

COMMITMENT TO CHRIST AT THE 2017 EASTERN DIOCESE YOUTH RETREAT

"#Commit to Christ" was the theme of the 44th annual Eastern Diocese Youth Retreat. Nearly 50 youth, adults and clergy from nine parishes across the Eastern Diocese gathered at Camp Howe in Goshen, Massachusetts for a beautiful, inspiring, calm and peaceful retreat.



The retreat began with a prayer service on Sunday, August 20, 2017. The theme for the retreat was again done in conjunction with the Year of Commitment 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. 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 "Sing" at our camp movie night. Fr. Robert



Fredrickson led the youth in evening prayer. All the campers experienced many creatures during the evening. Several field mice looking for food and a few chipmunks found their way into the cabins. We heard the owls howling but Bishop Paul was most blessed and he got to share his Episcopal Residence with a wonderful cute family of raccoons - thankfully they didn't keep our Bishop awake all night.

Monday began with a few deer making their way





across Camp Howe - a beautiful sight for the early risers. The celebration of Holy Mass was celebrated by Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich. During the Mass + Jason Fairclough was remembered in prayer (it was fourteen years ago that he lost his life as he traveled home from our youth retreat). + Bishop Thomas Gnat was also remembered during the Opening Mass of the Retreat, Bishop Gnat attended more than 30 diocesan youth retreats during his tenure as Bishop of the Eastern Diocese. During a short sermon – Fr. Sr. Rob encouraged the youth to commit to Christ and be Jesus to others. Thanks to Dylan, Gaby and Emmy for serving at the Altar for this Mass for Youth. After breakfast, the first session on our retreat theme was given by Fr. Michal Gitner. His session was “Why Jesus?” and he shared with the youth Jesus healing the paralytic after he was lowered through the roof to the place where Jesus was preaching. The youth were asked to write a letter to themselves about what Jesus means to them. The first activity was led by Joanne Olivera on Commitment. The youth were asked to come up with many ways that they could show

their commitment to Christ in various aspects in their lives. Here are some of them: Commit to Church—attending Mass, donating time and money to Church, mission work and serve God as an Altar Server; Commit to Family—household chores, helping family members, family gatherings; Commit to Community - volunteering, donating books to schools, animal shelters, buying from local businesses and giving food to the homeless; Commit to their education - doing your best, studying for tests, reading in free time, going to school everyday and doing homework on time; Commit to Country - serve and support the military, voting, protecting human rights, community service and paying your fair share.



Our second session was again presented by Fr. Michal Gitner on Jesus’ Own Commitment. Focusing on Jesus’ commitment first to His Father in heaven and then to all of God’s children. Some moving clips from Jesus’ ministry were shared with the youth—very dramatic was Jesus walking on the water and calming the storm at sea. A special thanks to Fr. Michal for presenting two sessions at our retreat while he was in great pain - following his efforts later on in the day he ended up in the hospital for treatment. He was remembered in prayer during the remainder of the retreat and we are glad that he was doing much better by the time our retreat was ended. Our second activity followed where our youth made kites - the theme for the activity was Rise Up and Commit. So



this theme was on the kites as well as a list of the ways each of the youth would commit. It was great to see many of our campers flying their kites as they ran up and down the road.



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. Joe Soltysiak gave the evening session on the Commitment of Jesus' Apostles. Fr. Sr. Joe gave a nice overview of the 12 Apostles and illustrated their commitment to Christ and their dedication to building the Church. The

youth especially enjoyed a game where they got to name to the Apostles (figures were brought out of the box and the youth had to guess which figures match the commitment of the various Apostles). All campers were rewarded with glow sticks for their efforts and they were enjoyed by most!

Christian Olympics followed. Thanks to Joanne and Heather for leading these games of the 44th camp Olympiad. Balloon races, blindfolded cotton ball scooping and gloves and gum were just a few of the exciting competitions. Fr. Robert Fredrickson then shared Ice Cream with the youth - he had ten gallons of Ice Cream donated to the retreat and wow did the kids enjoy it. Thanks Fr. Robert! Following the first of our camp Ice Cream socials the youth and adults enjoyed time at the camp fire and some four square in the dark. Fr. Fredrickson 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 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. Fr. Robert Frederickson gave the morning session on Witnesses. He shared with the youth the many opportunities they have to witness to their faith in Christ in their everyday lives—even in standing in

line at McDonalds they can witness to Christ. Fr. Robert told them to speak and live the truth in Christ Jesus and gave examples of some of the saints and through their witness showed their commitment to Christ. All the participants got a rock that said “Witnesses - Acts 1:8” - *You shall be My Witnesses*.

Community Service was the next morning effort as our youth gave back to 4-H Camp Howe. They sanded and painted a few of the camp picnic tables which needed the sprucing up. What a great job they did. 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. 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 ropes course, four-square and more.

Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich presented his session: How to Commit to Christ today. The words of Jesus were used to present this. Some ways the youth were encouraged to commit were to follow Jesus, to love as Jesus taught and did, to serve, to use their gifts and to be Jesus to others as “You may be the only Jesus some people see”. Fr. Sr. Rob also showed a clip from Nick Vujicic about having hope because of Christ and that with God we can always get back up.

The youth then enjoyed a second ice cream social thanks to Fr. Fredrickson. We thank he and Kathy for serving all delicious ice cream sundaes. 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. Soon after the service concluded the lightning found us and we were off to our cabins to shelter in place. An incredi-



ble storm passed through where inches of rain fell and a lightning strike on the boys sides of camp. All weathered the storm and then beautiful refreshing fall air followed.

Wednesday began with Fr. Fredrickson celebrating Morning Prayer. After a bacon-packed breakfast our next presentation was on the Institution of the PNCC. Brenda Richard with help from Fr. Sr. Rob did a great job show-

ing the early days of our PNCC under the leadership of Bishop Hodur and the purpose and work of our PNCC here in North America and throughout Europe. The 2017 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 Erin Tudryn from Holy Name of Jesus Parish in S. Deerfield, MA. Her name will be added to the plaque and will be remembered at future Youth Retreats. Congratulations Erin!

Then it was 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. A 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 is finally coning :)

After southern country chicken, Bishop Paul Sobiechowski gave the final session of Youth Retreat 2017: Bishop Hodur's Commitment. Bishop spoke about how Bishop Hodur was



committed to following Christ and did so faithfully during his life. Our Bishop also taught the youth how Bishop Hodur rooted the PNCC in the Catholic and Apostolic faith of the Undivided Church. After this session Fr. Fredrickson handed out Camp Howe -

Eastern Diocese Retreat 2017 - #Commit To Christ T-shirts to all gathered. Thanks to Fr. Robert, Bishop Paul and the Eastern Diocese for donating these shirts to our participants.

Our cabins then gave their reflections on the week of retreat and gave some examples of how they can commit to Christ in their lives. We hope and pray they do just that. 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 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. The youth also spelled out #Commit with their flashlights - so cool.

Bishop Paul Sobiechowski began our final day of retreat celebrating Holy Mass on the Feast of St. Bartholomew. Bishop in his sermon spoke about St. Bartholomew and asked the youth to take the important teachings they learned this past week and apply them in their lives. He told them to commit to Christ and His Church and take what they have learned this week and share it with others. Thanks to Charles and Zack for serving at the



Altar for this Holy Mass.



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 Fr. Robert Fredrickson. 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 make a real commitment to Christ and show that commitment in how they live: walking in the way of Jesus. Thanks are given to Bishop Paul, the session presenters, our activity coordinator Joanne Oliveira, our country store manager -

Brenda Richard, to Janice Dzialo and Maryann Zarek for a great job on the backdrop, to Natalie Chmielewska for being our retreat photographer, 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 2017 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 2018 will again be held at Camp Howe in Goshen, Massachusetts beginning on Sunday August 19, 2018. The countdown on a few cell phones to Youth Retreat next year has already begun!

We are excited to announce our next diocesan youth event will be our Winter Youth Gathering/Lock In - Friday, December 29th to Saturday December 30th 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 our 45th annual Diocesan Youth Retreat beginning next August 19th. #Commit to Christ!

Committed in Christ,

Fr. Sr. Rob Nemkovich















