

NCYC
November 19-
21, 2009
Highlights and
Reflections

STEMS

St. Edward's—St. Mary's Youth Ministry Newsletter

Awesome Teens

This past week I had an opportunity to join a group of our teens, or, more accurately young adults, on a pilgrimage to the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Kansas City, MO. Our group along with 20,000, or more, attendees from around the country gathered as the clearest signs imaginable that **Christ Reigns**, and that as His disciples they are called to be the kingdom for others, their friends and classmates. In my wildest imagination I never thought I would find myself as a chaperone on a trip to a conference where somewhere between 20,000 and 25,000 young adults (high school students) were expected to be in attendance. I was scared, but it was amazing!

The young people that I travelled with, the teens of our parishes, our diocese, our state, and our nation were in a word....

AWESOME!!



It was an experience that I will never forget, and an experience that I am sure these young people will never forget. The young church, as they were called by Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, was alive and excited to be with 20,000+ of their closest friends for four days celebrating their Catholic faith. For four days I watched and participated with these incredible young people as they learned about, experienced, discovered, and shared their faith in Jesus Christ in ways that I never would have believed possible in today's world.

- I wouldn't have believed it possible because I had become accepting of a world where political correctness is more important than standing up for what we believe.

- I wouldn't have believed it possible because I had become accepting of a world where teaching our teens that wearing immodest clothing tells the world that they don't respect themselves is taboo.

- I wouldn't have believed it possible because I had become accepting of a world that tells the next generation that doing what feels good at the moment is somehow better than a world that teaches right from wrong and accountability.

What I found most amazing is that these young people knew that these, and many other, "acceptable" changes that our world has experienced in recent years are wrong. They just needed an opportunity to know that they are not alone in that knowledge, and to hear that they can bring about change.

This trip has given me renewed hope for our children's future and for the future of the Catholic Church in the United States. Our young church showed me that our young people are more aware of right and wrong than we might imagine. Our young church showed me that they have strong faith and that we need to support that faith by learning to allow them to express it differently than older generations did. They really do need and want our support and guidance as they grow into adulthood and take positions of authority in our world and in our church.

As a chaperone and parent I was very proud of them. As a church community we should all be proud of these young people and demonstrate that pride by giving them our love and support as they teach us and lead us into the future. They really do have a tremendous amount to give. We need to be open to them and their new ways. The world has changed and will continue to change. Now we need to open ourselves to the new ways that only our young people can teach us.

A special thanks to each of the participants from St. Edwards/St. Mary's Youth Ministry, who made a trip such a great experience, Remo Apuzzo, Lauren Badalucco, Stephen Dering, Kitty Grebe, Chris Hamilton, Kayla Lindros, Erin Luibrand, Shannon Luibrand, Lauren McDonald, and Maggie Wayne.

Visit the pilgrimage at <http://ncyc.nfcym.org/> to get a glimpse of the incredible experience.

Andy Grebe



"The Procession of the Blessed Sacrament - Awesome!"

"This NCYC trip was amazing! It was filled with thousands and thousands of teens that share the same faith. Because of this trip my views have changed dramatically! I will now try even harder to help with the poor/homeless. I have also learned to have a relationship without having any temptations. God has given us a talent and that talent is suppose to reach out to those who really need the joy and hope." - Christopher Hamilton

Kitty Grebe

In November I had the opportunity to attend the National Catholic Youth Conference in Kansas City, Missouri. I went to this conference not knowing exactly what to expect. I had seen the video they have and been to a few meetings about it, but I could not say that I was prepared for what was in store. We left in a group of thirteen from St. Ed's and St. Mary's, including the chaperones, on Thursday November 19th. When we reached our hotel in Kansas City, I was surprised by the number of people from the Diocese of Albany, which totaled about 300 people. This was nothing compared to the roughly 26,000 people in attendance at the conference. A number so high was far beyond anything I had anticipated, and when we went to the Sprint Center for the first time, my jaw dropped and I fell silent. The thought of that many people all gathered in one place is impressive enough, but seeing it was more impressive than I could imagine. What I found the most impressive about the number of people there was the fact that the only other time you will see a crowd that size is for a concert or sporting event, and it is not the same thing then. At a concert or sporting event not everyone is there for the same purpose; some are there for one team, or the other, some are there because a friend had an extra ticket. In the case of NCYC, however, all 26,000 people were all there for the same reason- to celebrate their religion.

This trip was truly one of the most incredible things I have ever seen, or ever will see. I don't just say that because of the mind-boggling numbers of people attending the conference, but I also say it because I got to meet people from all over the country who were as excited about their religion as I am. Not only was everyone happy and excited to be there, everyone was extremely respectful, even after several very long days, when everyone was exhausted. Also, no one thought anything of walking up to a person they've never seen in their lives and talking to them, which I enjoyed. I talked to people about how amazing it was while we were there, people I had never met, and we had better conversations about it than I had with any of my friends back home. Honestly, some of my friends, upon my return home actively tried to avoid asking about the trip. They didn't want to hear about something to do with God, or with church- and really, why should they? This kind of thing isn't very important to them- but to the people at the conference, it was, and is important.

The fact that everyone was so excited and happy to be going to a church event, and the fact that there were just so many people there are the two main things that I will remember from this trip. The smaller details, like exactly what workshops I went to, and exactly what was said by a keynote speaker may fade from my memory over time, but I will not forget this trip, that much I know.

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Maggie Wayne



"We were like one!"

My time at NCYC was a time I will not forget. It was truly a moving and life-changing experience. Before I go any further, I just want to thank all the people who made this experience possible for me and the nine other youth from St. Mary's Crescent and St. Edward's parishes. I am truly grateful that I was able to attend this conference. The best way for me to describe NCYC is as a spiritual rock concert. Walking into the first general session and seeing all 21,000 people on their feet; clapping and singing together, it was something I will never forget. When we all did the wave, spontaneously, it was as if we were all one person. It did not matter where you came from, or what your story was, we were all united in Christ. The music was incredible. The first night almost everyone clapped and sang along, but by mass the last night, there was not a single person that was not on their feet singing and dancing. We were on the lower level, so I had a good vantage point and was looking around. It was such an uplifting feeling. The workshops were incredible as well. They offered a new perspective on my faith that I had never had before. I realized that it was okay to be catholic, and that there were so many opportunities for me to let my faith shine through in my actions. Everyone was so friendly and inviting. I collected signatures in a notebook, pages and pages of them, from people all over the country. I met many people, heard so many stories, collected and traded so many things. It was empowering to see that Christ Reigns in all of us, and his reign has reached thousands of youth across the country. I will never forget the four days spent in Kansas City, Missouri at the best rock concert in the world.

Shannon Luibrand-NCYC Experience

To describe my NCYC experience in merely a page or so would be a great injustice. It is hard to capture such an astounding and incredible event if you yourself have not attended. If I were to do so though it would be something like this. . Imagine teenager's from California, Nebraska, and Tennessee just to name a few, swarming the streets of Kansas City, Missouri, engulfing every open space available. Try to visualize walking into a concert arena quite like our hometown Times Union Center only bigger, shuffling shoulder to shoulder with thousands of other people from far and wide. Teens sporting their local Parish shirts, their crazy state hats, blinking and flashing lights universally. Envision stepping foot into this massive arena, with 20,000 other teens just like you from across the country.. Here in this arena is loud music, flashing lights, a huge stage, and teens doing the wave, singing crazy songs, and doing crazy dances. Then picture Jesus' presence. Imagine amongst the loud noises, bright lights, and wild dance moves, Jesus. Simply standing, watching over, and being present to the thousands gathered to witness him. Profound right? Well, it was. It is indescribable to witness the presence of Jesus among 20,000 people. To watch as 25,000 people receive Holy Communion and to watch as hundreds of Priests serve our Lord. To see all these sorts of people together, as a community, and a support network with the commonality of Christ. Teenagers gathered from all sorts of places, to pray, to laugh, to learn and to worship God together as a community of Catholic Teens. At NCYC every teen can be their self. It is cool to be Catholic, It is cool to answer God's call and most of all it is cool to love Jesus. Between workshops, concerts, comedy, live entertainment, games, and site seeing, anyone that has ever thought being Catholic is "boring" has obviously never attended an NCYC. A common comment I heard after NCYC from teens and adults was "Everyone was just so nice!" Unlike the hallways at school when bumping into someone on accident is nearly a life shattering event, NCYC is quite different. A simple "Oh whoops I'm sorry!" Is responded to a shoulder bump and in return receiving a "Hey no problem! and "By the way where are you from?" Before I went to NCYC someone that had attended before said to me "NCYC will change your life." Hah. Yeah okay. I thought. Well I was wrong. NCYC was a life changing experience, it opened my eyes to my faith in a way no retreat or youth gathering had done before. I saw Christ in a new light and I shared Christ with 20,000 other teens. I realized at NCYC that my Catholic Faith is not a solo journey. That even when I get down about my faith, or lose hope there are literally thousands of other teens out there in the same boat as me, riding down the same river, and struggling to stay afloat. There are teens believing what I believe, loving God the way I love God and supporting each other whether we know it or not. I am not the future of the Church. I am the present. And NCYC showed me that I am not alone in this journey, and on this pilgrimage. God is present in the Sprint Center in Missouri, in my home Parish in Clifton Park New York, and in the quiet of my bedroom when I put my head on my pillow at night to sleep. God is with me constantly and you can be sure God was present and alive at NCYC.



"NCYC 2009 was a great experience for me. It showed me that there was more to my faith than just going to Church on Sundays. It allowed me to meet new people, gain new friends, and come closer to God. This Conference was a once in a lifetime experience that I will never forget. The music was great, the speakers were excellent by portraying their messages with humor and excitement. The workshops and events offered were very interesting and inspiring I would recommend this event to anyone who wants to strengthen their relationship with not only God, but with themselves and others.

Stephen Dering

Erin Luibrand

The National Catholic Youth Conference was an amazing experience. While I was there I felt a stronger connection with God because I know I was not alone, surrounded by thousands of teens who thrive and struggle with their faith in many of the same ways that I do. After attending a variety of workshops I got an insight on triumphs and tragedies of everyday peoples lives and how they knew God was there to help them all along in the end. The workshops also gave me tools and strategies to live my everyday life. My favorite part of NCYC was when everyone was in the Sprint Center together singing, sharing faith stories, laughing and connecting with God. The Reignforest, was also a great experience to be there because you had the opportunity to meet teens from around America who were there for the same reason as you. Overall NCYC was an amazing experience from the connection with people to the connection with God, Christ was there reigning on the world and I am thankful for this incredible opportunity I was presented with .

NCYC was a great experience, in which I was able to take part in. Throughout the three day long conference, I was able to participate in numerous workshops and interact with other youth from Catholic churches throughout America. At the main venue we were able to enjoy a few live concerts by Christian Musicians. The music was incredible, and watching 20,000 other people sing along to it was amazing. Every day we participated in at least one prayer service, which brought everybody together in a calm atmosphere. Many of these prayer services were led by the Christian rock musician, Steve Agrisano. In leading the prayer services, and through things he told us during the conference, I could tell he could relate to teens very well. All during the conference, there were many workshops occurring which we could attend. Most of the workshops filled up quickly, but I was able to attend two. One of the workshops focused on suicide prevention, a hot topic in High School. Through the workshop I was able to learn ways to identify if one is depressed or if one may be thinking of committing suicide. Even better, I now know how to react and respond if somebody that I know may be thinking about committing suicide. On a less serious note, the other workshop that I attended was a Catholic Comedian, Judy McDonald. While her workshop included humor from her life, she also discussed a mission trip she went on in Ireland.. She visited a small town that had many elderly people. There was no church near this town. The town residents were only able to receive communion once a month. Mrs. McDonald took a picture of a woman as she received Communion.. I could tell just from the picture how happy she was to receive the Body of Christ, even if it was only monthly. The Conference ended with a Mass, and from there we went back to our normal lives of work and/or school. I do know that even though the Conference lasted three days, I have a lifetime of memories and knowledge from it.

Lauren Badalucco - Unforgettable

Hi, I'm Lauren Badalucco, and I went to a once in a life time experience in Kansas City. My time in Kansas city, Missouri for the National Catholic Youth Conference was truly an unforgettable experience. I was somewhat skeptical to go at first, because I was unsure of what was in store for me there, but even as I woke up at 4 A.M. on November 19th, I knew that this was going to be a fantastic experience. I was one hundred percent right. The first Concert of the conference was a mind blowing experience - in the gigantic Sprint Center there was a full house of over 20,000 youth celebrating our faith, with another 5,000 in a completely different convention hall! To think about 25,000 people my age all getting as excited as I was about worshipping God and living by the ways of Jesus and embracing his love was a deeply moving experience. The concerts we had every night and every morning were filled with upbeat praises and beautiful prayers and ballads that all 25,000 people were singing with. There were amazing speakers that were able to connect with all of the youth at the conference, and they gave awesome speeches based on their own experiences, and how they felt about them, and how we should feel about our own experiences. They were very influential and moved many of the participants to better express their love for their faith in their everyday actions.

Another experience I had was the privilege of meeting so many friendly and nice people from all over the country. I met and spoke with people my age about my faith from places like Alaska, Wisconsin, Arizona, Beverly Hills, California, Maine, Virginia, Louisiana, Nashville, Nebraska and many more. The best thing about talking to the people there was that they were excited as I was to be there, and truly wanted to be there to learn and grow more into their faith.

The Workshops that we attended were also great. They were condensed, individual sessions with about 200 other people, listening to speakers in a particular area of faith. The speakers were also recorded artists a lot of the time, who incorporated singing and dancing into their messages. They were really fun to go to and listen to the speakers who were excited about sharing their faith with us. The Reignforest was an activity center filled with a lot of cool things to do during down time, and small shops to get souvenirs to remember our awesome time there.

Kansas City was beautiful, and packed with many friendly people! When I returned, I was really influenced by the people I had met, the concerts, speakers and the time I shared with my friends who were as excited as I was to attend this conference. It was an incredible experience, and I still get chills when I think about the praise of 25,000 youth celebrating Jesus. It is an experience that I wish I could describe fully to people who were not able to attend, but it is truly that - an experience. To get the full effect you must go! It is a once in a life time event.



Kayla Lindros- The Who's, What's, Where's, When's, Why's and How's

I and 12 other people from St. Edward's and St. Mary's churches of Clifton Park had the experience of traveling to Kansas City, Missouri for one of the most spectacular events of my life on November 19-22. I was skeptical at first though, dreading the long plane rides, having to find my way around a new city with an added 23,000 people in it, and the fact that I probably knew really nothing about what I was about to experience except the few videos I had seen in meetings leading up to the trip.

The first plane ride wasn't bad, catching up with old friends, meeting new ones, and it was only the first few hours of the trip! And then as our second plane touched down in Missouri, I got really, really excited. It was exciting to be in a new place, but when we got on the bus and were able to see what was around us, and experience just how different it was from New York, it was great. As we got to the hotel, we were able to meet up with friends from our Diocese, and check out our rooms. The rooms were great (except for the one little mishap myself and the three other girls I was rooming with had), and the people at the hotel were really nice and helpful. We hung around in our hotel rooms until we had to go to opening ceremony.

I'll just say, that it was nothing like I expected. I walked into the Sprint Center and was amazed. It housed 20,000 Catholic youth along with the amazing bands, speakers, choruses and chaperones that had attended the Conference as well. The speeches that were given that night were inspirational, and the music that they played was jammin'! When we got back on the bus we were exhausted, but couldn't not talk about what we had just seen! That night, I could barely sleep, even with the getting up early and the time change, we were all just so excited about the weekend to come.

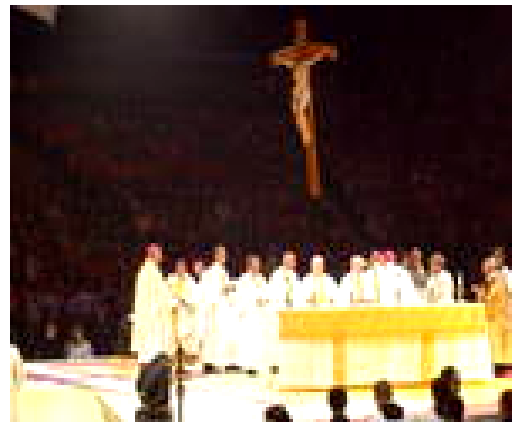
The next few days were some of the best of my life. Workshops, shopping in the Reignforest, and multiple concerts and speeches that changed my opinions on many things. Making new friends, catching up with old ones, learning things about other people, and even myself. There was many booths to check out, and they had everything from sports booths, college booths, and charity booths. It was a real sight to see. There was a concert every night, which left me speechless every time.

Saturday, before we left on Sunday, there was a huge Mass. I had never seen anything quite like it. All the Priests, Bishops and even a Cardinal were there. It was amazing to say the least. It took about three hours, but in my opinion, was so worth it.



Even though I was skeptical about the whole thing at first, I'm glad I made the most of it. NCYC was an experience I won't get to attend probably ever again, and it was so worth while. I really encourage anyone who has the chance to seize it, and have the experience of a lifetime.

"Saturday, before we left there was a huge Mass. I had never seen anything quite like it."



My experience at NCYC was the most life changing experience of my life. I experienced God in a whole new light and it made me realize that I was part of a huge catholic community. I now understand how hard it is to explain exactly what happened in Kansas City with about 20,000 other people. This is because what happened was within each person and everyone had a different experience inside of themselves and with God. All the people I had met there were so amazing and accepting of you. The speakers that I listened to there were so inspiring and made you want to believe in your religion and made you think about why and what you believe in.

The workshops at NCYC that I went to were helpful in helping me figure out what I am doing here and what to do when I left NCYC to keep my spirits as high as they were when they were there. One workshop that I went to was what happens after you die. The speaker spoke about all of the assumptions about what heaven and hell are like. He told us that heaven was supposed to be you with Jesus Christ and that hell was being without him. He explained that when you die and go to the gates of heaven to be judged, that He asks you "Have you lived with me in your life?" and if you say yes you go to heaven to actually be with Him. He also explained exactly what Purgatory was, he said that you can't fail Purgatory but that it is a place where you learn how to live with God in your life. The second speaker that I went to talked about being yourself with God. He spoke about how God can see you for exactly who you are and that you can't be a pretender with Him. He created everyone for a separate reason and each person is special in their own way.

The speakers at the opening and closing concerts were also very inspiring. A young couple who spoke about abstinence really made me think about why people choose to stay abstinent until marriage. They discussed how you have to know your husband/wife even before you love them. That if you're doing something with your boyfriend/girlfriend; would you like it if your future spouse was doing that with someone else? Another group of speakers talked about miracles. They were all teenagers about my age and one young man spoke about how when he was 6 or 7, he was diagnosed with a tumor that cannot be removed. His parents would ask him, "is God talking to you?" and he would say, "yes - He told me that there is nothing wrong anymore." Then one day when they went to the hospital, the tumor was gone. This helped to show me that miracles do happen, even when you're so young you don't understand exactly what or who helped to make this happen.

Overall, I feel like NCYC changed my life and the way that I practice and look at my religion. I feel like I have become a new person that knows how to respect myself and others. Going to this conference made me realize just how important my religion is to me. It made me see that I am a part of a huge community of young catholic people, just like me. I am so thankful to the churches and the diocese for giving the money to enable us to make this trip. I would have most likely not been able to go if it had not been for them. I would also like to thank the people who were chaperones on our trip and anyone who helped to make this trip and NCYC possible.

