

Eucharistic adoration leads teens to experience 'the true love of God'

INDIANAPOLIS (CNS) – For many youths, group adoration on the second night of the National Catholic Youth Conference is the part of the event they look most forward to and find most memorable.

And it is indeed memorable. For as raucous as the energy of nearly 11,000 spirited, joyful teens is, just as palpable is their reverent silence when kneeling together before Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

The juxtaposition became especially clear throughout the evening of Nov. 19 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis as the evening began with upbeat Christian music the young people jumped and sang to.

But as soon as the Eucharist was brought into the space in a procession, the partylike atmosphere changed. Kneeling, the youths watched in silence as the monstrance was placed on an altar.

The next hour was consumed in silence and reverent music, broken only occasionally by the voice of Father Leo Patalinghug, a priest-member of a community of consecrated life called Voluntas Dei ("The Will of God"). He led the adoration service.

First, he helped the young people enter into conversation with Christ.

"Can Jesus really squeeze his body into this small piece of bread? Can he really squeeze his blood into wine?" he asked. "Truly he wants to feed us with himself. He wants to dwell in

us because he made us so beautiful.

“Let Jesus tell you how he sees your life, not in condemnation but in how beautiful he made you.”

After time for quiet reflection, Father Patalinghug spoke about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He shared how scientists who studied consecrated hosts from Eucharistic miracles determined two things.

“One thing that scientists were able to discern is that the blood type is AB+ like on the Shroud of Turin, making it a universal recipient – anyone can take that blood type and make it their own,” he explained.

“They also discovered very impressively that when the host turned to flesh, that it was actually myocardial tissue – heart muscle.”

“Could it be, then,” he continued, “that the traditional prayer ‘Jesus Christ, make my heart like unto thine?’ that it is real? Could it be that when we say at Mass, ‘We lift up our hearts up to the Lord,’ that it’s a mutual exchange – I give you my heart Lord, because my heart is broken, and he gives us his?”

“Think in your heart what needs to be healed in your life today. Let Jesus in as the divine physician.”

More reflection and music followed before Father Patalinghug’s final words to the youths.

“I would ask you if you want to become a saint, and you might say, ‘Ain’t no way I’m going to become a saint.’ And that’s because the devil is lying to you and you are listening to him,” he said.

“With Christ, all things are possible. You can be a saint – you are supposed to be a saint.”

“In your heart, ask Jesus to root out whatever needs to be rooted out of your heart, to have the strength to go to confession, to put in you the virtue to be holy and to give you holy friends and people to get back on the right track.”

The impact of the encounter with Christ was visible. Hands were folded and heads were bowed in prayer. Tears streaked the cheeks of some, while others raised their hands in praise.

“I just opened up and really felt Jesus here tonight,” said Annalise Bird, 18, of the Diocese of Syracuse, New York. “It’s a feeling I’ll always cherish.”

Ryan Perez, 17, of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, said it was “so powerful seeing so many people come together to worship our God. The Spirit in the room was just overflowing. It was really a life-changing experience.”

During one point in adoration, 17-year-old Jaidn Asch of the Syracuse Diocese, stood and hugged those on either side of him.

“My soul was just filled,” he told *The Criterion*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. “That led me to feel the true love of God, which made me want to just spread his love to others. Me and my friend here have been close for a while and I wanted to show love to him, and to my brother here, just having this feeling that my soul was filled.

“I go about my day and I get busy, and I’m trying to prove my worth. My soul gets empty, but my soul was filled here. It’s something I’ve been chasing my whole life.”

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