

Convo 2016
hosted by the Eastern Diocese
of the Polish National Catholic Church
July 25-29, 2016
St. Anselm's College – Manchester, NH



“I AM” was the theme of the 2016 National Youth Convocation of the Polish National Catholic Church. During the hot summer week of July 25 through July 29 - more than 140 youth, adults and clergy gathered at the beautiful St. Anselm's College in Manchester, New Hampshire.



Our registration committee of Shirley Mietlicki-Floyd, Joanne Oliveira, Brenda Richard and Mary Tudryn did a great job of getting all checked in and settled. Following registration and dinner, Convo began with the song and video “I AM” by Eddie James, followed by a prayer offered by Convo 2016 Chaplain, Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich. Fr. Sr. Rob spoke about this important year in the PNCC – the Year of Reverence and how the Future Direction committee was focusing on the Solemnity of the Christian family and that all the Convo folks would be playing an important part. He also reminded everyone that this day was the 5th Anniversary of the beginning of the Union of Scranton. He introduced Convo President – Eric Nemkovich. Eric welcomed the participants and welcomed and introduced Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky and host bishop of the Eastern Diocese – Bishop Paul Sobiechowski. Both Bishops addressed the Convo and expressed gratitude for them attending and prayed that this week would increase their faith and knowledge of Christ and His Holy Church. The Convo schedule and the rules and regulations were then reviewed. Kathy Nemkovich was then introduced and she spoke about the 30-day





challenge that the youth choose to accept and then would share what they were going to do related to this challenge with the group later in the week. Ice Breakers of the human knot, the I Am _____ and the ball toss helped the youth get to meet and

to know each other better. Thanks to Joanne Oliveira for developing our Ice Breakers and to Eric and Cliff Nemkovich, Jacob Nowak, Erin Tudryn and Hannah Bilinski for leading these groups.

The Match Game was then enjoyed by all – Cliff Nemkovich (aka Cliff Bar – delicious and nutritious) was our host and our celebrities were: Prime Bishop Mikovsky, Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich, Fr. Jason Soltysiak, Eric Nemkovich, Hannah Bilinski, Ned Kotula, Sherry Mack and Amy Macaig. Questions such as “When you were packing for Convo I made sure to pack my _____,” “I hope my roommate _____” ; “What I always have at a parish picnic is _____” and of course “How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?” Many laughs were had as Group 2 got the top prize. The youth were reminded several times about the importance of brushing their teeth and flossing by our resident celebrity dentist, Ned Kotula.

The first day of Convo came to a conclusion with Evening Prayer celebrated by Fr. Robert Fredrickson. Everyone enjoyed each other’s company in the hospitality room provided by 10 parishes of the host Eastern Diocese. Thanks again to Shirley, Brenda, Joanne and Mary for taking care of the hospitality room for the week.

Davidson Hall provided a great breakfast to all to begin day two of Convo. We were honored to have the president of St. Anselm College, Dr. Steven DiSalvo, welcome our Convo to St. A’s. He was happy to see that our Convo Chaplain, Fr. Sr. Rob, graduated from St. A’s all the way back in 1992.

“I AM the Light of the World” was the first session given by Kathy Nemkovich. Kathy spoke about the importance of Christ lighting our way and that there is no darkness but just the absence of light. She spoke about flash-light faith – believing in the light God shows you each day as he is the light of the world. Her presentation then focused on how the youth can be the light of the world to others, following Jesus and helping others



whenever possible and concluded with the story of Welles Remy Crowther, his Red Bandana and how he spent the last moments of his life on 9/11 saving the lives of many in the south tower. What a moving session and many folks shed a tear or two. All participants received a red bandana and many wore them throughout the rest of the Convo.

During this Year of Reverence in the PNCC some time was taken to prepare the youth for the celebration of Holy Mass. A special examination of conscience for youth was given by Kathy Nemkovich to all gathered in the Abbey Church chapel.

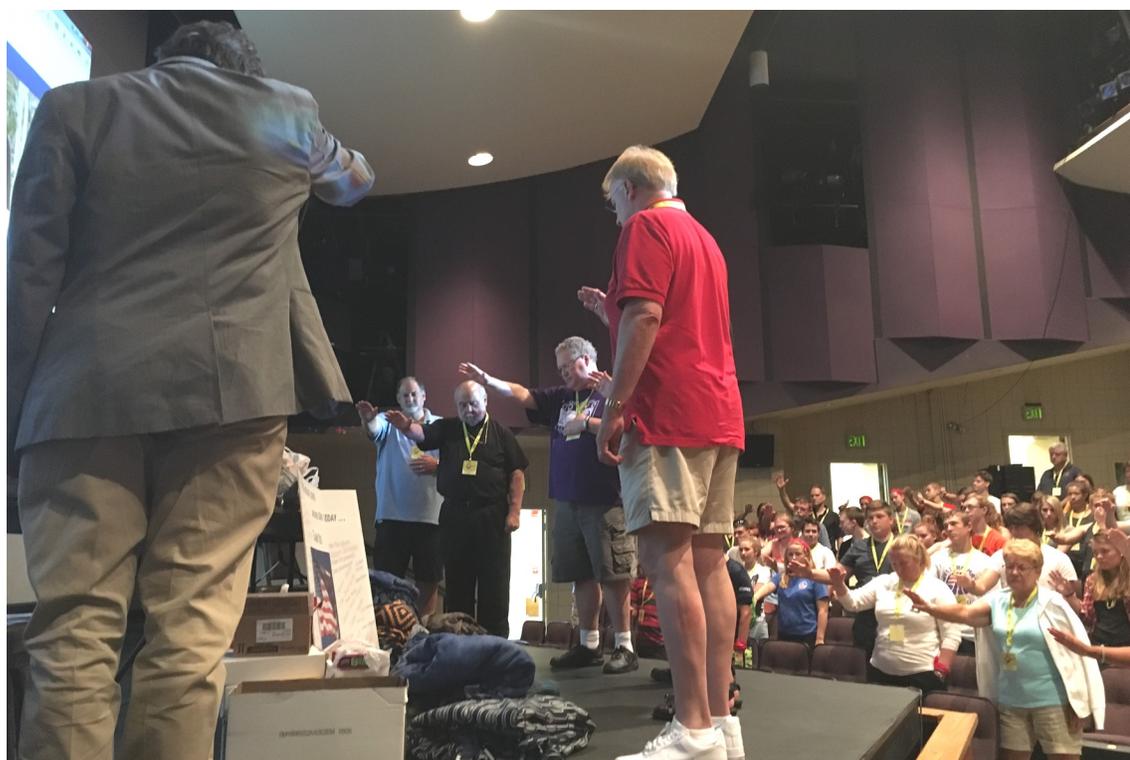


This spoke to many issues and pressures teens and young adults facing in our culture today and prepared them to receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky celebrated Mass for Youth. He was as-

sisted by Convo Chaplain, Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich. Jacob Nowak was the lector for the readings and Eric Nemkovich offered the intercessions. Prime Bishop in his sermon spoke about the important role the youth have in the Church today and to take the presence of Jesus out into our communities and world. He taught the youth that “I AM” has a plan for them that they may not know now but will understand later in life so they need to follow Him.

“I AM the Good Shepherd” was the second presentation at Convo. Fr. Robert Fredrickson gave a wonderful presentation teaching the youth about the importance of following Jesus – our Good Shepherd in our lives. He reminded them how the Good Shepherd went out to find the one that was lost and that we need to beware of many false shepherds that we encounter in our day and age.



Small group sessions followed where our youth of the same age had an opportunity to further discuss the presentations. A big thank you to our small group sessions leaders who did a tremendous job: Maria Hughes, Hannah Bilinski, Fr. Jason Soltysiak, Dr. Shirley Mietlicki-Floyd, Fr. Jim Konicki and Bishop Stanley Bilinski who worked with our adults in sessions geared for them.

One of many

highlights of the Convo was the Community Service Project. The Convo committee wanted to have a community service project that would help a local need in the greater Manchester area. Bishop Paul and Karen Sobiechowski suggested Liberty House – a place that provides support for Homeless Veterans and others in great need as well. Convo participants were encouraged to bring toiletries, gift cards for food and some food items. The response was tremendous. Some diocesan parishes helped in this effort – a special thank you to St. Joseph’s in Westfield, St. Joseph’s in Stratford, Blessed Trinity in Fall River, Holy Cross in Central Falls, Holy Trinity in Webster and our Cathedral in Manchester. More than 50 bags and boxes of needed items, more than 100 gift cards were collected and hundreds of dollars were given to Liberty House.

Following a great video on helping others taken from the Andy Griffith show, our Convo participants broke up into 15 groups and each group made a prayer blanket for the homeless veterans. We began in prayer as Prime Bishop blessed all of our hands, then when the blanket was finished each group put their hands on the blanket and offered prayers. When they were all completed the director of Liberty House was introduced and thanked everyone for this effort. He spoke about Matthew:25 and the parable of the Sheep and Goats – that what we do to the least of these – we do to Jesus. Keith reminded the youth that the next

time they see a homeless person remember that they are a fellow human being and should be treated with respect and dignity. An incredible moment was our Bishops and all Convo participants with their right hands extended praying over all that was to be given to Liberty House.



“I AM the Door” was the third presentation of Convo 2016. Our National Youth Chaplain Bishop Stanley Bilinski got the folks moving and cheering with colored dot races. And we needed it as we all had just enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Bishop Stanley stressed the im-





portance of getting that safe haven in which Jesus is that door that protects us and keeps us safe. Some powerful clips of youth finding Christ in their life were shared with the youth. Examples of allowing Jesus – the sheep gate - to be the center and priority of our lives. Small Group sessions followed.

In this year of our Lord – 2016 our PNCC honors the 150th Anniversary of the birth of our organizer – Bishop Francis Hodur. A special Reenactment of the life of Bishop Francis Hodur was prepared by Joanne Oliveira, Kathy and Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich. They used “The History of the PNCC” materials prepared by the National School of Christian Living Commission in 2010 as their basis. The 30-minute reenactment was a moving and educational moment as our youth got to hear from Bishop Hodur and some of those who helped him organize our Holy Polish National Catholic Church. Thanks to Eric Nemkovich who portrayed Bishop Hodur, Fr. Jason Soltysiak, Hannah Bilinski, Jacob Gerardi, Nick Richard, Rebecca Kotula, Mason Martisaukas, Tyler Bagshaw and Alexis Drakulich, who were organizing members of St. Stanislaus Parish on Locust Street in Scranton and Charles Vassas as the Bishop and Cardinal. This presentation was professionally video recorded and will be available on a YouTube page in the future. For

more information on this and other Convo videos please email: RobNem21@aol.com or request to join our Convo 2016 Facebook page.

Karen Sobiechowski led the Convo in evening prayer with a Taize prayer service. Introducing a different type of a beautiful meditative prayer in chant and song. Following our time in prayer together everyone again enjoyed the hospitality area.

Wednesday began with our 4th presentation of the Convo “I AM the Bread of Life”. Fr. Sr. Rob led this presentation and spoke to the youth about the greatest gift they could ever receive – they in fact do receive with the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist every time they receive communion. Fr. Sr. Rob presented a dramatization of Jesus and His words at the Last Supper (the Passover Meal Jesus shared with His Apostles). He also showed a few clips on the Catholic teaching of the Eucharist – one very dramatic on the great sacrifice God had for us in giving us His Only Begotten Son to save us from sin and death and show for us “The Way” to salvation. Small group sessions followed this session on the source and summit of our Catholic Christian Living – the Eucharist.

The stage at St. Anselm College, which has had





on it every US President since Dwight D. Eisenhower, came alive as the youth rehearsed a special song “We Are Family” with the lyrics prepared by Kathy Nemkovich and Laurie Dionisio. Cathy Bilinski with her gift of teaching and leading youth in music rehearsed this song and it was amazing how quick the kids and adults got the lyrics and what moves some of our folks have. This was a rehearsal for a performance on Thursday which we plan to use for Prime Bishop Mikovsky’s presentation on the Christian Family prepared by the PNCC Future Direction Committee on Wednesday – October 5th 2016 at 7 pm. This is must see viewing – let your family, fellow parishioners and friends know. To

receive further updates please just email: FutureDirection@pncc.org. The participants then broke up into small groups to begin their planning and brainstorming for skits to perform later on in the Convo based on the Christian Family and Reverence.

“I AM the True Vine” was the next Convo presentation. Fr. Jason Soltysiak began with a compilation of songs from the 70’s, 80’s 90’s and today using “I am”. He then showed several clips of himself doing various things around his parish church and Jesus appeared in white time and time again giving the youth important teachings from the Gospel. All were reminded how when we are a part of Jesus “I AM” – that True Vine – we are where we need to be on our earthly pilgrimage.

The National United Choirs then gave a presentation to the Convo about their important ministry for the Church and announced their 2016 NUC Music Scholarship recipients. Five of the scholarship recipients were at Convo and received their certificate from Bishop John Mack, Lydia Hohn and Cathy Bilinski. What a special moment for these recipients and we pray they continue their important music ministry for our holy Church. A special thank you to the National United Choirs for donating backpacks to all the Convo participants which were perfect for our off campus trip later that day.

The Polish National Union of America then gave a presentation to the Convo by CEO Irene Jugan and CFO John Andrzejewski. Thanks to the PNU for donating the lanyards. They also gave Bish-



op Hodur medallions and distributed Spojnia Credit Union sunglasses to all. Cash prizes were given to those who answered the questions by the Education and Youth Commission – thanks to Mary Ann Stankowski for handed out these prizes.



It was then time to board the buses and take a short trip to Holy Trinity Cathedral. On a 90 plus degree day we gathered for Holy Mass celebrating the Christian Family. Bishop Paul Sobiechowski celebrated the Mass and was assisted by Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich and Fr. Robert Fredrickson. Carrie Tazbir served as the lector. Bishop Paul preached on the

importance of the Christian Family and how it is in the family that we need Christ to be the center. Thanks to Morning Star – from Divine Providence Parish in Norwich, CT for providing the music for this Mass – what a great job they did. After the Mass, Bishop Paul made a presentation to Joseph Quirbach, of St. Casimir's Parish in Lowell, MA, who was awarded the PNCC God and Country scouting award. We are thankful that all survived the extreme heat we experienced in the cathedral!

After the Mass and the Convo group picture, the wonderful folks at Holy Trinity Cathedral served tacos and ice cold water to all. We thank the Holy Trinity kitchen staff for their efforts – all kitchen staff were given the remaining Convo 2016 T-shirts.

The buses then headed south for a great night out at Canobie Lake Park. The youth, adults, clergy and bishops enjoyed the roller



coasters, water plunge, Yankee canon ball, the Boston Tea Party, the train and many more. When the park closed and we finally rounded up all our chaperones – we headed back to St. Anselm’s where Fr. Sr. Rob lead the group in evening prayer outside under the lights by the Dana Center.

The National United Youth Association held their meeting on Thursday morning. National Youth Chaplin, Bishop Bilinski, spoke about the work and importance of the NUYA. He then turned things over to Hannah Bilinski who ran the meeting. The youth then broke up into dioceses and elected members to the NUYA Board for the next two years. Congratulations to the delegates and alternates who were elected and will continue on with the work of the youth of our church until Convo 2018.



“I AM the Way” was the next Convo presentation given by Fr. Michal Gitner. Fr. Michal spoke about the Way that Jesus went and that it was a radical one that challenged the established norms based on the Gospel. He used clips on the life of St. Francis of Assisi to show how he put all things in God’s hands. He told the youth to be true to themselves and the teachings of Jesus who is our Way.

Holy Mass of the Day was celebrated by our National Youth Chaplain – Bishop Stanley Bilinski. The diocesan chaplains, Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich, Fr. John Kowalczyk and Fr. Jim Konicki con-celebrated this Mass. Bishop Bernard Nowicki gave a powerful sermon on “The Potter’s Hand” and how we need to be molded and shaped by God our Father in heaven: “Beautiful Lord, Wonderful Saviour, I know for sure, all my days are held in your hands, crafted into your perfect plan. You gently call me into your presence guiding me by Your Holy Spirit. Teach me, dear Lord, to live all my life through Your eyes. I’m grasped by Your holy calling. Set me apart. I know you’re drawing me to yourself. Lead me, Lord, I pray. Take me, mold me, use me, fill me: I

give my life into the Potter’s hand. Call me, guide me, lead me, walk beside me: I give my life into the Potter’s hand.

The afternoon began with a Passion Portrayal done by various



Convo youth under the direction of Fr. Michal Gitner. The portrayal began with Jesus at the Last Supper and moved to the garden of Gethsemane with the arrest of Jesus, His trial before Pilate, scourging, crowning with thorns and walking the way of the cross. The crucifixion was a powerful moment as was Jesus being carry to the tomb. The portrayal ended with Jesus resurrected. Thanks to Michael Chmielewski who was Jesus and youth from all dioceses comprising the rest of the cast. A job well done – Thanks Fr. Michal.

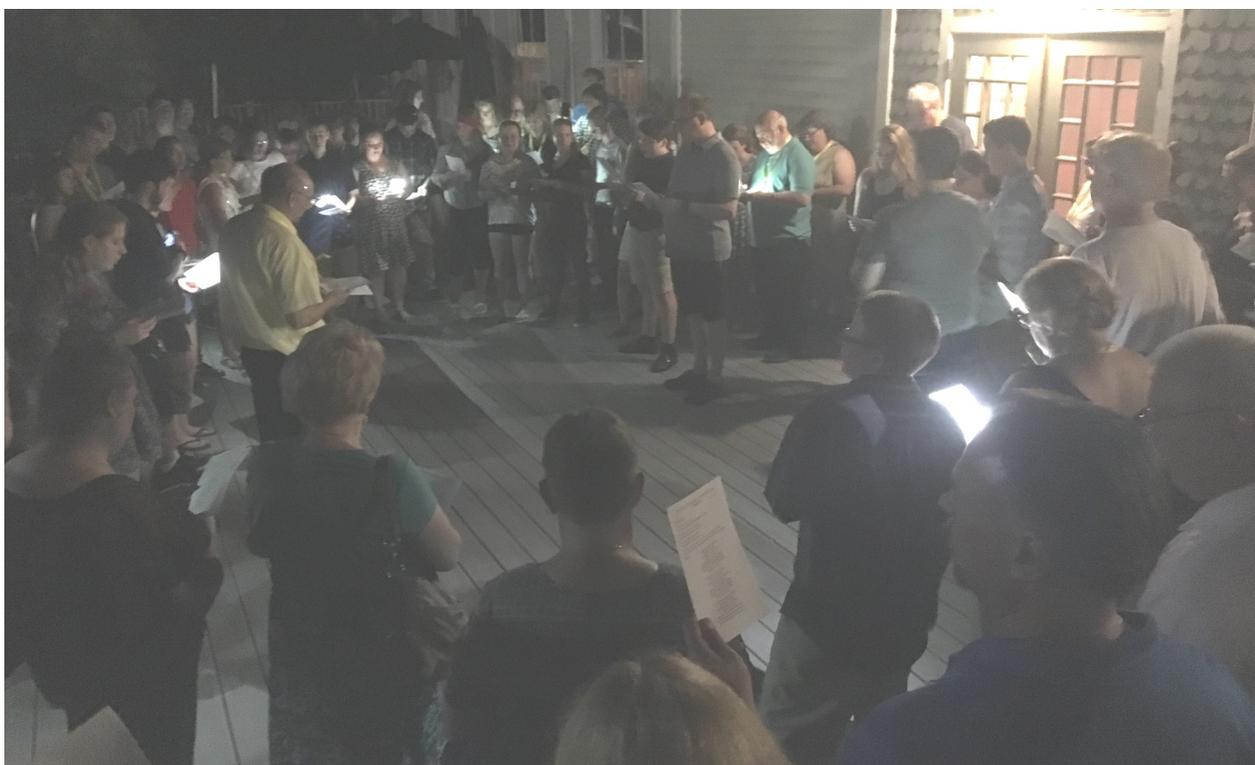


It was then time for all the Convo folks to perform our rendition of “We Are Family” and what a great job they did. The refrain “We are Family, Brothers and Sisters are We, We are family, Get up everybody and sing.” This was recorded and will be a part of

Prime Bishop Mikovsky’s presentation on the Christian Family on October 5th at 7 pm. What a great job the kids did and what moves our chaperones had too!

Each of our small groups then presented skits based on our Convo theme and the importance of the Christian Family. These were just amazing and it was a blessing that they were also professional videoed. These videos will be shared via YouTube and on the Convo 2016 Facebook page in the future. It was so gratifying to see our youth and even adults take the message of the Convo and the work of our PNCC Future Di-

rection committee and put this into concrete action in these skits. “They Got It”. A shout out to Bishop Mack who in portraying the boy Jesus at 12 years old was able to walk across the stage on his knees. Make sure you take the time to see the message our youth had and that will be shared with you



all soon.

It was then time for some of the youth to announce what they are taking on for their 30-Day Challenge. Some were increasing prayer every day, helping a neighbor, to be kind to everyone she met every day, reaching out to someone from Convo each day, reading Holy Scriptures and more. Daily reminders of the 30-day challenge are being posted on the Convo 2016 Facebook page.

A “Come as I AM” dance was held at the St. Anselm’s coffee shop. The youth and adults enjoyed



many hours of dancing the night away and the photo booth was quite the hit. It was great to see all our bishops enjoying some quality time in the photo booth as what a great group of shepherds we have. When the dance concluded we all gathered outside on the deck of the coffee shop where Fr. Jim Konicki led the group in Evening Prayer. After some more quality time in the Hospitality room it was off for some well needed sleep.

The final day of Convo 2016 began with our final presentation “Who Do You Say I AM?” given by Prime Bishop Mikovsky. Prime Bishop did a tremendous job of reviewing the various sessions of the week and the important words of Jesus that we had been focusing on. He then challenged the youth asking them: “Who Do You Say that Jesus Is?” and reminded them that they answer that question each and every day in how they choose to live their lives. He ended his session with the powerful song “I AM”.

Fr. Sr. Rob for the closing sessions reviewed all the posts on the Convo 2016 Facebook page for the days leading up to Convo and through the entire week – a beautiful walk down memory lane. After this presentation he then thanked all the Convo presenters, the Bishops, Karen Sobiechowski for selecting the music and playing the hymns during the Convo Masses, and all the chaperones. The Convo committee began their work in November of 2014 and were thanked for the program and Convo that was enjoyed. Special thanks to Convo President Eric Nemkovich for doing a great job before and during the Convo. Also to a spe-



cial group who were of tremendous help and support: Shirley Mietlicki-Floyd, Kathy Nemkovich, Joanne Oliveira, Brenda Richard and Mary Tudryn.

Thanks to our Convo 2016 Sponsors who allowed the cost of Convo to be significantly less: Bishop



Paul & Karen Sobiechowski, Fr. Sr. Rob & Kathy Nemkovich, Dr. Shirley Mietlicki-Floyd, Martha Lafranchise, Beverly Basinki, St. Joseph's Parish in Stratford, CT and the Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament Society in McKeesport, PA. Also thanks to our anonymous donors who sponsored Convo and provide registration fees for youth who needed

it. A special Thank You to Paul Gorgol for donating the Convo 2016 T-Shirts.

Lastly Fr. Sr. Rob had the honor to tell the Convo 2016 participants that the St. A's conference and events staff thanked our group for their excellent behavior, positive attitude and their kindness and just being great kids during our Convo.

The Convo concluded in a most appropriate fashion – gathered around the Table of the Lord for Holy Mass. Convo Chaplain Fr. Sr. Rob celebrated Holy Mass of the day. Eric Nemkovich served as the Lector for the Mass.

Bishop John Mack gave an inspiring sermon and teaching the youth that it is not "IAAM" but "I AM". That it is not "It's All About Me" but rather that it is all about Jesus. He illustrated this with the 14 puzzle piece stickers - having different youth reading teachings of Jesus and then putting the pieces together to depict Jesus. Bishop Mack also encouraged the young men and boys at the Convo to listen to that call of God to the Holy



Priesthood and Diaconate and told the young women that they did not need a collar to serve and minister in our One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. After the sermon Bishop Bilinski called forward the youth elected to the National United Youth Association and Prime Bishop Mikovsky administered the oath of office. At the conclusion of the Mass all the bishops gave their Apostolic Blessing to all the Convo participants. As

Convo 2016 came to an end Convo Chaplain – Fr. Sr. Rob left everyone with these words: “May we be as I AM wants us to be”.

As the youth left the beautiful campus of St. Anselm College and returned home our hope and prayer for them is that **Jesus is the Light of their world, that He is their Good Shepherd, their Door, their Bread of Life, their True Vine in Life and their Way, their Truth and their Life each and every day; by the way they will chose to live – it will be evident to all who they say that Jesus is in their lives.**

Humbly prepared in the Name of “I AM”, Fr. Sr. Rob Nazarkovich – Convo 2016 Chaplain





