

© The Catholic News & Herald, May 29, 2009

Focusing on the identity of Christ

High school youths gather for diocesan conference

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staff writer

RIDGECREST — Youths from across the Diocese of Charlotte recently gathered to grow in faith and reflect on the challenges of their baptismal promises.

Approximately 300 youths and adults took part in the 32nd annual Diocesan Youth Conference at Ridgecrest Conference Center April 24-26.

The theme, “Born Identity: From Him, Through Him, For Him,” reminded the youths that through baptism they are born into the mission of Christ. The retreat also challenged them to seek and spread the truth to all.

“DYC was a successful expression and reflection of the vibrant and growing faith of the young church of western North Carolina and the adults who work with them,” said Paul Kotlowski, director of diocesan youth ministry.

“Through the various workshops and homilies, participants were challenged to realize the power of their baptismal call to a life of conversion to holiness and to be a leaven in society,” he said.

In keeping with Pope Benedict XVI’s proclamation that June 28, 2008 to June 29, 2009 is a year dedicated to St. Paul, the conference’s theme was meant to invoke the spirit of St. Paul by highlighting the message of his letters.

The mission statement for this year’s conference as composed by the Diocesan Youth Advisory Council states, “St. Paul reminds us that we have an identity in Jesus Christ, who instills strength within us to live our faith.”

“I hope that those who took part in this year’s conference realize that they are part of something much bigger than themselves,” said Kotlowski, referring to the universal church. “They are called to build the kingdom of God.”

Each year at the conference several awards are presented to clergy, youths and adults who have displayed outstanding leadership and service in the area of youth ministry.

At this year’s conference the John Paul II Award, which recognizes ordained men who exemplify love for the youth of the church, was presented to Father Patrick Hoare, parochial vicar of St. Mark Church in Huntersville.

The Bishop Begely Award, for youths involved in social justice and outreach, was presented to Nicole Lehman of Holy Spirit Church in Denver.

The St. Timothy Award, for a youth exemplifying outstanding discipleship, was presented to Eric Fischer of St. Mark Church and Katie Finegan of Haywood Catholic Youth — a youth group comprised of young people from St. Margaret of Scotland Church in Maggie Valley, St. John the Evangelist Church in Waynesville and Immaculate Conception Mission in Canton.

The Bishop Curlin Award, for an individual or group exemplifying outstanding pastoral care, was presented to Kim and Derick Medlin of Holy Cross Church in Kernersville.

WANT MORE INFO?

For more information on diocesan youth ministry, go online to www.charlottediocese.org/youthministry.html.