

At our last meal at Camp Howe for 2018 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 Fr. Sr. Rob. He thanked all the chaperones, session presenters and activity leaders for their work for the youth of our diocese. He reminded the youth to live their faith and share their experiences they had with their family, friends and parishes and invite others to join us next year.

The 2018 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 Jakeb Bradbury from Blessed Trinity Parish in Fall River, MA. His name will be added to the plaque and will be remembered at future Youth Retreats. Congratulations Jakeb!

Thanks are given to Bishop Paul, the session presenters, our activity coordinator Joanne Oliveira, our country store manager – Brenda Richard, to our Eastern Diocese Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament Society for their generous annual donation to our retreat, to District 3 of the Polish National Union and to all the chaperones who gave of their time to make Youth Retreat 2018 an outstanding success! Thanks to Natalie Chmielewska and Charles Vassas for their wonderful pictures.



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 2019 will again be held at Camp Howe in Goshen, Massachusetts beginning on Sunday August 18, 2019 – this will be our 25th Retreat at Camp Howe and our 46th annual diocesan Youth Retreat. The countdown on a few smart phones to Youth Retreat next year has already begun! For more pictures of the retreat as it unfolded please see our Fa-

cebook page: **Eastern Diocese Youth**

We are excited to announce our next diocesan youth event will be our Winter Youth Gathering/Lock In - Friday, December 28th to Saturday December 29th at Blessed Trinity Parish in Fall River, MA. We will begin Friday afternoon and lock ourselves in at Blessed Trinity and wrap up this winter retreat late Saturday morning. It should be a great time. God bless and we look forward to seeing you all again at Youth Retreat 2019.

Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich - Diocesan Youth Chaplain















