

Thank you, St. Vincent de Paul Parish, for supporting us!



Marshall Bellinger – 10th grade Shepherd Public Schools

NCYC was an amazing experience. I met so many great and amazing people on this once and a life time experience. Everyone is so kind and welcoming m, it's not like everywhere else and everyone is not like everyone else. They are super kind and very welcoming. Going to NCYC made me look and take my approach on my faith totally different. There is just something special about it that made me feel a certain way that I have never felt before. There was just an indescribable and so surreal feeling.

I am so happy and grateful that I got to experience this amazing experience in person. This would not have been possible without all of the great people that have been kind enough to donate money to this event. Donating money to the church made it possible for everyone to come and experience an amazing trip. Overall this trip was amazing and I hope that I can attend the next NCYC if the opportunity arises.

Lilly Dubridge – 9th grade Sacred Heart Academy

I was very grateful for the opportunity of going to NCYC this year! I have made so many memories that will be impossible to forget. I've also made friendships that I will forever be thankful for. It was crazy how fast I connected with other Catholic youth. It felt like one big family.

It started Thursday night, and as soon as I walked into the stadium, I was shocked to see so many people ready to praise the Lord. There was just a feeling in the air that I have never experienced before.

On Friday I had the opportunity to go to adoration. I was so excited because I have never really seen anything like it before. It was so powerful to hear nothing but the fans blowing in the background. Everything was so quiet and peaceful during adoration. It was truly amazing.

On Saturday I got to go to reconciliation. I was a little nervous at first but from the help of my youth ministers and my new friends, I was ready. After confession I felt peace that I couldn't even explain. I felt so happy and could not stop smiling. We also had mass which was very cool. I've never been to a mass where 16,000 Catholic youth received the Eucharist together. It was insane.

Overall I am blessed to be able to experience NCYC. I am so thankful for all the people that mad this possible for us! It truly changed my perspective on lots of things. And I would encourage more youth to go in 2027.



Will McDonald – 11th Grade Shepherd Public Schools

This past weekend has been really fun and I've learned a lot from it.

One thing that I learned was that there are so many other people that are my age that are also catholic. It can be hard to realize when not a lot of people that are my age go to our church but this weekend showed me that there are so many people my age that have the same beliefs as me. It's really cool to see and that's one reason that this weekend was so fun.

Another thing I took away from this weekend was from adoration. It was so beautiful to go to adoration especially with how many people there were and important it was to everybody. It was a truly beautiful moment and I'm so glad I got to experience it. It gave me a new appreciation for the Eucharist and how beautiful it is. I hope that I can go to adoration again soon.



Eddie Radtke – 10th Grade Shepherd Public Schools

My time at the National Catholic Youth Conference was life changing. I was so excited to start the journey on Thursday and seeing the 15,000+ kids all singing praise to the lord and filling the stadium with his glory was a powerful opportunity. It built so much onto my faith and gave me a deeper understanding of his great love for me. I loved the chance to go to confession and take the time to release the burdens and pain that I've held on my shoulders for too long. Feeling them lifted away like a weight that I didn't realize was there left my head blank for a moment. A clean slate on which to better praise the lord and deliver his glory, free from the muck of my past sins, I am truly a different and better person.

The most powerful part for me was going to adoration. I've known for a long time that through transubstantiation the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus. We met the pope via zoom earlier that morning and the experience was a huge blessing upon me and all who were there and it made me think of just how blessed we were to be able to meet the shepherd of our church and hear him speak directly to us. Hearing Pope Leo speak upon us calling us the future and the present of the church was life changing, but at adoration it clicked in my head and made me realize something. We got to meet the pope, one of the most well known people on the planet, but every Sunday we get to meet someone even more famous and powerful than he. Every single Sunday we get to meet and establish a deep and personal connection with the most famous person to ever walk the face of this planet. We consume the son of God every Sunday through eucharist and through eucharist he consumes us. I've known that for a while but I had never truly realised the truth of it until that moment during adoration and it brought me to tears before the Lord. I will never be the same.



Kaylee Radtke – 12th Grade Shepherd Public Schools

I have never been more thankful for being “forced” to do something in my entire life.

When we arrived at NCYC on Thursday night and went to our first general session, I was terrified. The thought that plagued my anxiety-filled mind was “...where you’ll be joined by *fifteen thousand* of your closest brothers and sisters.” I basically had a panic attack walking into that stadium for the first time. So many people, so many hats, so little space. But after we sat down and the music started playing, and I saw *fifteen thousand* other teenagers praising my God, I decided then that I wanted to *remember* this.

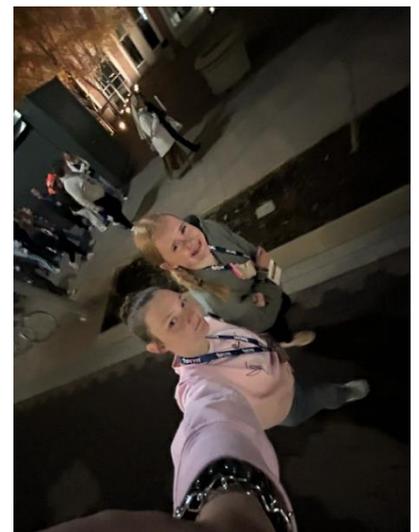
I took notes during every talk I went to. I cried tears of joy every day. I met new people who believed the same as me and now call them friends. I learned how to pray, and found a new appreciation for just talking to Jesus. I got to challenge my anxiety with the Lord right next to me. I went to confession. And I sang my heart out praising Jesus.

We traded hats with random strangers. We gave out ducks, and secretly clothes-pinned people with bible verses written on them. We got Rick-Rolled by a Nun and had a live conversation with Pope Leo. And we learned so much from every person who walked onto the stage about how loved we are and how good it is to love Jesus. Finally, we went to the most beautiful mass. Have you ever received communion with *fifteen thousand* other people? Because I can now say I have. And I have never felt closer to God in my entire life.

It was terrifying and amazing and felt like home. One of the speakers said (and I paraphrase) “Some of you are scared to leave here because you don’t want to go back to the ‘real world.’ But you need to remember, that THIS is the real world. Here with Jesus. Take this home with you.” And I know that this is how I will praise my Lord for the rest of my life.

Lastly I want to share some of my favorite notes I took during my time here. Just to read and think about.

- God loved us before *time* existed.
- We need believers. Not perfect people. People who fear, people who listen, people who are weak.
- Amen means we are willing and open to *listen* to God.
- Pray. He knows your prayers are *imperfect*.
- We get tired of asking, but God will never get tired of forgiving.
- We are the church of now and the future.
- Come Holy Spirit, teach me how to pray.
- “Do you want to be healed?”
- Not who am I, but *for whom am I?*
- God will walk with you, taking steps at your speed.
- “I give my life to you and whatever happens is your fault.”
- Hatred is not a thing (noun). Hatred is the absence of love.
- I am yours.



Thank you all who helped me and my friends have the opportunity to experience this. If I could go again, I would, if only to hear the echo of *fifteen thousand* people all saying “Amen,” to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Cayd Wohlsheid – 10th grade Sacred Heart Academy

NCYC was an amazing experience. Taking part in the mass with over 16,000 people was one highlight of my trip. Also, seeing the pope live was amazing. My favorite part of NCYC was meeting new people. It was an atmosphere where everyone was there for the same reason. There was no division amongst people, creating a friendly, warm environment.

Most importantly though, as I write these words, my relationship with God feels healed. I've been going to mass every week, and trying to get back into praying throughout the day, but I've not felt close to God for a while. If I took one thing away from this trip, it is that I need to seek a relationship with God before trying to clean myself up alone. NCYC was a great experience and has helped me grow closer to God.

Deacon Todd

Thank you all for your support of the fantastic young people in their journey to NCYC. Whether you supported them in prayer, financially, or both, your efforts were not in vain. You can tell by the words you just read from them all.

The only breakout session I was able to attend was Steve Angrisano's "Real Presence: So What?" In that he took time to point out St. Augustine's oft-quoted line from his Confessions, "Our heart is restless until it rests in you." The quote is often written as 'hearts', plural. But the quote begins with our, and uses the singular heart. If you noted the profound impact on our youth of attending mass with 'fifteen thousand of your closest friends', you begin to see the importance of our unity in communion. We truly are one bread and one body in Christ. And we are one heart, beating in unison. Let the church say Amen.

