

Reflecting and proclaiming

Participants reflect on theme of Eucharistic Congress

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correspondent

CHARLOTTE — Thousands of Catholics from around the Diocese of Charlotte converged for the diocese's fourth annual Eucharistic Congress.

The event, this year themed "It Is Christ Whom We Proclaim," was held at the Charlotte Convention Center Oct. 3-4.

The theme was taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians, as the congress occurred during the Pauline year convoked by Pope Benedict XVI to honor the 2,000th anniversary of the saint's birth.

"St. Paul's sole passion was to proclaim Christ," said Bishop Peter J. Jugis in a June letter to parishioners announcing the congress theme.

"In our Eucharistic Congress, it is Christ whom we proclaim in our eucharistic procession through the streets of Charlotte, in our holy hour of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, in the celebration of the Mass, in the talks by our speakers and in our sacred music concert," he said.

"The entire Eucharistic Congress from beginning to end is a proclamation of Christ," said the bishop. "The theme we have chosen, therefore, not only honors St. Paul and his apostolic mission, but also appropriately expresses the spirit of the Eucharistic Congress — to proclaim Christ."

Throughout the two-day event, participants reflected on the theme and what it means to them.

"I proclaim Jesus as King by going to church, praying and believing in him," said teenager Jairo Riascos, a parishioner of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Monroe.

"I know that he (the eucharistic Jesus) exists for real and I proclaim him as my Savior by my actions, which include following the commandments and receiving the sacraments," said Riascos.

"By proclaiming Christ in our lives, we must give of ourselves to his life as we follow the Bible and love one another," said Nguyen Van De of St. Joseph Church in Charlotte.

"We must give ourselves completely to Jesus and pray for his forgiveness as we join him along his way. This will bring us to eternal life," said Van De.

By proclaiming Christ, we speak the "good news" across the entire world, said Peter Shaw, a seminarian for the Diocese of Charlotte.

To paraphrase “the words of St. Francis, we must go out into the world and proclaim the Gospel and, when necessary we should even use words,” said Shaw.

“We must proclaim Christ as Lord and Savior because he commanded us to,” said Deacon Andy Cilone of Immaculate Conception Church in Forest City.

“He is the Good News. He is the answer to our worldly strife,” he said. “We accomplish this by living like him and imitating him in all things — all the way to picking up our own crosses and following him.”

“By our words and our actions, and by living Christ’s love and all the virtues, may we proclaim Christ to our brothers and sisters, so that they also may come to a greater love for the Lord,” said Bishop Jugis.

Editor Kevin E. Murray contributed to this story.

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