

NCYC: Archdiocesan youths re-energized in Indianapolis

INDIANAPOLIS - As musician Steve Angrisano moved about the National Catholic Youth Conference stage inside Lucas Oil Stadium Nov. 17, singing his hit "Yes, Lord," Doug Hanna danced from about 100 feet away.

Hanna's long, curly hair swished around in the air and the parishioner of Our Lady of the Fields in Millersville pumped his fist enthusiastically.

He wasn't alone, as 280 teenagers, young adults, youth ministers, priests and chaperones from the Archdiocese of Baltimore joined 25,000 others inside the stadium in singing together.

"We all knew the words to the song and just all connected," Hanna said. "We all shove our faith in a little closet and dust it off on Sundays. An experience like NCYC gives us the opportunity to put our faith on full-time and see what that is like to hopefully go back to our home churches, dioceses and schools knowing what it's like to wear the armor of God and share it with the world."

NCYC, an every other year event organized by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, was held Nov. 17-19. It brought together a legion of young Catholics under the theme "Called to Glory," with an emphasis on strengthening prayer life.

Baltimore pilgrims said that presentations by Mark Hart, executive director of LifeTeen, and presenter Mike Patin put that in focus.

Rachel Clevenger, a parishioner of Severn's St. Bernadette, said that youth ministry experiences in her parish show her people can be filled with happiness because of Jesus.

"You see that on a huge scale here," Clevenger said. "They're all celebrating being children of Jesus and it's just amazing."

Bishop Christopher Coyne, apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of

Indianapolis, celebrated the event's final Mass. During his homily, he said humility is the key to faith.

"Our whole call to Christian faith is not just about doing good things for the right reasons," Bishop Coyne said. "It's about salvation."

During the three-day conference, the youths found dozens of ways to strengthen their faith through keynote presentations and workshops. They also took part in trading quirky hats and possessions inside the Indianapolis convention center.

While many young people tried to get trading cards signed by bishops or played games like corn hole, others participated in more quiet reflections. During a eucharistic procession, Our Lady of the Fields parishioner Jennie Pajierowski said the lines of people standing in reverence moved her.

"As they passed by, we all got up and followed," she said. "It struck me we didn't really know where we were going and didn't see the monstrance, but got up and followed our Lord. We just trusted."

Amanda Ceraldi, a student at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and a parishioner of Our Lady of the Chesapeake, Lake Shore, attended the first-ever National Catholic Collegiate Conference, which ran concurrently with NCYC.

She attended NCYC two years ago when it was held in Kansas City and wanted to attend NCCC to continue her passion for the church.

"As a young adult, it's great because so many people talk about how 20-somethings are lost in the church and don't really have a place," Ceraldi said. "I want to have a place in the church and this is the best way right now for me to be involved."

On the final night of the conference, NFCYM executive director Bob McCarty, a parishioner of St. Francis of Assisi in Fulton, told the thousands in attendance that they should aim to be more peaceful, loving, compassionate, forgiving, joyful and courageous upon leaving the conference, using Jesus as an example.

"May the Lord deeply bless you, may you rejoice proudly and may you always

remember that you're indeed called to Glory," McCarty said.

Matt Palmer's accommodations in Indianapolis were provided by the Archdiocesan Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.