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## Why I Want to be Confirmed

by Amanda Achtman, St. Bede Elementary School

The reason I want to be confirmed is because I value my beliefs and my faith. It is very important to me that I go to church every week and receive the Eucharist too. I have decided that Jesus is my God and the one I can pray to for help and guidance. I believe in the Catholic religion and will try my best to follow the Ten Commandments.

God points me in a good direction; he is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. I think that if I continue my faith and keep my trust in God I will be a better person. I have noticed that putting a little faith in something and following rules that are to respect others

is not too bad. God is an example for me to do what's right. So why not go to church, practice your faith and spread the good news?

Being confirmed is my choice and I choose to take part in this final sacrament of initiation into the Church.

After I receive this important sacrament, I will continue to go to church weekly, go to a Catholic school and learn more about Jesus and the Saints. When I get older I will get a job that will not go against my beliefs and I will either get married and have children or I will become a religious sister if that is God's plan for me. Confirmation is an impor-



Amanda Achtman

tant step in my faith. I know that Jesus is always with me, helping and leading me to do what's right. When I am confirmed I will continue to practice my faith following Jesus' good example.

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## Faith is a Learning Experience

by Stephanie Davis, Sr. Youth Group Leader – Ascension Parish

When I was twelve years old I thought I knew it all. I thought I knew what it meant to be a good Catholic, what the difference between right and wrong was. I thought I was perfect because, unlike most of my friends, I went to church with my family every Sunday. Don't get me wrong—it's very important to attend weekly mass, even though there's more to being a Christian than that. I thought I knew what it meant to be confirmed, and that I wanted to be a Catholic for the rest of my life. I never understood the friends who were confirmed because their parents said they had to or because all of their friends were. In grade six everything was simple and comprehensible. Without question, I followed my parents' example and knew that what they believed was what I believed.

Then came Junior High, that uncomfortable period which many of you are in now. People started smoking cigarettes during lunch, carefully avoiding the adult supervisors who tried to prevent such things. Some kids were even drinking and

doing pot. This was a strange place—far from the comforts of the lunch bags and crossing guards of elementary school—a place writhing with hormones and growth spurts. With all that change came a change in my attitude towards faith. I met so many people who didn't think it was cool to pray or to believe in God even. Was Catholicism right for me? At a time when fitting in was oh so important, I started to question what I had been taught. And I felt guilty for it.

In high school I learned that it's all right to question what you believe, in fact it's considered healthy and is encouraged. I discovered that by reflection, prayer and honestly searching for the truth I would strengthen my own faith. I realized that there are so many people out there with the same struggles and concerns as me. I learned that one of the greatest blessings was to be able to talk to someone about my feelings and get an honest answer.

As a young adult, I think growing up today is a tough thing to go through. There are so many pressures to abandon



Stephanie Davis

what we know to be true and right. I think the most difficult thing for me to do now is to find the time and the courage to talk to and be with God, and to know Jesus on a personal level. But I think one of the wisest things to do is to take life day by day.

One of my favourite quotes is from the musical Rent, "There is no future, there is no past. I treat this moment as my last. There's only us, there's only this. Forget regret or life is yours to miss. No other road, no other way, no day but today."

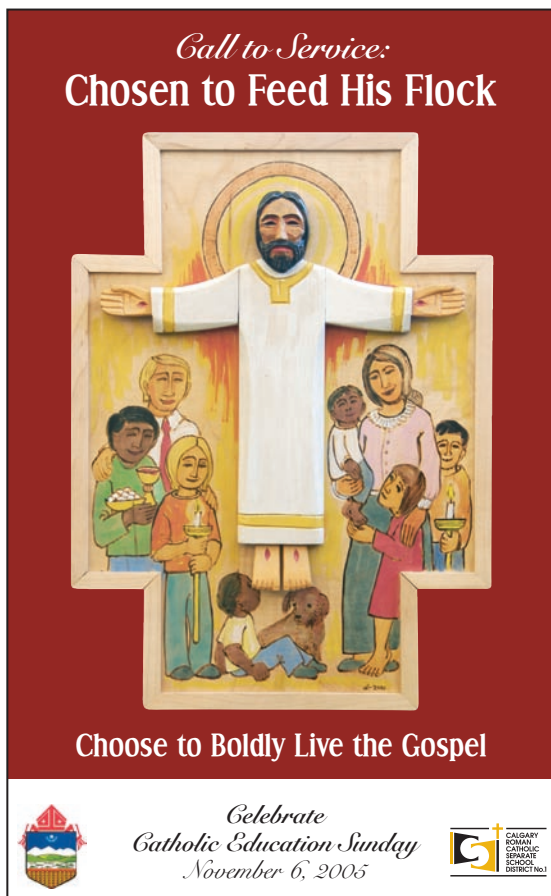
# Catholic Education Sunday 2005

by Judy McKay, Calgary Catholic School District

The Catholic Education Sunday theme, *Choose to Feed His Flock*, reflects our shared responsibility as members of the Catholic community, to contribute to the faith formation of our children and youth through our support for quality, Catholic-education, provided in faith-filled learning environments.

In setting this day aside, Alberta's bishops confirm their personal commitment to Catholic Education and call on us to reflect on our own roles in supporting it. Catholic Education Sunday causes us to review the successes of the past, to appreciate the opportunities of the present, and to anticipate the possibilities of the future. This event is particularly relevant during this year of our province's centennial since Alberta's history reflects the rich tradition and commitment to excellence evident in Catholic Education.

Part of this history is depicted in the Calgary Catholic School District's poster that lists each school and the date of its opening. In addition to this master poster, each parish in the Calgary area has received a smaller version featuring the schools to which it is linked. For past as well as current students, the school posters evoke strong memories of educational experiences and the rich faith environment unique to each school community.



In recognition of Catholic Education Sunday, the Calgary Catholic School District prepares and distributes resources to its 97 schools. The District also makes posters available to all parishes within the Diocese of Calgary, as well as 500 postcards to the city of Calgary parishes and immediate surrounding area. Posters and all online Catholic Education Sunday resources are available for all Alberta Catholic school jurisdictions. These materials can be used to express appreciation for those who support Catholic education.

As we recognize Catholic Education Sunday in parishes and schools, we give thanks to God for the gift of Catholic Education and are encouraged to offer the following prayer, found on the prayer card distributed to schools:

*Gracious, Eternal Creator, You ask us to tend and feed your people. Today, on Catholic Education Sunday, and in the year ahead, bless parents, teachers, and members of parish communities as*

*they strive to "feed Your flock." Help us create faith-filled learning environments where young people succeed and grow in their love of You. Grant us wisdom to follow the path of the best shepherd, Your son, Jesus Christ. We ask this through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

## My Catholic Education is a Blessing!

by Amanda Achtman, Madeleine d'Houet School

After attending a public school for the past two years, I feel blessed to be back in the Catholic system. In general, everyone is more friendly, compassionate, helpful, kind, caring and Christ-like.

Each morning our day begins with the O Canada, Our Father and Intentions to show respect for our country, pray openly and express our mutual reliance on God. The school religious celebrations fill our hearts with joy and acknowledge our shared faith.

A cross or crucifix in each classroom is a silent, but powerful reminder of Jesus's love for each student and teacher. When people say "you're super religious" it's usually out of admiration rather than discrimination or the desire to mock you.

When the School Board says "religion is an integral part of Catholic education," they mean it because religion has been subtly incorporated in subjects other than Religion.

There is less swearing, sexual comments, inuendo and bullying thanks to the *Catholic Community of Caring Program* at my school. I am grateful to be at Madeleine d'Houet!



Thanksgiving School Celebration

# Hearts on Fire: Light to the World!

## Catholic Conference 2006 Youth Program

by Amanda Achtman, Youth Delegate, Madeleine d'Houet School

We are children of God, Servants of the Lord and Friends of Jesus! This was Jesse Manibusan's message for the 560 youth delegates from northern and southern Alberta on Friday, March 17<sup>th</sup> during the Catholic Conference Youth Day, sponsored by the Alberta Catholic School Trustees Assn. (ACSTA) and the Alberta Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The day began with the Liturgy of the Word. Liturgical dancers beautifully set the mood for the faith-filled day.

During the opening reflection, Archbishop Collins called us to be fire and light—not lukewarm. He said that fire and light is needed so much in the world today.

Our keynote speaker, Jesse Manibusan, singer-songwriter-guitarist, is



Jesse Manibusan and Amanda Achtman

a man on fire for God. I really liked how he addressed us as “the Church.” It made me feel responsible and that I have a role to play in the Church. Jesse spoke primarily about fire and light. He said three important things about this topic: First, Jesse stated that it is the Holy Spirit that burns within our hearts and makes our faith truly come alive. When we have the fire of faith—then it burns, and people know that we are children

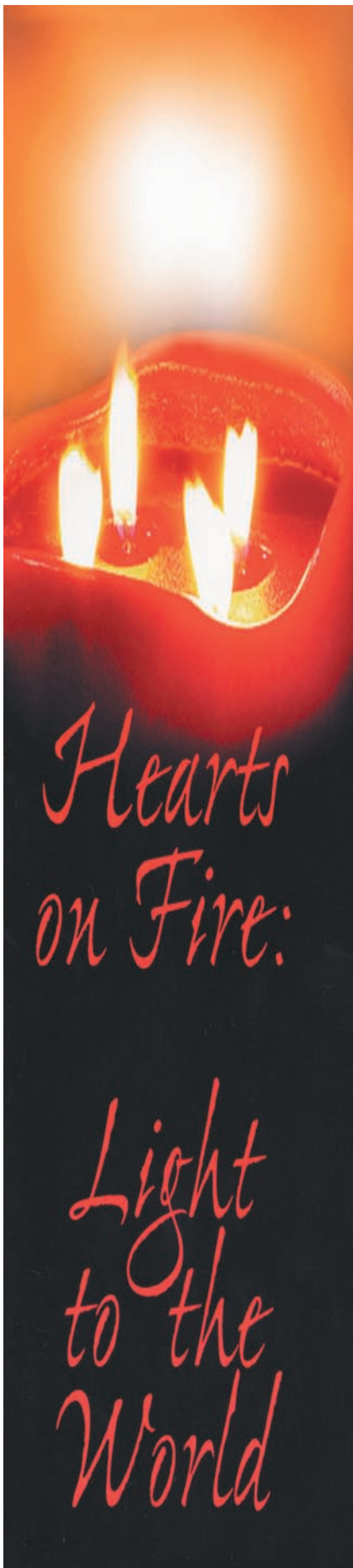
of God because we are servants. Second, he explained that the way to the Light often involves traveling through the darkness. It's about being holy, not being perfect. And finally, we are called to be a people of justice and when we do justice, we know God.

We were given the opportunity to share a bit about ourselves. Another



teen, Amy, from Lloydminster told me that she really likes coming to conferences like this to see new faces and meet new people to find out what they believe and what their faith is all about. Others commented, saying that it was “spiritual, inspirational, fun, inviting, fulfilling, truthful, stupendous, priceless and—definitely worth missing a day of school for!”

Many of the youth questioned, publically and privately, “Why can't the Church be like this everyday?” We closed with a final Liturgy of the Word and left the Conference with the confidence that our hearts are on fire and we can be a light to the world.



*The Catholic Conference hosted several workshops and plenary sessions presented by speakers from a variety of disciplines and areas of catechesis.*

*by Monique and Amanda Achtman*



Archbishop Thomas Collins spoke on *The Eucharist: Setting Our Hearts on Fire*. He walked us through the mass with words starting with why we bless ourselves with holy water—as a sign of our baptism; then through purification/illumination, we say “I confess to you my brothers and sisters that I have sinned through my own fault...” and commented on how rarely these words are actually said in today’s society. He explained that the parish community is a “common jumble” and that this mix is important. The mass is something beyond us; it is not like a club. The point of mass is not for intimate friends to get together, it is for all people. We are not limited to loving the few; we need to love the many. Illumination through the words of sacred Scripture brings us to the fire—the Eucharist. The Eucharist cannot be complex, it should be simple—to be with the one we love. Archbishop Collins concluded, “the last word at mass is not *come*, it’s *GO!* We are sent to bring the Light outward.”

Bishop Frederick Henry’s presentation titled *Pursuing Wellness* encourages us to discover a passion that will withstand the tests of time and history, personal struggles and limitations, and the challenges associated with human relationships. If our hearts are to be on fire, we are to be light to the world. This kind of passion requires proper maintenance and care. Such maintenance flows out of learning to live a balanced lifestyle, setting appropriate boundaries, caring for oneself, nourishing our creativity, refreshing our souls, and having a healthy spirituality which entails repairing and healing ourselves.



Sr. José Hobday, plenary speaker from Tucson, Arizona, gave an address titled *From Glow to Spark to Tongues of Flames: Keep the Fires of the Faith Alive*. Within this presentation Sr. José begged us to keep blowing on the coals of our heart to ignite the flame of passion for living life with gratitude and celebration. She urged us to “taste and see that the coffee is good... taste and see that the day is good... taste and see that you are good! And when the temper of the day makes you move too fast, pause to remember that you are loved by God, by others and that you are very important. The gift you have to give to the world is YOU... You must understand that your presence is food for the world.”

Sr. José said that Lent is springtime/newness and we need to spring to life! She shared that fasting wakes us up and makes us aware that there’s more to us than hunger. Prayer is a way to be consciously connected to the God of life. When we fast, we free the body to make room for the Holy Spirit and we free the mind to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit: knowledge, wisdom, courage, understanding, piety, fortitude and fear of the Lord... “What do we have to do to wake ourselves up? Sing and dance!” resounded Sr. José.



# Faithfully Encouraging Vocations to the Priesthood and Consecrated Life

"I will spend my heaven doing good on earth... I will help priests, missionaries, the whole Church..."

*St. Thérèse of Lisieux*

## Consecrated Life? What's the Point?

*Submitted by Sr. Dianne Turner, OSE*

### Excerpts from Pope John Paul II *Vita Consecrata*

Many people today are puzzled and ask: What is the point of the consecrated life? Why embrace this kind of life, when there are so many urgent needs in the areas of charity and of evangelization itself, to which one can respond even without assuming the particular commitments of the consecrated life?

...Those who have been given the priceless gift of following the Lord Jesus more closely consider it obvious that one can and must be loved with an undivided heart, that one can devote to him one's whole life, and not merely certain actions or occasional moments or activities. The precious ointment poured out as a pure act of love, and thus transcending all "utilitarian" considerations, is a sign of *unbounded generosity*, as expressed in a life spent in loving and serving the Lord, in order to devote oneself to his person and his Mystical Body. From such a life "poured out" without reserve there spreads a fragrance which fills the whole house.

The house of God, the Church, today no less than in the past, is adorned and enriched by the presence of the consecrated life. What in people's eyes can seem a waste is, for the individuals captivated in the depths of their heart by the beauty and goodness of the Lord, an obvious response of love, a joyful expression of gratitude for having been admitted in a unique way to the knowledge of the Son and to a sharing in his divine mission in the world. "If any of God's children were to know and taste divine love, the uncreated God, the incarnate God, the God who endured suffering, the God who is the supreme good, they would give themselves completely to him, they would withdraw not only from other creatures but even from their very selves, and with all their being would love this God of love, to the point of being completely transformed into the God-man, who is the supreme Beloved."

## A RETREAT EVENING FOR YOUTHS SEEKING GOD'S PURPOSE

*by Amanda Achtman, St. Michael's Parish, Calgary*

The evening retreat, attended by about 50 students, was hosted by Fr. Myles Gaffney, Vocations director for the Diocese of Calgary. Following Mass, Fr. Julian Studden of St. Michael's Parish, explained that the search for purpose is often puzzling typically because we begin at the wrong end of the spectrum. He said that it is key to discover God's plan for us because living our purpose is the only way to really live, and not just exist.

There are many resources that attempt to reveal your life's purpose to you. However, as Fr. Julian reminded us, you won't discover your life's purpose just by looking at yourself. "You've probably already tried that," he said. "Clearly you did not create yourself and so there is no way that you can tell yourself what you were created for. Instead, you must look to your creator, who is God, for the revelation of your purpose."

God has five main purposes for you! He has revealed these in Scripture when he says, "Our goal is to measure up to God's plan for us" [2 Cor. 10:13] and "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purposes that prevail" [Proverbs 19:21]. These passages inspire us to ask five questions about life pertaining to worship, ministry, witness, fellowship and discipleship:

Who will be the center of my life?

What will be the contribution of my life?

What will be the communication of my life?

What will be the community of my life?

What will be the character of my life?

Fr. Julian encouraged us to develop a life statement. This statement may contain a personal definition of success, a list of purposes—not goals, (goals are temporary, purposes are eternal).

Fr. Julian gave an example of a life statement involving God's purpose for one's life: "My life purpose is to *worship* Christ with my heart, *serve* him with my SHAPE (Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experience), *fellowship* with his family, grow like him in *character*, and fulfill his *mission* in the world so he receives glory."

For me, success is achieved by continually learning and growing while joyfully serving others and remaining faithful to God.



## What is the Bishop's stick called?

The bishop's stick is called the crosier, "crook," or staff. It is carried by the bishop and sometimes by abbots and abbesses as a sign of the office of chief shepherd. Thus, the stick takes the form resembling a shepherd's crook.

We are not sure why, but the pope has not carried a crosier since the 11<sup>th</sup> century. We find this to be strange since the Holy Father is our chief shepherd. Jesus tells Peter to feed his sheep during their dialogue in John's gospel. We are the sheep of his flock and the pope and the bishops have been entrusted through Peter with the grave responsibility of feeding us.

Scripture has many passages in reference to the sheep and the shepherd. These passages should be understood today as our relationship with our bishop(s). We understand and respect the responsibility that has been laid upon the bishop: to seek out the lost; to lead to restful waters; to protect the vulnerable, especially; and in all things, serve the needs of the sheep. We can remember and reflect on this when we see the bishop with his "stick."



## FACE II FACE Youth Retreat

by Amanda Achtman, St. Michael's Parish

The celebration of Sacraments, the passion of a fabulous ministry team, and the communion of young people were all part of the Face II Face retreat that took place at St. Bonaventure school and parish. Youth gathered to experience the love of God and to be spiritually renewed during this liturgical season of Lent. I was strengthened and inspired by the community of my peers desiring to "set the world ablaze with Christ's love."

The two-day retreat was both fun-filled and faith-filled. Participants had the opportunity to experience confession, adoration, prayer ministry, small group sessions and to celebrate mass. The small group sessions were very meaningful to me. In grade-specific groups we "soul-searched" by answering questions like, "What scares people about letting God direct their life?" "How has God acted to help you in your life?" and "What are you doing right now to prepare for eternity?"

Ken Yasinski from Face II Face Ministries is an engaging and passionate speaker and musician. He shared many personal stories that were easy to relate to and incredibly relevant in our lives as teenagers. The Face II Face Retreat empowered us to live our faith, to be people of love, and to continue to grow in an ever-deepening relationship with Christ.



Ken Yasinski  
Face II Face Ministries

## iPray. He listens.

by Amanda Achtman, St. Michael's Life Teen Youth Group

The Catholic Youth Rally was attended by youth from all around the province on Saturday, October 20 at Holy Trinity Academy in Okotoks. The rally theme was: **iPray. He listens.**

Youth joined together to celebrate the faith, establish friendships through group sessions, celebrate Mass together,



Greg Thompson's main message: *iPray. He listens!*

and be inspired by the keynote speaker, Greg Thompson. Greg, a passionate, funny, courageous, and talented man from Alabama came to remind the youth attendees of God's love, the call to discipleship, and the meaning of having courage. His use of games, stories, and different media were all highly effective in engaging, inspiring, and challenging the youth.

It was a blessing to attend the rally and meet people my age from all over Alberta who are passionate about their faith. One of my personal highlights, was when a new friend of mine and I prayed the Creed together as we prepared to enter

St. James Church for mass. Uniting in prayer with other youth throughout the day was really strengthening, as we were all powerful witnesses to one another.

The rally concluded with a dance. Youth were challenged to keep the enthusiasm that was built during the rally as we returned to our families, friends, and schools with prayerful hearts that are tuned into God.



Youth delegates celebrate the faith by "tuning into God."

## For Vocations: Consider Planting "Smaller Seeds"

### Children's Holy Hour

Submitted by Barbara Johnson Moroney, St. Gerards Parish, Calgary

As a service to our Catholic community, and especially for mothers of young children and homeschooling families, our Calgary Catholic homeschoolers are leading a weekly children's hour of adoration.

We have been graciously welcomed at Holy Spirit Parish, where they have designated the last hour of their weekly Friday Adoration for children and their parents or friends.

Initiated by Melissa Neil, and assisted by Bridget Dobek and me, we have met every Friday since the beginning of September from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. and spent some beautiful time with Jesus; singing, praying, and being quiet. There is a brief, parent led talk (usually on the upcoming Sunday gospel), and we

remain for the Chaplet of Mercy and benediction, which was already a feature of this hour at Holy Spirit. The time goes by too quickly for most of us, including the children.

Inspired by the Web site [www.childrenofhope.org](http://www.childrenofhope.org) and adapted to fit our particular circumstances, this initiative is proving to be very popular with



Children's Adoration of the Eucharist

children and their parents. We usually have about 30 attendees, and our first holy hour in October was attended by more than 50 people, of whom 39 were children of varying ages. Our older children help to lead the prayers and the singing, and on occasion present the talk as well.

One of the intentions at all of our holy hours is for vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. I am sure this special time with Jesus will cultivate the rich soil where many vocations will be able to take root. With God's grace, these little seeds will grow into large trees giving Hope to our hope starved world! For more information we can be contacted at [www.calgarycatholichomeschoolers.com](http://www.calgarycatholichomeschoolers.com).

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If you were about to have an abortion, would you walk up to someone standing near hostile, violent, exploitive pictures?

Why not just do your work with love, softness and compassion, the way Jesus would?

### Letter # 2

This does not only effect the mother, but also grand-parents, aunts and uncles, fathers, etc. With the great numbers of abortions performed each year, these pictures will hurt many, many people.

This kind of approach is judgmental. Yes abortion is wrong, I know that first hand, but placing people in the groups of the good guys against the bad guys is not the way to go about it.

### Letter # 3

My children are not objects and their death is not something to be displayed. Instead of displaying pictures of dismembered aborted foetuses, display the laughter and smile of all children...

I would advocate that to picture a family with the loss of a child as a shaded child in the background with the words, What is missing? would be as effective in delivery of the message of the impacts of abortion on individuals, families, our community and our society. Taking a playground full of children and then removing those that have been aborted also brings a strong message of what is truly lost. A picture of a playground with no children would also speak volumes of what the loss is. Combine this with the cries of a newborn child, the joy of watching a child take its first steps, a line of little people holding onto their partner and a rope as they journey to an excursion from their daycare... The celebration of the images of life and living are all that is needed to render images of loss

A life is not shown in the image of death, life is lived in the images of living... day by day.

Life is the most precious gift that is given to us on this earth, and it is our duty to love it, respect it and keep it from harm. *The Gospel of Life* enjoins us to respect life both in the thousand and one things we do each day and in important family, political and legal decisions.



## Student Dialogue on Catholic Education

by Amanda Achtman, Grade 11 Student Advisory Council

The Student Advisory Council is comprised of three high school students representing every Catholic high school in the Calgary Separate School District. We meet on a monthly basis to discuss the happenings in our schools, create a sense of community between schools, and engage in service projects throughout the year.

Our first meeting this year gave student representatives and administration members representing each school an opportunity to discuss Catholic education. Dr. Lucy Miller, chief superintendent, spoke to us and guided our dialogue inviting us to reflect and consider “what would it look like if the best happened?”



*Dr. Lucy Miller addresses and challenges the Student Advisory Council of the Calgary Separate School District*

In a world café conversation format students dialogued about what makes their school Catholic, what makes their Catholic education different, and how attending a Catholic school influences them inside and outside of school.

The “gems” of our conversation included the following points: there is a greater sense of purposeful respect and tolerance within Catholic high schools; we are guided by the Gospel values; students gain understanding and tolerance for other world religions through the religious studies curriculum; and there is a freedom to speak openly about religion and to live out the faith.

My school, Bishop Carroll, hosted the morning session. After our dialogue, Bishop Carroll representatives made a presentation about our school and gave guided tours to the visiting students. The meeting concluded with a lunch. It is a blessing to journey with other Calgary Catholic high school students in friendship and faith throughout my high school career.



# World Consecrated Life Day Celebration 2008

Submitted by Sr. Ernestine Miskolczi, SSS

*“O, Lord, you have come to the seashore,  
Neither searching for the rich nor the wise,  
Desiring only that I should follow...”*

These words, began the celebration for those gathered on February 1 at St. Joseph Church to celebrate World Consecrated Life Day with the many Sisters, religious priests and brothers of our Diocese. As people arrived they received a candle which, after opening greetings, was lit from the Christ candle on the altar. The celebration of the Eucharist was presided by Fr. Krystian Golisz, SDS. Following the homily the religious renewed their commitment to Christ.

Pope John Paul II established this observance for the whole Church (February 2). The purpose of the day is “to help the entire Church esteem ever more greatly the witness of those persons who have chosen to follow Christ by means of the practice of the evangelical counsels” as well as



“to be a suitable occasion for consecrated persons to renew their commitment and rekindle the fervour which should inspire their offering of themselves to the Lord” [Ordo – Liturgical Calendar].

## Diocesan Youth Evening Retreat

by Joseph Boissonneault and Amanda Achtman, Bishop Carroll High School

On January 30, youth from around the Calgary diocese gathered to celebrate faith and renew understanding of their purpose in life. The Office of Vocations hosted this evening retreat. Both of us attended this event and dialogued about our experiences.

J: We started the evening off with a mass at Sacred Heart Parish, celebrated with Fr. Myles Gaffney, after which we were introduced to the guest speaker, Ken Yasinski.

A: Ken Yasinski, founder of Face to Face Ministries spoke on the theme of “Discovering Your Purpose in Life.” His talk was given in an intimate and heart-to-heart way that was engaging and inspiring.

J: Ken began his talk with a story from when he was growing up in Saskatchewan. He realized, after watching his uncles break his family’s canoe by towing it with a motor boat, that if something is not used in the way it has been designed, then the potential is there to harm yourself or others. He connected this to the experience of our lives by saying that we are called to live up to God’s design for our lives, and to fulfill his purposes for us.

A: A powerful story that Ken shared involved his experience of watching a sunset and observing that the clouds nearest to the sun shone the absolute brightest. Watching this made Ken realize that just as the clouds appeared to be consumed or lost in the sun, we are challenged to lose ourselves in the glory of God’s “Son.”

J: The last story was about the trials Ken faced when he attended university. The most important concept that I took away from this story is that Ken realized, when he received a failing grade due to his irresponsible lifestyle, he was making the mistake of identifying himself with a 34% test mark. He made a commitment at that point to change, and become open to receiving God’s call to holiness.

A: Everyone in attendance was asked to examine their life and answer three questions. The first question was “Do you want to be holy?” Ken light-heartedly reminded us that if you don’t want to be holy, then you won’t be.

J: The second question posed was “If Jesus returned tomorrow, would his return be a disruption or a fulfillment of your daily activities?” Thinking about this question urges us to approach God with joy and in a spirit of readiness.

A: Finally, he invited us to examine where we are with our ‘yes’ to God. Ken explained that prayer is change and that through prayer we can become saints.

The Evening Youth Retreat was a wonderful opportunity for us and other youth ages 16-30 to examine our purpose in life and reflect on what were created for. We will go forth with a renewed sense of mission and desire to be holy!



Alive in Christ: through him, with him, in him...

# Catholic Conference 2008: Youth Program

by Joseph Boissonneault and Amanda Achtman, Bishop Carroll High School

On March 7, youth from all across the province gathered in Edmonton for a faith-filled, high energy Catholic Conference. The conference was geared towards students from grades seven through twelve. Speaker Mike Patin from Louisiana and musician Jesse Manibusan, from Texas were extremely engaging and passionately shared their faith through stories of personal experiences. Mike shared with the youth that he has learned that God does not want us to choose between him and our other various activities, but rather to include him in these aspects of our life that we enjoy. Mike suggested four ways that people can include God in their daily activities. The acronym PLUS was conducive to remembering these values that were outlined. PLUS stands for Pray, Learn, Unity, and Serve, and Mike explained what each of these four elements entail.

Jesse has a passion for people and identified with our own personal struggles of the challenge of embracing God's plan. Jesse learned to put God's purposes for his life before his own ambitions (which formerly included becoming a Beatle).

Both speakers collaborated in presenting the importance of perspective. A poster displayed the phrase **Godisnowhere** which could be read either as "God is nowhere" or "God is now here."

One attendee said about the event, "I thought it was so fun and I usually don't like the singing and dancing but I thought it was so great that I couldn't stop!"

The entire event affirmed the faith of the youth attendees and we go forth with the confidence that we are living Alive in Christ: through him, with him, in him!



Mike Patin and Jesse Manibusan



Naomi Gallant was serenaded by her boyfriend, Rob Hartery in a public witness of his love for her as he proposed marriage in front of about 300 youths! Naomi and Rob are school teachers.

## BISHOP'S DINNER 2008



...a Southern Alberta celebration and charity benefit

October 23, 2008

*"Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless."* [Isaiah 58:7]

"Tickets or a family table make great wMother's Day or Father's Day gifts."

Tickets: \$125/person or a table of 8 for \$1000  
Contact the Catholic Pastoral Centre (403) 218-5531

Location: Telus Convention Centre, Calgary

## Knights of Columbus Scholarships



The Alberta-Northwest Territories Knights of Columbus State program of scholarships provides fifteen \$500.00 scholarships annually (i.e. three available in each of the five regions established by the State Council).

This program is open to Alberta/NWT Knights in good standing, their wives, children and grandchildren and also to widows of deceased Knights in good standing. These scholarships are for study beyond the secondary education level. This program is intended to supplement and enhance the various scholarships and bursary programs currently offered by several councils and to provide opportunities in areas where no scholarships currently exist.

Application deadline for 2008 is May 31. For more information, contact: Neil Gannon, State Secretary (780) 444-6399 or Wally Streit, State Deputy (780) 988-8719 or (780) 437-4335 voicemail.

Application forms can be obtained from your Grand Knight or downloaded from [www.kofc.ab.ca](http://www.kofc.ab.ca).

# Choosing our Future: Peace, One Heart at a Time

by Amanda Achtman, Student, Bishop Carroll High School

ON JUNE 19 OF 2008 ST. MARY'S University College hosted Jean Vanier in Calgary, and invited young adults from across western Canada to come listen to his message and learn from his living witness.

After being introduced by the parents of a young daughter with a developmental disability, Jean Vanier was welcomed with a standing ovation. With his back to his audience, he humbly embraced the young family who were so grateful to him for his work and for the encouragement that he had inspired within their family.

Jean Vanier shared his concern about the shameful conditions that people with disabilities are often faced with leading them to be sent to institutions. Inspired by the Beatitudes, 44 years ago in France, Jean Vanier created a home for himself and his two friends, Raphaël Simi and Philippe Seux, both of whom were developmentally disabled. His idea was to invite them to his home and simply "share life" together. He had no idea that this very personal commitment would inspire a world-wide movement called L'Arche.

Jean Vanier is truly a man who knows

and fulfils what some refer to as "the duty of the moment." He spoke in great detail about how the world we live in is creating outcasts and how social disparity can lead to breakdowns in society. He emphasized that every person is valuable, precious, and necessary and that when we lose sight of this, we are truly missing out on the big picture.

Mr. Warriner, a teacher at Bishop Carroll High School also attended this special day. He and I are members of the **Youth 4 Justice Committee** at Bishop Carroll. Remembering Jean Vanier's inspiring testimony through word and action, we brought forth the idea to support L'Arche as part of the 2008 Advent fund-raising project. The Youth 4 Justice members readily agreed. The fund-raising took form in an Advent Raffle Basket Challenge. At the Advent mass on December 16, a cheque in the amount of **\$4500.00** was presented to L'Arche Calgary. Our school plans to do more service projects in the spring through a school-based initiative called the "Hands and Feet of Bishop Carroll." Jean Vanier's inspiration leaves a lasting impression and his legacy continues to be celebrated.



Amanda Achtman and Jean Vanier

Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche, has been named the 2008 Nation Builder of the Year by the Globe and Mail. The Nation Builder Award recognizes outstanding Canadians who unify and inspire the nation. Vanier is being touted as a social visionary for planting the seed of L'Arche in France in 1964. Since that time L'Arche has flourished and today encompasses 134 chapters worldwide. In Canada, there are 29 L'Arche communities. L'Arche Calgary is a registered charity established 35 years ago. Please see Diocesan Dates February 8 on p. 12 for details on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual L'Arche Calgary Cakewalk.

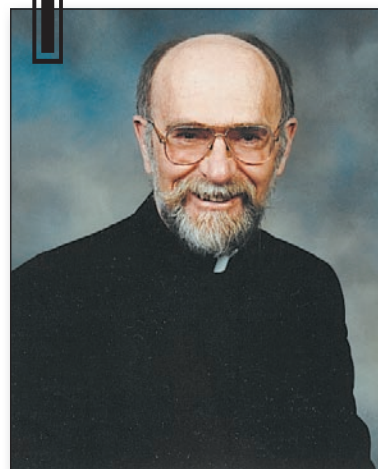


## In Memoriam: Rev. Frederick Sogz • 1935-2009

After retiring from his teaching career in southern Alberta (1959 - 1985), Fr. Fred entered the seminary, and was ordained a priest on February 23, 1990 at St. Mary's Cathedral, Calgary. Fr. Fred served at St. Luke's Parish, Calgary; St. Ambrose, Coaldale; Sacred Heart Mission, Raymond; and finally at St. Anthony's, Drumheller.

After retiring from parish ministry in the Diocese of Calgary in 1999, he moved to British Columbia and assisted in the Diocese of Nelson, BC.

After a serious car accident around 2004, he was hospitalized in Calgary and unfortunately never made a full recovery of his health. Fr. Frederick Sogz passed away in Calgary on Saturday, January 10 at the age of 73 years.



# Faithfully Encouraging Vocations to the Priesthood and Consecrated Life



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## 13<sup>th</sup> World Day of Consecrated Life

*Excerpt from Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI after the Holy Mass*

**I**n the Church's tradition, St Paul has always been recognized as father and teacher of those, called by the Lord, who have chosen unconditional dedication to him and to his Gospel. Various religious Institutes are named after St. Paul and draw from him a specific charismatic inspiration. One can say that he repeats to all consecrated men and women a forthright and affectionate invitation: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" [1 Cor 11: 1]. What in fact is consecrated life other than a radical imitation of Jesus, a total "sequela" of him? [cf. Mt 19: 27-28]. Well, in all this Paul represents a sound pedagogical mediation: imitating him in the following of Jesus, dear friends, is the privileged way to correspond fully to your vocation of special consecration in the Church.

## Consecrated Life

*by Sr. Noreen Hickey, SND*



**O**n February 2, Religious Priests, Brothers, Sisters and laity gathered at St. Joseph's Church to commemorate World Day for Consecrated Life of the Religious. A special PowerPoint presentation was followed by Mass with Fr. Krystian Golisz, SDS, assisted by Deacon Dennis Foraie.

The liturgical songs were very meaningful, and in his homily, Fr. Krystian challenged everyone present to be truly committed to Jesus Christ and to live out their commitments with sincere and total dedication. The religious present were then invited to stand and renew this commitment to their call.

The Liturgy of the Eucharistic prayers included intentions for all aspects of the Church and for the great needs of the world. At the end of the mass, Sr. Donna Marie thanked all who worked to make this a great celebration. All were invited to the hall for a reception and a time for fellowship.

## St. Paul and Vocation

*by Amanda Achtman, St. Bonaventure Parish/Bishop Carroll HS*

**F**ebruary 29, the diocesan Office of Vocations hosted an evening to celebrate, consider, and pray for vocations. Native Calgarian, Fr. Raymond de Souza from the Archdiocese of Kingston was the guest speaker. Fr. de Souza spoke on the theme *Saint Paul and Vocation*. "The Year of St. Paul" began on June 28, 2008 and ends on June 29, 2009 as declared by Pope Benedict XVI.

Fr. de Souza compared and contrasted the conversion story of St. Paul to the possible vocational calls that each of us has or will receive. In the account of Paul's conversion story, there are three elements of the story that each of us can learn from. First, Paul heard the voice of the Lord. While Paul did have an extraordinary encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus, he also had an extraordinary call to match. Secondly, Paul became open to new possibilities and radical change. He went from being a persecutor of the Church to a preacher of the Gospel. Finally,



Paul was willing to accept risks and take action. To accept Christ, Paul had to begin to listen to the Church. Through Paul's conversion story we learn that God does not simply call the prepared, but rather he prepares the called.

In our lives, may we be attentive to the voice of the Lord, draw close to Christ in prayer and the sacraments, allow the Church to guide and inform our vocational call, and have confidence in the Lord's providence. Fr. de Souza encourages parish groups and individuals to study St. Paul and his teachings during this year in his honour.

## CALLED TO LIVE IN PERSONA CHRISTI

by Amanda Achtman, St. Mary's University College

Catholic Family Ministries hosted the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Catholic Family Life Conference at Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta from July 1-4, 2010. With a special focus on the *Year for Priests*, all of the keynote speakers were priests. There was even a Men in Black Soccer Challenge! The conference was sacrament-filled, with concurrent sessions each day geared to each specific age group attending. The challenging and inspiring talks, combined with campfires, fireworks, and outdoor sports made this conference a fun and spiritually strengthening family event.

Catholic families from all over Alberta have traveled during the first week of July to attend this event for the past 15 years. At the conference families spend time dedicated to one another, friends reunite and discuss faith and family issues, older children care for and play with the younger children, and families go to confession and receive Christ in the Eucharist together. It is beautiful to see the vibrancy and happiness of the families whose lives are centered on Christ with the common goal of each member growing in holiness.

Claire Soentgerath, 18 says that for her, "The highlight would be the community of people who all have the same values coming together to share their ideas. It's positive and inspiring that there are so many others out there wanting to follow in the footsteps of Christ."

For Christian Arroyo Gama, 26, the best part of the Conference is the model that the priests give. He says, "My highlight is the way that the priests gave the talks. They were natural and they have [made] mistakes too. Christian observed, [the Catholic Family Life Conference] brings families together and all for the same reason: family and Jesus."

Fr. Paul Nicholson gave a relevant and challenging talk to the women delegates specifically. He tackled issues of modern feminism centered around convincing women that the home is a place of oppression. Fr. Nicholson explained that escaping the family and children, and home contradicts the feminine genius of women. On the subject of living in *Persona Christi*, Fr. Nicholson explained that for the wife

and mother, preparing the dinner table is similar to preparing the altar and that she shares in a priestly experience that all laity are called to by virtue of their baptism. He said, her table is her altar and the way that she serves [her family] proclaims the gospel message that they are not a burden, but a blessing. We were reminded that it is in ordinary ways and daily sacrifice that we are sanctified and to remember the extraordinary reality in the simplicity of the sacrifice of the mass.

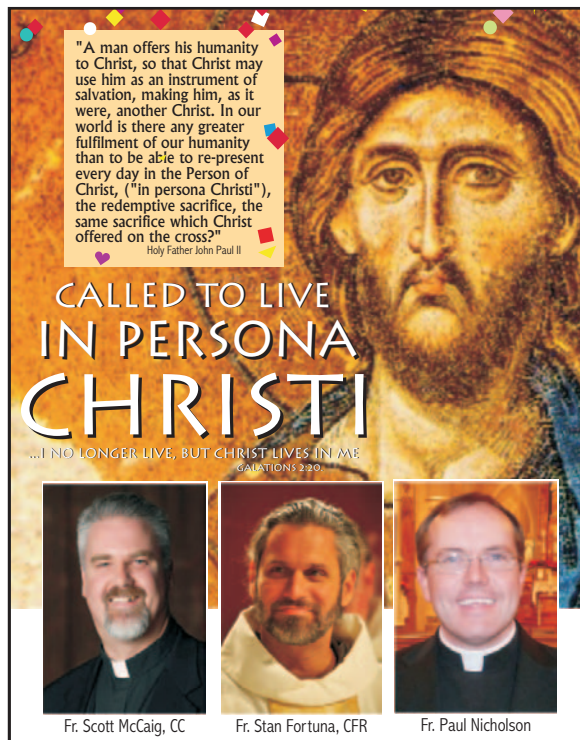
Jana Drapal's favorite talk was about sacrifice and daily mortification. She learned, in order to be transformed in the person of Christ and to become like Christ we need to be strengthened by allowing ourselves to encounter desert-like experiences. By the small daily things we do in denying ourselves, we strengthen our will and in that way we are transformed to be more and more like Christ. This is what helps us to fight temptation and difficult situations."

A highlight for me was Fr. Stan Fortuna's talks and his evening concert. Fr. Stan, also known as the rapping priest came from New York to connect with conference attendees and was described as different, dynamic, and passionate. He

performed *F.A.M.I.L.Y.*, a song that everyone was getting excited about. Here are a few of the lyrics:

We need a new humanity  
 We're way too selfish, it's devilish  
 How do you deal with the craziness?  
 Worldliness is deadliness  
 With all the excess still got no happiness  
 We got to be selfless don't you agree?  
 Don't you know how to spell family?  
 F.A.M. - Forget About Me  
 I.L.Y. - I Love You

When asked how to promote world peace, Mother Teresa responded, "Go home and love your family." May family life be strengthened by the gospel message of sacrificial and unconditional love so that, in all cases, we may live striving to imitate Christ's example always.



# Solidarity, Subsidiarity and Singing Karaoke

by Amanda Achtman, St. Bonaventure Parish

**T**he world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page,” said St. Augustine. In August I travelled to the Philippines as a member of the **Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace** on a young adult solidarity trip. The main purpose of the trip was to live in solidarity with the poor and to learn about the development work of the partners receiving funding from Canadian supporters of **Development and Peace**.

Our team was comprised of 10 university students. The partners that we met with included: the Urban Poor Associates, the Centre for Environmental Concern, the National Secretariat for Social Action-Justice and Peace (NASSA), and the Philippine Educational Theatre Association.

After spending a day in metropolitan Manila, we traveled by jeepney out of the city to the urban poor community of Baseco. Touring the slum community was our starting point, but it wasn't until families in the communities hosted us, that I had turned the page. The hospitality shown to us in the slums was remarkable as families welcomed us with great enthusiasm. They were honoured to have international visitors as their guests. They said that they feel special knowing that people thousands of miles away care about them.

Among the first things we noticed in the community was the large number of young children. I spoke with a mother of four children whose husband is an overseas worker, like so many other Filipinos. The mother explained that she has big aspirations for her children and pointed to each one mentioning her dreams for a nurse, a teacher, and for her son to be a seaman like his father. As she snuggled her infant son, who is named after her husband, she remarked that even though her husband is out of the country, she still has her son. This prompted me to realize the great extent to which children bring hope to their families. Each child inspires optimism and gratitude.

Of course, there are challenges for the poor to raise large families. The same mother shared that she was wrestling with how it can be pro-life to have so many children when there are too many to feed and send to school.

Our group met with the Auxiliary Bishop of Manila, **Bishop Broderick S. Pabillo**, who offered some insights into the approach that NASSA takes in total human development. He said, “We, here in the Philippines, are trying our

best in order to develop our own people, but sadly there are groups that claim that contraception, abortions, and condoms are for the poor. We do not believe in that—and that is not true—because actually these programs are anti-poor. They look down on the poor and they don't empower the poor. For us, instead of using money to bring about these programs, we should bring money to help the sick, to help develop the people, to help them get proper education. That is more empowering to the poor rather than these programs, which are against life and against the family.”

Throughout the two-week trip, I tried my hand at planting rice, ate roasted pig, met with organic farmers, witnessed cultural presentations, experienced the incredible hospitality of rural communities, sang karaoke, observed a protest before the Department for Agrarian Reform, lived with several different host families, observed an open pit mine on Rapu Rapu island, and explored the complexity of the issues related to foreign mining companies operating in the Philippines.

Through the experience, many friendships were estab-

lished. I learned to see the poor not as a problem to be solved, but as partners to cooperatively involve in development of their respective communities. This is one of the fundamental principles in Catholic social doctrine. It is the principle of subsidiarity, which, Pius XI explains in his Encyclical letter *Quadragesimo Anno*: “Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals



*Welcomed by the Filipino children at Rapu Rapu Island*

what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so it is also an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never to destroy and absorb them.”

Now we are to take action by doing our own research on the current issues of Canadian mining abroad, housing rights, and water privatization. Let's contact our MPs to discuss related legislation. Visit [www.devp.org](http://www.devp.org) for more information and participate in the Fall and Lenten D & P campaigns.

# INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT OF CATHOLIC STUDENTS UNITED NATIONS STUDY SESSION

by Amanda Achtman, for the Diocesan Offices of Social Justice and Stewardship

In March I had the opportunity to travel to New York City for a United Nations Study Session. This session was coordinated by *Pax Romana*, the International Movement of Catholic Students. This non-governmental organization was founded in 1921 and has since been serving to unite Catholic students in their efforts to promote justice and peace around the world.

The highlight of the experience for me was our visit to the headquarters of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations. We learned about the role of the Holy See in international diplomacy as a Permanent Observer. For more details, please visit <http://www.holyseemission.org>.

We had the opportunity to meet His Excellency, Archbishop Francis A. Chullikatt and Lucas Swanepoel who provided us with an overview of the activities of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the UN. We learned that the Holy See maintains full diplomatic relations with nearly every member nation of the United Nations.

In response to one student's question, the Archbishop explained that he does not think that we Catholics encounter obstacles in politics or international diplomacy because we are Catholic, but rather because of the positions that we take on certain issues. "We cannot swim with the current," he said. We discussed how speaking the truth is often unpopular and difficult, but that this is our mission as Catholics in whatever walks of life we choose. Lucas explained that it is the role of government to negotiate and find middle ground, but that we ought to be more concerned with the discernment and promotion of truth.

When I asked a question about life issues at the international level, we were told that the UN has its own language that is not the common parlance; for example, we will never hear explicit mention of abortion. Instead, the UN will use terms such as reproductive healthcare services and sexual and reproductive rights. These ambiguous terms are problematic and the role of the Holy See Mission is to ask the question: "What does that mean?" The Holy See Mission listens carefully to resolutions and then aims to discern the

real meaning of the incredibly vague language. We learned that "gender equality" and "women empowerment" are often not neutral, harmless terms.

This really struck me and can inspire all of us, especially during election time, to pay careful attention to what the political language we hear *really* means.

Our international delegation of students participated in a service project in Brooklyn at the Dress for Success warehouse that provides professional clothing to women in need who are seeking employment.



*The United Nations Study Session Team of Catholic Students poses outside Holy Family Church, the designated United Nations Parish, blessed by Pope John Paul II.*

We also received an introduction to Eastern Catholic churches and the Maronite Catholic liturgy when we celebrated mass at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Cathedral. The hospitality that we received from the community was wonderful and reminds me that the Church is truly universal. Wherever in the world I travel, I have family—my brothers and sisters in Christ.

This trip was sponsored in part by St. Mary's University College and the diocesan offices of Social Justice and Stewardship.

not objects. They need to represent themselves, not simply be represented by their employer, however benign that employer might be. This is the same principle that good parents follow when they recognize that their children are now adults and so must make their own decisions.

Third, unions combat the tendency, inherent to market economies, to treat workers as just another market commodity. Good unions not only struggle for decent wages, but also for a legal framework in the workplace, for grievance procedures that guard against arbitrary treatment, for a voice in the operation of the business (since workers are an essential part of the business), and for some measure of economic security.

Fourth, unions make possible the process of collective bargaining, which is the most successful democratic institution in our society. More than 95% of all collective agreements are reached without resort to a strike or lockout. On any given day in this country, dozens of collective agreements are being signed without any fuss. Moreover, time lost through strikes is less than 0.5% of all hours worked. This is a small price to pay for a social institution that protects freedom and gives people an effective voice in both their workplace and their society.

Labour unions are human organizations. They suffer from the failings found in all things human and, like any other human institution, they can sometimes disappoint us. They are also democratic institutions; their decisions reflect both the strengths and the weaknesses of positions based on majority vote. Union activity also tends of its very nature to be very public and visible. There is also the fact that unions sometimes represent a challenge to well-established interests. For all these reasons unions often receive a bad press.

Our basic challenge is to apply moral principles to the signs of the times—there is lots of room for improvement!

*"Planted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith." [cf Col 2:7]*

## **Excerpts from Eye On Madrid 2011**

**(World Youth Day Blog hosted by Brian Salisbury)**

*by Emma and Anne Moroney, Daniel Bilodeau, and Amanda Achtman*

### **Emma and Roseline in San Pedro**

Hola! From a teeny tiny town called San Pedro. The town's population in the summer is 20 persons and with Rosie and me they said 22. It has been a wonderful day of learning about and sharing of our own and other cultures. It was so cool to see how everyone joined in and was having such a fantastic time with each other even though we could not necessarily talk to one another. ~ *Emma*

### **Anne's Reflection**

What an amazing thing to be a part of a universal church. Today I prayed the rosary in Italian with my American friend who I met in Mexico, walking next to the Vietnamese WYD group in Fatima, Portugal. I realized what it means to be part of something huge, something that can change the world. ~ *Anne*

### **Daniel's Experience**

As a young man on my journey in faith, it is quite uplifting and reassuring, to see so many people all gathering for the same reason. Last night I went out with a bunch of non-WYD travelers from Melbourne, Australia who were, in fact, opposing of the WYD pilgrims. But as they were in the process of talking about drugs and getting high, one of them piped up, "Boy mate, I ain't quite sure what them WYD are on, but I sure wish I could get some." His buddy's response was, "Dude, they is high on that Jesus guy!" It made for a funny evening and a real eye opener that everyone is truly yearning and searching for a feeling and a love that can only be found in God. ~ *Daniel*

### **The Vigil Mass, Amanda and 1,400,000+**

More than one million pilgrims gathered from various directions and headed towards the site where the World Youth Day vigil and mass would take place. There were people from all the ends of the earth coming together. Everyone cheered, chanted, and waved their flags. It was extremely hot outside and soon we noticed that Spanish residents who lived in the apartments along where we walked began to open their windows and wave to greet us. They realized the intense heat and soon began pouring water on the pilgrims from their balcony windows to cool us off!

As we arrived to the place of the vigil, it really felt like a pilgrimage. I have never seen so many people in one place in my life. In the evening, the vigil was about to begin, but a strong wind began to sweep through. Then, it started to pour! The Pope's address was stalled for a few minutes. The emcees of the event thanked the pilgrims for their cooperation and said, "All afternoon you were asking for water and here it is in this rain!" Then, Pope Benedict XVI spoke briefly. Some of us slept during the night, others went to the chapels for Eucharistic adoration, and others stayed awake meeting the pilgrims from around the world.

The most striking part of the mass with the Holy Father was the sign of peace. World Peace is what politicians strive for, what soldiers die for, what beauty pageant contestants and many others say that they want most for the world. Then, at this mass with the one, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, everyone from all around the world offered one another the sign of peace. It was powerful and I was in awe at the power of Christ to make His peace manifest in the Church. It has been a beautiful experience. I have learned that pilgrimages are full of detours, but that these detours can all be very meaningful and often inspire the greatest transformation in our hearts. To all of our family and friends, you are in our prayers and please know that the Holy Father extended his blessing not only to all of us pilgrims, but to all of our loved ones as well. ~ *Amanda*

