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### **Taking time to adore Jesus**

#### ***Youths, young adults gather for prayer, reflection at Belmont Abbey***

by KATIE MOORE

staff writer

BELMONT — “We are all on a pilgrimage during the Lenten season,” said Bishop Peter J. Jugis.

This is a “time for interior renewal and turning away from sin, a time to embrace Jesus,” said the bishop to young Catholics from across the Diocese of Charlotte.

Bishop Jugis was one of the speakers during the diocese’s fifth annual Lenten spiritual pilgrimage to Belmont Abbey for youths and young adults March 29.

The approximately 450 participants included students from middle and high schools and colleges across the diocese, as well as youth ministers, other adults, diocesan priests and deacons, women religious and monks from Belmont Abbey.

The pilgrimage, a day of prayer and reflection, was part of the diocese's preparation for the fifth diocesan Eucharistic Congress, themed "The Word Became Flesh and Made His Dwelling Among Us," to be held at the Charlotte Convention Center Sept. 25-26.

“The words from St. John’s Gospel are the perfect theme to reflect on the meaning of the Eucharist,” said Bishop Jugis.

“We usually hear these words during the Christmas season,” he said, “but they are appropriate any time of year.”

“Two thousand years ago Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit,” said Bishop Jugis, reflecting on the theme.

Today, “the Word becomes flesh once again here in the holy Eucharist,” he said. “We see the mystery right here before us, there in the monstrance. This is the real presence of Christ.”

“I think it was a great success,” said Jenny Ryan, campus ministry director at Belmont Abbey College. “The students who participated seemed very engaged and very enthusiastic.”

The day included a eucharistic procession, Benediction, the sacrament of reconciliation and vespers with the monks of the Belmont Abbey.

“It was really student organized and student led,” Ryan said, referring to the 15 Belmont Abbey student volunteers who helped coordinate the event.

Student volunteers gave witness talks and led the youths in singing praise and worship music.

“I think the high school and middle school youths look up to that,” said Ryan, “I think that had a lot to do with the success of the event.”

Katie Bess, youth activity coordinator at Queen of the Apostles Church in Belmont, brought seven youths to the pilgrimage.

“I think it’s important for them to see other people their age committed to the church and the life of the church,” said Bess.

One of the speakers, Brother Edward Mancuso of Belmont Abbey, talked about the importance of faith in defining good relationships.

“It is important to have friends who support your faith,” he said.

He shared the importance of the Eucharist in his life and how it led him to his vocation as a monk.

“The Eucharist started to play a defining role in my life when I went to college,” said Brother Mancuso of his time at St. Bonaventure University in New York.

He talked about the graces that come from receiving Christ in the Eucharist.

“Not everyone can attend Mass each day,” said Brother Mancuso, “but when possible, Jesus is waiting to energize your day.”

Christ in the Eucharist is a gift to us from the Lord, said Bishop Jugis, and it is not based on anything “we could have merited or deserved.”

“It is my hope that as you offer yourself to Christ you will be a blessing for your friends and family and that the Lord will choose some of you to offer yourselves as priests or as brothers or sisters,” said Bishop Jugis in his address to the pilgrims.

“Many good works come from a person who is offering himself to God,” he said.

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