

A silver chalice with intricate designs stands on a white cloth. In the foreground, a loaf of bread is partially broken into several pieces. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

EUCCHARISTIC JOURNEY

A Pilgrimage to NCYC

Don Smith

**Coordinator of Sacramental Catechesis & Family Life
Diocese of Rochester, NY**



Dear Pilgrimage Leader,

First and foremost, thank you! Thank you for taking the time to prepare a group for NCYC, but thank you even more for taking the time to prepare your group for *pilgrimage*.

In 2000 I had the opportunity to go with a group of 30 other pilgrims for a two-week pilgrimage to Assisi, Italy to pray with and learn about St. Francis and St. Clare. I was at St. Bonaventure University at the time and I remember the pilgrimage leaders insisting that we come to meetings leading up to the voyage. I did not realize at the time how vital these meetings were to forming our group.

Three years later, I was preparing my own group of teens for NCYC Houston. The Director of Youth Ministry for our Diocese referenced making our NCYC prep into a pilgrimage, so I insisted on the same format, all be it modified for high school. We prayed together, we learned together, we got information together. In short, we grew together so we could travel better together.

That pilgrimage group grew into an active youth group that welcomed more youth into it and was excited in two years to take on pilgrimage again. It affirmed in me that the Spirit was working and I had the opportunity to help them find joy in growing with and in God.

Fast forward a couple years, and I was asked by our Diocese to write an overview of pilgrimage to help new youth ministers. I did, but each NCYC I added to it. What you have in front of you, is more than ten years of a desire to help youth experience pilgrimage. Most importantly, it is a guide, not a program. It is meant to be modified for each group, because each group is different and in need of their own experience.

Again, thank you for your ministry!! Please know that as you prepare for NCYC and offer a pilgrimage experience, you are in my prayers. If you think I might be able to help you, please reach out. My email address is donald.smith@dor.org. May the Holy Spirit guide your efforts and your pilgrimage, and may you grow closer to Jesus Christ through this pilgrimage.

Peace & prayers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don'.

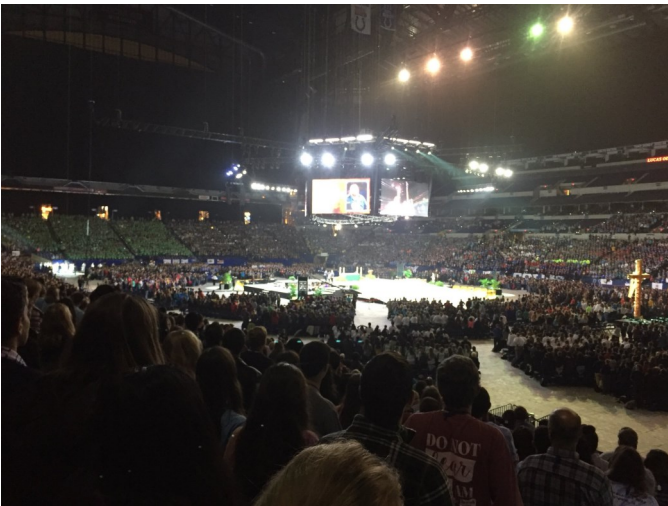
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Introduction

What an experience! Joining 20,000+ teens in prayer, praise, excitement and expression. If you are a teen it is even more impressive because it serves as an affirmation of who you are, not just who you appear to be. But the goal of the National Catholic Youth Conference is much more. It is not simply a “trip” to a new city. It is more than a “gathering” of young people. It goes beyond a single weekend experience. NCYC is best described as a pilgrimage, with its preparation, journey, experience, and return all important aspects.



For those who have been to NCYC, the return journey is one of excitement and expectations. Those who have never been tend to have as much excitement, a different form of expectations, and a nervousness mixed in as well. There are always “what if” questions: “What if it’s not what I need?” “What if they all think I’m a freak?” “What if they’re all freaks?” The teenage questions are predictable, which makes preparation so vital. Setting the preparation in the context of pilgrimage allows for the movement of the Spirit and also frames the entire process in the light of prayer and as a religious experience.

Pilgrimage is an outward expression of an inner journey. Each person is on their own faith journey, and groups/communities often form to support those journeys. When we take a physical journey to highlight the inner process of faith

growth, we are on pilgrimage. An NCYC Pilgrimage is not simply fundraising (which is important) or community building activities (which are important) or gathering forms (which is important) or sending in payments (which is important), but rather includes the practical while embracing the mystical.

One of the sayings used with groups I have led before and is well known in the Diocese of Rochester’s lexicon is that “pilgrimage is messy.” We’ve heard the joke that if you want to hear God laugh tell him your plans. Truth is, planning is essential, but with pilgrimage we must always allow room for adjustment. It will not go exactly as we envision when we have 20,000+ people in one stadium trying to exit and get back to their hotels; nor will it work out exactly as we hope if another group chooses the exact same landmark as a meeting place. All of it is surmountable, but only if we remember to take it in stride and keep an attitude of pilgrimage. More about pilgrimage attitudes later.

Pilgrimage is an ancient concept, and far from exclusive. While Christians are known for their pilgrimages to holy sites, the Islamic world is better known for their pilgrimages. Each adult in the Islamic world is expected to make pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their life. In Jesus’ time, Jews made pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem for holy days or to have their children named. It was during such a pilgrimage that Luke tells us about how Jesus entered into the religious dialogue with the elders in the Temple.



The key to pilgrimage over simple travel or tourism is the focus on the pilgrim. Pilgrimage has meant and continues to mean many different things to different people, yet it is recognizable. It is similar to describing a plant. Some may immediately think of and describe a tree, while others may think of a vine and others a flower. They would all agree with the others' description, even though it may not match their own.

One view of a pilgrimage includes five distinctions from a tour. This can be found in an article by Doris Donnelly from *Spirituality Today* (1992). She tells us that:

(1) Pilgrims perceive an internal dimension to the pilgrimage, while tourists are concerned with the external journey alone;

(2) Pilgrims invest themselves, while tourists avoid a personal commitment;

(3) The focus for the pilgrim will be affected by the pilgrimage while tourists seek to remain untouched on a deep level by their experiences;

(4) Both the journey and arrival are important to a pilgrim while only the arrival matters for a tourist; and

(5) Community is formed for pilgrims while it is not a goal for tourists.

Another view of Pilgrimage outlines some elements of pilgrimage as being, longing, call, beginning, arrival, return and remembrance. This is the primary model on which this guide will be built, but Donnelly's five distinctions will also be used.

If we intend to make NCYC a true pilgrimage experience, we must remain focused on including these concepts and features. Some of these elements are explicitly outlined in this program, others are experiences that cannot be outlined, or even planned. As pilgrim leaders, we are tasked with the responsibility to remain open to the Spirit throughout the pilgrimage, and to seize the opportunities given us to break open pilgrimage for the youth.

This program is one form of pilgrimage. It may work as outlined for your parish or pilgrimage group, or it may need modification.

Pilgrimages are not "canned" experiences, and we cannot confine the experiences of NCYC preparation, experience, and processing into the pages of a manual.



Pilgrimage Overview

The pilgrimage to NCYC, as outlined in this program includes the following elements:

- Regular Gatherings of the Pilgrims
- Pilgrimage Retreat Experience
- Pilgrimage Covenant (developed by each pilgrim)
- Parish Pilgrimage Journal Entries by ALL Pilgrims (yes, adults too)
- Pilgrimage & Parish Prayer Partners
- Commissioning & Sending
- Welcoming Home

These elements are included to facilitate your group growing together as pilgrims as well as learning about the theme. Much of the learning is accomplished through discovery and faith exploration as opposed to formal classroom-style teaching.

Please note, as well, that while this pilgrimage outline does not include the more practical elements of the journey such as filling out forms, fundraising, making reservations, or other features needed to make NCYC successful, all of these can become opportunities to grow as a group. Any task everyone is asked to do becomes a point of commonality, and fundraising especially can be a group undertaking.



The same group traveling to and from NCYC.



NCYC Pilgrimage Outline

Regular Gatherings of the Pilgrims

Because pilgrimage is about journey, one must prepare for such an undertaking. In medieval days, pilgrims would go to confession and perhaps undergo a fast before traveling to a sacred shrine or to the Holy Lands. Today, we will prepare for both the practical and spiritual aspects of the pilgrimage by gathering regularly. Ideally the group would gather monthly to allow regular information to be passed out and for the group to grow together. These gatherings remind pilgrims that pilgrimage is about the journey, not the destination. It also helps them understand that this is a journey the *group* will make, and not a gathering of individuals.

Each gathering should have a topic or theme. They should include both prayer and a discussion or activity in order to help the group grow closer to each other and in their understanding of pilgrimage. The themes provided in this resource will add to an understanding of pilgrimage, and being a Eucharistic people (Church).

It is important that at these sessions pilgrims are viewed as equal companions on the same journey. Adult pilgrims may have added responsibility and authority in certain areas, the pilgrimage leader may have certain knowledge needed for the journey, and returning NCYC participants may have wisdom to share, but all are pilgrims and all are learning what this particular pilgrimage holds together. The concept of a chaperone who functions as only an authority figure or as an extra set of eyes and ears without participating in pilgrimage can be disruptive to the group cohesiveness, and it does not allow the chaperone to have a full experience.

This resource book includes guides for pilgrimage. They can be used as written, but more likely it will be modified to create a unique pilgrimage experience for your particular parish or group. The gatherings provided follow a similar format for each session. Creating a constant

format fosters comfort with the pilgrimage. High School age youth commonly have never or rarely experienced religious pilgrimage, and as a new experience it is important to create a comfortable and familiar atmosphere.

The regular gatherings have the potential to become *the* highlight and lasting experience. While gathering with 20,000+ peers will be memorable, more so are the lasting bonds that individual members form with one another. Many groups will find post-NCYC sessions much easier if the group has bonded leading up to NCYC.

Pilgrimage Retreat Experience

Retreats are an important part of any pilgrimage. Because pilgrimage is an intense experience, a period of time to reflect and pray outside the established normalcy of daily life or a pilgrimage can only enhance the pilgrimage experience.

In the course of this pilgrimage it is hoped that some sort of a retreat, be it a day retreat, a weekend retreat, overnight retreat, or even a “busy persons retreat” over a couple weeks will highlight the spirituality of journeying with and toward God. Through retreat we can hope to discern ways in which the Church can best respond to the presence of others (remember you will be journeying to a gathering of 20,000 people who have their own unique experience of God, the Church, and the world in general). We can also hope to strengthen the response to the call of the New Evangelization as missionary disciples serving the entire Church.

Some parishes or communities will find carving time away simple. Others will have difficulty finding when and where to gather for this part of pilgrimage. Some ideas that may help:

- Retreats can be good starting points for a pilgrimage. Get away from the normal day-to-day life of the pilgrims so they can enter the pilgrimage with fresh eyes.
- Lent is another good time for retreat as a pilgrimage community. This can highlight how we journey as Church, not just as a parish or individuals.

- Lent and Advent also ideal times for a “busy persons retreat” where you gather for a short time, go apart to pray and act, and then gather again.
- Shortly before going to NCYC, you may wish to gather for retreat so the norm of your pilgrimage gatherings is broken before the new norm of journey and conference is experienced.
- Retreat is best experienced outside the physical space that you normally gather. If there is a different meeting room, chapel or other space available, reserve that for retreat. If you are doing an overnight retreat, consider going to a retreat center.
- Remember to follow and explain Safe Environment guidelines from your diocese. These have a place in our world today and cannot be ignored.
- Your diocese may have a retreat experience planned or prefer a program for this component. Consult with them to find out.



Israelites to worship and stand with their God. Their identity of being God’s chosen people is understood in light of those covenants.

As Catholics, we understand Jesus as the fulfillment of that covenant, and the establishment of a new and everlasting covenant. The promise does not need to be renewed with successive generations; it goes without saying that we remain God’s people and God remains our God. Through Jesus, our commitment to God is renewed regularly through Sacraments and deeds.

Covenant is not limited to agreements between God and God’s people, however. Covenants are developed among people as well. By developing a covenant with the parish, the pilgrims commit themselves to the pilgrimage beyond simply attending a conference. A covenant gives an opportunity for the parish to express its involvement in the pilgrimage as well. What is expected of both sides?

As God gave Noah the bow after the flood, the parish may want to give a token to the pilgrims as a sign of the covenant. This token could be a necklace, pin or other small reminder of pilgrimage. The parish may also want to wait and present the pilgrim with such a token during the commissioning and sending before NCYC.

There is an example of a parish covenant form you can use on page 69.

Parish Pilgrimage Journal

Each person’s experience of pilgrimage will be different, but the group’s experience will be the result of all the experiences. A good gauge and record of that experience can be found through a group journal. If pilgrimage is a regular component of your parish, be it to NCYC, service immersions, or other outings undertaken as a pilgrimage, a long-lasting journal that is used through all of them can be beneficial. It creates a bond to the pilgrims before and allows them to

Pilgrimage Covenant

Making a pilgrimage is a sacred process. It is not something one enters into without some understanding and a lot of support. While it is true that a lot will be learned through pilgrimage, it is important that pilgrims know what is expected of them and what they can expect from their faith community. This can be accomplished through a parish covenant.

A covenant is more than just a list of rules, or a pledge to pay so much of the total cost. Covenant has its roots deep in our Judeo-Christian Tradition. It carries with it an understanding of commitment and the force of vows. The fact that Yahweh formed a covenant with Abraham and again with Noah and again with Jacob drove the

give insight to future pilgrims. Each pilgrim has an opportunity to add to the formal record of NCYC in their own handwriting and their own writing style. It truly becomes *their* journal.

Group leaders may want to focus pilgrimage entries with reflection questions so they do not become silly or irreverent. The potential for a memory book or a joke book exists. However, if approached in a prayerful manner, the pilgrimage journal has great potential to become a lasting account of pilgrimage and not just a diary of events. Often asking youth to focus their entries (such as with the journal guide on page 68) will allow the pilgrims to keep the journal as a prayer-focused activity.

For the best results, each pilgrim should be encouraged to write at least three entries – one before going to NCYC, one while they are at NCYC and one after leaving the conference. Time is limited during NCYC, so these entries tend to be shorter and less thought out. It is important to express the expectation of an “at NCYC entry” well before leaving. This way, pilgrims know what to expect. The post-pilgrimage entry can be done on the travel home, or at a follow-up gathering after NCYC has had time to settle in the hearts and minds of pilgrims or by being passed around the week or so following NCYC.

Typed copies of this year’s section of the journal can be made available to pilgrims and even parishioners who helped fund the journey. Selected excerpts make wonderful additions to future promotions as well as bulletin inserts recounting the experience for parishioners. Previous excerpts also work as a “what to expect” handout before the pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage & Parish Prayer Partners

When one undertakes a pilgrimage, it is important to remember the community aspect. There are multiple communities involved. The group that is traveling together will form a community, and the parish that sends the pilgrims forms another community. Pilgrims also have family communities, school communities, sports



organizations, and many, many more, all of which will be affected by the pilgrim’s experience simply by virtue of the changes that the pilgrim will experience. Those communities that are not going to NCYC are making a sacrifice as part of their community is away.

One way to develop and encourage the pilgrimage community to form and grow is to offer the opportunity for each pilgrim to draw another pilgrim’s name randomly, or be randomly assigned another pilgrim. This person will be the pilgrim’s prayer partner. During the regular pilgrim gatherings, and through the entire preparation process, the pilgrims are asked to pray for their partners. Since it is not a pairing, the chain of prayers should circle through the group (A is paired with B who is paired with C who is paired with A).

While at NCYC, the group can take an opportunity to recognize and/or reveal their

prayer partners. A prayer service to do this is on page 73. This allows each pilgrim to fully realize the relationship and the power of prayer among one another.

As much as pilgrims can grow together through prayer with their partners, the parish and pilgrim groups can grow together in prayer as well. One way in particular to connect the parishioners to the pilgrims is to ask for their prayers, through the bulletin, announcements and/or special invitation. Consider asking your parish pastoral council or the local Knights of Columbus or other parish group to hold your pilgrims in prayer and likewise you can hold them in prayer while away. The groups may want to write a note of encouragement to be shared at NCYC with the pilgrims, and likewise your group may want to bring back a post card with thanks and warm wishes for groups praying for them. This will create unity among the parish, despite the distance to another city or state.

Creating the spiritual investment of prayer builds any community. A group or individuals willing to commit their time to prayer for the youth may also be willing to commit their talent or treasure to making NCYC a success. Consider building the prayer community by inviting groups to fundraising activities where they can be recognized as prayer partners on the pilgrimage.

Commissioning & Sending (to NCYC)

Traveling to another place is a big deal, especially for teens. If possible, at a Sunday Liturgy the weekend prior to traveling, the youth and adult pilgrims going to NCYC should be blessed & commissioned as pilgrims of the parish and sent on this journey. The *Book of Blessings* has specific prayers for pilgrims, and there is an example of a rite of sending available on page 70. At the sending, pilgrims can receive a token of pilgrimage which will connect them to their home while away.

It is important to recognize and bless pilgrims before they undertake the travel portion of pilgrimage. This serves to remind and assure them of home, and it reminds and assures the



parish of their connection to the pilgrims. Like Peter, James and John at the Transfiguration, we tend to want to stay at NCYC, but we must return home. This sending will help the pilgrims remember how important home truly is.

A second sending at the time of their departure may also be appropriate, depending on the time and situation. Even a simple prayer for safe travels reminds teens in the frenzy of travel that this is a pilgrimage and not another bus or plane trip. There is also has a prayer service for the departure on page 71.

Welcoming Home

While a pilgrimage formally ends, the impact never leaves us. We are changed by the experience and have hopefully grown in our understanding of faith, Church and community. This is a foreign concept to high school students who quickly move on to new activities and leave yesterday's events to memories. Pilgrimage, however, is always a growth experience, and as such should change us and influence our lives well



beyond the trip to NCYC. As a reminder of this (or as an affirmation of it), groups should gather and retell their stories and share their photos or trading tokens.

It is also important for the parish to know what happened at NCYC. A formal welcoming home at a Sunday Mass will bring to the forefront the nature of NCYC and allow the parishioners to see that such an event is more than just another trip that teens take. It is often helpful for the parish to hear the stories of pilgrimage from the teens themselves.

Teens will often share that one thing they did was meet new people. Post-pilgrimage gatherings, help teens delve deeper. What happened that sticks with them? How did meeting people affect them? What speaker or prayer experience do they remember?

Similarly, parents of teen pilgrims should be prepared for the return. The four days of NCYC are intense and it often takes time for teens to process just what happened. A set of probing questions (an example provided in the “Welcome Home” section beginning on page 74) that can foster discussion will help parents and teens process the pilgrimage together.

Your parish or Diocese may have planned programmatic elements of the return home. A

day to process what NCYC meant with other pilgrims or a retreat especially for NCYC pilgrims. Encourage each pilgrim, teen and adult alike, to take advantage of these opportunities. They prepared and traveled as a group, and as such they will long to process and follow up as a group.

It is also important, however, that pilgrims not become a clique. Pilgrimage is meant to help us grow in our faith, and as Catholics that is more than a single group within the Church. As part of the universal Church, we need to be open to sharing our faith experience to some degree with others. Friendships will have formed at NCYC, but when we return to regular youth groups or other activities, encourage the pilgrims to branch out and share with others as well. Some groups will find this difficult, and others will return to the status-quo non-clique groupings with ease. Each group is different.



Session Guides

- I. Pilgrimage: More than a Field Trip
- II. "He took some bread, and after a blessing..."
- III. Blessed are You!
- IV. Pilgrimage: A Time for Bringing our Gifts
- V. "He broke it..."
- VI. God breaks our hearts of stone
- VII. Pilgrimage: A Time for Packing our Humanity
- VIII. "Gave it to the disciples..."
- IX. See what you believe; become what you see.
- X. Pilgrimage: A Time for Being Open

You are the target audience of these plans. They are not scripts that can be read through as you lead a session; rather they need personalization and adjustments to make them your own.

Each session has:

An icebreaker – a game to get everyone involved and invested in that night's topic.

An opening prayer – a prayer that sets the tone for that night's topic/theme. Often built around a scripture passage. If it works for your group as written, wonderful; if it needs to be modified, or replaced, go for it!

An activity – a catechetical activity to introduce a theme. Ideally this is an opportunity to experience, explore, and learn. These vary depending on the session's theme and place in the pilgrimage.



Discussion Topics – An opportunity to go deeper and seek input and wisdom from the group.

A project – some type of activity that gives pilgrims ownership of the pilgrimage. These are rarely catechetical, and are often planning activities or events that happen outside the gathered sessions.

Announcements – Some standard reminders are included, but this is an opportunity to remind pilgrims of any other information they may need such as fundraising events, payments that are due, information from the Diocesan office or NFCYM, updates from the pastor or any number of things. Don't feel limited to the ones listed.

A closing prayer – Please note that closing prayer for most sessions is purposefully left empty. Depending on your group you may want to assign closing prayers to pilgrims to develop and lead, or you may find a simple intentions with an Our Father a fitting way to end. Be sure to include prayer, but make it one that will speak to your group.

Two additional sessions are included for after your return from NCYC. These sessions follow the same outline as above, without a project and with a focus on looking back rather than looking forward.

- I. The Pilgrimage Continues
- II. Bringing the "Real World" Home

Icebreaker or Community Building Activities

When gathering as a group, especially if the group has not grown to know one another already, it can be helpful to have a community building activity or icebreaker. These typically hint toward the topic, but sometimes are just fun activities to get participants working together.

Included are a series of possible activities that you can use. Others can be readily found in many Youth Ministry resources or through a simple internet search.

Do You Love Your Neighbor?

Form a circle of candidates. Have them take their shoe or shoes off and put them in front of their spot in the circle. Those are now place markers. Remove one set of shoes, so there is one less spot in the circle than there are candidates.

The additional person then moves into the center of the circle and declares, "I love my neighbor! Especially _____." They can fill in the blank spot with any descriptor they would like, such as "anyone with white socks" or "anyone who has a brother". Anyone who fits that descriptor must move their location in the circle. They cannot move to a spot immediately next to them. Once everyone has moved, there will be one person in the center to repeat the process.

Continue until the game grows tired.

Biggest Fan

This one turns a simple game of Rock-Paper-Scissors into a group game. Two players have to compete best 2 out of 3 Rock-Paper-Scissors games. Whoever wins, goes on to compete more, and whoever loses becomes the winner's biggest fan, cheering them on in future competitions. If someone loses who has fans, all the fans go on to cheer the winner.

This goes on, each person's fan base growing, until there are only two retreatants. The winner, now has everyone else as their fan.

Egg, Chicken, Dinosaur

The goal of this game is to work your way up by beating other players at Rock-Paper-Scissors. Everyone starts as an egg. To show this, you have to crouch down and walk with your knees near your chest. After playing Rock-Paper-Scissors the winner becomes a chicken (walking around bent over with wings tucked in – think chicken dance). The loser remains an egg. After chicken, you can win to become a dinosaur (small arms, standing tall, roaring). If you lose, you go down to the previous level.

Play until there are no more eggs or chickens – dinosaurs win.

Ninja

Standing in a circle, the goal of this game is to slap another person's hand. The catch is that you can only move on your turn or as a reaction to an "attack". The move must be one fluid motion and cannot last long. Everyone is frozen in the motion they were last in.

If a player's hand is slapped, they move to the outside of the circle cheering on the group.

Optional rules:

Players are also eliminated when trying to evade an attack intended for someone else.

Players must make a "yah" ninja chopping noise when they attack.

An excessively violent attack can also get you eliminated.

Human Etch-a-Sketch

Break the group into teams. Their goals are to create shapes using only their bodies. The retreat leader calls out a shape (sailboat, state of Michigan, etc) and the team members lay down and make the picture on the floor.

Variation: Human math – ask math questions and they have to make the numbers out of their bodies. You can ask "the number of days it took God to create the world, minus the number of days he rested" or "the number of Jesus' apostles plus the number of the tribes of Israel"

I. Pilgrimage: More than a Field Trip

Date: _____

As you have already seen, true pilgrimage is about more than preparing to go on a vacation or field trip. For many young people, this will be one of the first non-school and non-family travel experiences. It is important that it not become another group vacation or the youth group equivalent of a band trip. The excitement will be there, same as the others, but we hope to focus that excitement into an expression of faith.

This session strives to set the stage for that deeper and meaningful experience. It has a great focus on prayer and experiential learning. One credo for this session is “lex orandi, lex credendi” – “the law of prayer is the law of belief”. For our pilgrimage, it will add the law of pilgrimage: “lex orandi, lex credendi, lex peregrinati”.



Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found immediately on page 11.

Prayer

led by _____

Opening Song: Owl City, *In Christ Alone (I Stand)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ipl-rLRxOrs>

Prayer:

*Let us pray. Here in your love, we stand, O God. Walk with us on this pilgrimage of faith as we journey deeper into a relationship with one another and with you. Help us along the way, guiding our feet and lighting our path. We ask this, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.***

Reading: Mark 1:16-20

As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” They abandoned their nets and followed him. He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.

Quiet Reflection: (consider these or other questions)

What did you hear that stood out as Jesus’ first disciples started their journey with him?

What comfort do you think they experienced beginning their time with Jesus?

What fears do you think they had beginning their journey with Jesus?

General Intercessions:

For us, pilgrims together on a journey to NCYC and a deeper faith. May we be open to the experience and grow with one another, we pray to the Lord.

For our parish community, that it may be enhanced by this pilgrimage of its parishioners, we pray to the Lord.

For our families, that their support and love may make this pilgrimage a time of wonder, we pray to the

Lord.

For all those intentions we hold in the quiet of our hearts, we bring them all to the Lord in the words Jesus gave us.

Our Father:

Our Father, who art in heaven...

Closing Prayer:

Let us pray. You have called us, O Lord, to walk with you on this pilgrimage. May we know of your presence throughout this preparation, and during our travels. Keep us always in your love, and help us to share that love with those we meet. We ask this, as we make all our prayers, through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Pilgrim Activity

Today's prayer was rather formatted and generic. It did, however, illustrate our approach as Church to many things. Often we see Church and Mass as the same ol' same ol'. It can seem like just one more thing we do because we are told to, not something we do because we want to.

A pilgrimage to NCYC aims to break that mentality. Church is something we *are*, not something we do. Yes, we show what we are, by what we do, but who we are beneath what our actions show to the world speaks much louder. Are we simply a group of individuals who all know when to sit, stand, and kneel at the same time - or are we the Body of Christ, unified through our Baptism and gathered to give praise to God?

Prayer is a key component of pilgrimage. It allows us to unite with one another AND with our God. Each pilgrim will have multiple opportunities to pray over the course of the pilgrimage, and if he/she wishes, to lead prayer. Each session begins and ends with prayer, and pilgrims are encouraged to lead those prayers.

As a group, design a logo for your pilgrimage. It should be something that shows who you are as a group, and what you hope to gain from NCYC. Start by brainstorming themes and slogans. Then try doing an internet search of "NCYC" images and see what others have done. As a group decide how to make the logo.

Example: one year a group based their pilgrimage around a video about finding a gorilla in a crowd. The theme was "Pilgrimage is about Finding the Gorilla" and the logo had a gorilla face surrounded by the theme and parish name/location.

This logo & theme can be used for T-Shirts, trading tokens, posters, publicity, and a variety of other uses. It brings the group together with an identity that simply gathering does not achieve.

Pilgrim Discussion

- When do you pray most often?
- If prayer is conversation with God, what do you talk about most often? Do you ever tell God the good things you are excited about?
- Have you ever "yelled" at God?

Pilgrim Project

Note: for the first session, it is encouraged that parents be invited to join the Pilgrim Project, Announcements & Housekeeping, and Closing Prayer portions of the gathering. In future sessions, parents are not required to be there.

Have a conversation about fundraising and other practical aspects of the pilgrimage. Do you need

meals at your meetings? What is needed to make NCYC a good experience – and how will all the pilgrims come together to make it happen?

Make a plan. The Pilgrim Project section is really about between the meetings. When will you have fundraisers? Are you going to come together to do service together?

As you make your plan, be sure to include everyone on the pilgrimage. Does someone have a gift that fits with a task? How will the adult pilgrims and parents help you, so that all the leg work does not land on you alone as pilgrim leader?

Once the plan is made, make it public. Will this be shared through communication channels or will you post it in the gathering area? Is there a system of accountability for those who were assigned tasks?

Announcements & Housekeeping

Add any announcements particular to your pilgrimage. Some starting announcements might be:

- Introduce and begin the Pilgrimage Journal
- Upcoming dates to remember
- Announcements/Updates from the Diocese or NFCYM
-
-
-

Closing Prayer

led by _____

Closing prayer is a simple prayer of intention brought together with a Hail Mary or Our Father. A "script" for young people to reference would look like:

Leader: As a people of God, united in prayer, we bring our intentions to God.

For our Church, especially Pope Francis, Bishop N., and all those who lead us in our faith. That they may be examples of God's love, we pray to the Lord.

For us, pilgrims on a journey of discovery. That we may encounter our God on this pilgrimage through those we journey alongside and those we meet, we pray to the Lord.

For the poor and lonely in our world. That they may know God's love through the actions of our Church and all those God has called to service, we pray to the Lord.

Now is an opportunity for you to add your own prayers, that we may join with you. Simply offer your prayer and end with "we pray to the Lord."

Pause as pilgrims offer their own prayers

We offer all of these prayers, and those we hold in the silence of our hearts to Jesus, our Lord, as we ask for Mary's intercession praying, "Hail Mary, full of grace...."

or

Confident that God hears our prayers, both those spoken and those in our hearts, we unite them with the whole Church, as together we pray, "Our Father...."

II. “He took some bread, and after a blessing...”

Date: _____



When Jesus instituted the Eucharist, his actions established a norm for us. They created a pattern repeated to this very day. We can go before this line to Matthew 26:20, “When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve.” Jesus gathered with his followers, with his community. It is only after this that the Eucharistic feast can begin.

On pilgrimage, we will again follow Jesus’ lead. Just as he begins the institution narrative with a blessing, we will begin our sessions and our times together with prayer. We will be conscious of blessing one another, events, and our experience. It is our common priesthood that empowers us to do this, and our baptism that demands we become a blessing to one another.

Note: Ask your pastor or a representative of the parish leadership to join you at this gathering. We will be writing our parish covenants.

Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found on page 11.

Prayer

led by _____

Use either a pilgrim-developed prayer or this one.

Supplies

Bread (rolls)
Basket
Bibles
Gift Assessment
Handouts (online)
Sample Covenant(s)

Take steps to ensure the pilgrims are made aware that what they do now is a reminder of Eucharist, but should not be confused with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

Leader: Lord God, as we remember how you blessed bread with your disciples, we come together as pilgrims on a journey. Bless our gathering, and join us on this journey. Bless the bread we share, that it may remind us of your time with your disciples.

As we share this bread with one another, let us listen to the words of scripture.

Pass the basket of rolls for everyone to have some if they wish.

Reader 1: When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve ... while they were eating, Jesus took bread, and said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; this is my body.” (*Matthew 26:20, 26*)

Reader 2: As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. (*Luke 24:28-31*)

Reader 3: For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my

body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” (1Corinthians 11:22-24)

Leader: As Jesus blessed, broke, and shared bread with his friends and as they continued to bless, break, and share bread after his Ascension, may we continue that tradition, sharing meals, stories, and joy with one another on this pilgrimage. We ask God’s help in this, as together we pray...

Our Father...

Pilgrim Activity

One component of our pilgrimage is the communal aspect. It is possible to make an individual pilgrimage, but we have chosen to undertake pilgrimage together. This means some very practical and spiritual choices will be made. Tonight is the night to begin that process.

Community – of all shapes & sizes

Take some time as a group to discuss the importance of communities to which we belong.

On a whiteboard, newsprint, or other large board – list the communities the pilgrims have. These could be secular, extracurricular, academic, or religious (or many more). When you think you’ve exhausted all the options, keep going. Don’t just hit the low hanging fruit.

Depending on the group, this brainstorming can become silly – and that is good. It is a nice way to show that not everything on pilgrimage has to be serious and stoic, but should have a purpose – even if that purpose is not known until later.

Once the communities are brainstormed, put check marks next to “the most important”. Do not define what that means, let the group. Some groups may choose only the ones that include personal relationships, some may go with what they think you mean and choose all religious groups, some may just check everything. Let them choose as many as they like, and let them struggle with the directions until they are done. Then tell them you will be adding those communities to the pilgrimage journal as communities to pray for. If they want to change their answer to add more communities from the list, let them.

Write a short prayer to pray every pilgrimage gathering moving forward asking God’s blessing on the communities now listed in the pilgrimage journal. It can be as simple as “

Traveling from & representing a community

While we bless communities, we should also recognize that our communities bless us. Fun fact – numbers in the bible often stand for a deeper meaning. Three typically hints at the Divine. Forty means many, or completion. And scholars tell us that 12 means “government perfection” but we must remember that in the Hebrew tradition, any perfection would mean right relationship between those in the family, community, or nation. Examples of 12 in the bible include:

12 sons of Jacob 12 Tribes of Israel 12 Apostles of Christ
12 legions of angels 12 Gates of the New Jerusalem

Being a part of a community is about more than being listed on a membership role. Being a part of community means allowing that community partially define you to others, and in turn, to partially define that community. It’s a mutual representation. Saying “I am a Catholic” or “I am a member of the local fire department” is an identifier, just as your parish claiming “John is a member of our parish community” or your school saying “Annette is a student here.” When someone makes news, the community is also highlighted.

When we travel to NCYC we are representatives of our communities. We need to be a blessing to others so that –*insert parish name here*– can be a blessing as well. That is why we are developing a parish covenant today.

As a mutual representation, the parish is taking on responsibilities for this pilgrimage. Likewise, each pilgrim is asked to take ownership and responsibility as well. Just as responsibility is shared, so too will experiences. Our joys are made sweeter and our struggles shared when we have a community.

This is an ideal place in the gathering for the pastor to talk about the importance placed in the pilgrimage group as representatives of the parish and his trust that the pilgrims will represent the parish well.

Using our Gifts for the Community

Give each pilgrim an opportunity to assess their gifts to help them to determine how they may want to bring home what they experience or learn at NCYC. Remind them that this pilgrimage is as much about coming home from NCYC as it is going to a new place. As members of the parish community, each pilgrim (teen and adult) will be asked to come back and share the experience so the parish can grow as well.

Promises in a Community

Once everyone has had an opportunity to complete the *Gifts Assessment* begin the process of creating the pilgrimage covenants. A sample covenant made between each pilgrim and the parish is found on page 69. Alternatively, you may want to do a group covenant where each pilgrim can summarize their promise before signing.

Throughout the Scriptures, God made covenants with His people. From God promising Abraham many descendants, to the promise to Noah never to flood the earth again. God promised Israel to be their God and they would be God's people. God renews that covenant through the prophets, and fulfils it with Jesus Christ. In Jesus we have a new and everlasting covenant that God will journey with us and never abandon us. Today, we still make covenants with and before God. Marriage is a covenant between husband, wife, and God.

Throughout salvation history, it has been people that fall away from the covenant, not God. We do our best, and we strive for perfection, even if we never make it. As we move into developing our personal pilgrimage covenants, be aware of making your promise realistic. Do not pledge to come back and increase youth group attendance by 200%.

Using the gifts you've identified, have each pilgrim determine how they will bring the fruits of NCYC back to the parish. These could be 'one-and-done' events such as hosting an NCYC prayer night, or it could be to help present NCYC to the parish. Someone may want to help make a promo video or host a promotion night for NCYC 2021. Maybe their gifts lend to continuing to pray for the pilgrimage group and those who supported the group. Whatever they choose, each pilgrim should find a way to bring NCYC home.

Once the covenants are signed, place them in a prominent place where you meet. These are the visual representation of our promises. As the pastor if he is present, or as the leader you can, say a blessing over the covenants. Ask each person to silently, make the sign of the cross on the hands of another pilgrim, marking them for the pilgrimage and silently blessing them.

Pilgrim Discussion

- What gifts do you have that will help make the pilgrimage to NCYC a joyous experience for everyone?
- What gifts do others have that meld well with your own?
- When and how have you been empowered to use your gifts in our parish?

Pilgrim Project

Holding Our Hopes in Prayer

Early on in pilgrimage the hopes and excitement of what is to come fills the atmosphere. Even after delving into their gifts and forming a covenant, the pilgrims will be filled with anticipation. Have each pilgrim write on a slip of paper two hopes for the pilgrimage: one for the entire time preparing and traveling, and one for while they are at NCYC.

Collect the slips and re-distribute them to the pilgrims in no particular order. Without knowing whose hope you hold, keep that pilgrim in prayer until we meet again. Consider how you might help make this pilgrim's hopes a reality.

Announcements & Housekeeping

Pass the Pilgrimage Journal

Upcoming dates to remember

Announcements/Updates from the Diocese or NFCYM

Closing Prayer

led by _____

Gifts Assessment

III. Blessed are YOU!

Date: _____

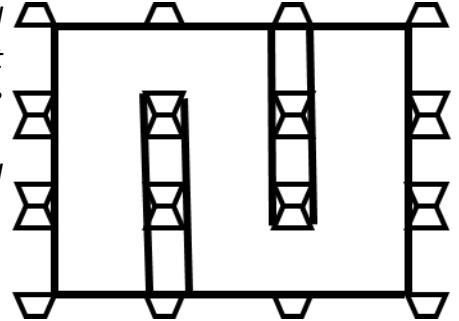


Pilgrimage is a sacred undertaking. It is made sacred by our actions and our intentions, but it is also made sacred because it is blessed, and it is undertaken by those who have been blessed. By inviting God to journey with us, we have made this conference into pilgrimage.

In this session, we will explore how we are blessed. Through our inheritance and our baptism, we have been blessed in abundance. It is the goal of this session to help pilgrims recognize, name, and respond to those blessings.

Note: this session requires a second room or space unseen before it is used to set up a “maze”. To create the maze, place chairs at corners and connect the backs of the chairs with rope as pictured so that the larger side of the trapezoid is the back of the chair:

Depending on the type of chair or pole you are using, the rope could be one solid length woven through, or many individual lengths of rope. There should be no exit, but by either unfastening or raising a section, people should be able to easily get in or out.



Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found on page 11.

Prayer

led by _____

Use either a pilgrim-developed prayer, or this one.

Thomas Merton – I believe my desire to please you pleases you.

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.

I do not see the road ahead of me.

I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself, and the face that

I think I am following Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please you.

And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that, if I do this, You will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore I will trust You always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for You are ever with me,
and You will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Pilgrim Activity

Rope Maze

In an enclosed area, set up a rope maze where the participants have to guide themselves along ropes that are at waist height while blindfolded. Unlike a typical maze, however, there should be no entrance or exit. The only way out is to ask for help. Begin by blindfolding the participants and guiding them into the maze area. Start each participant at a different point in the maze and tell them that their task is to find a way out. If they need you, you are only a shout away. Once out, they should not yell out directions to those still in the maze, but they too are only a shout away.

Once everyone has “escaped” pose the following questions for reflection:

In terms of our pilgrimage:

What might the maze have represented? *our pilgrimage; life; obstacles*

What might you have represented? *pilgrims; ourselves; etc.*

What might the person who guided you out represented? *God; pilgrim leaders; NCYC planners*

This activity will encourage them to work together and to rely on others, and naturally leads to a conversation about how we are in it together. Anyone could have been the “hero” that came to the rescue and lead people out of the maze. We all help one another when we make pilgrimage together!

Last time we spent some time developing our identity as a group. We designed a logo, we signed a covenant, we explored what it means to be OUR group. But group identity doesn’t do us any good if we don’t have a purpose. There’s a quote: you can be on the right track, but if you’re not moving you will still get hit by a train. Identity is a start, but it’s time for the next step.

Spend some time as a group formally defining why you are going to NCYC. What are each pilgrim’s hopes and expectations? Do you have any fears? What do you hope to bring home from NCYC? What does the parish hope you will bring home? Are those hopes realistic?

Taking these brainstormed visions of what is to come, form a vision. It may seem backwards to create the vision after formally committing in covenant form, but we need to look at it from a different angle. Now that everyone is committed and “has skin in the game” we are ready to stop standing on the train tracks. It’s time to move the pilgrimage forward.

With your vision solidified, create your road map for success. You have your sessions scheduled (hopefully), and catechetical goals outlined (hopefully), but pilgrimage is about people. How can this group at this time in history in this location make this pilgrimage work? What do you need from one another, from families, from the parish, and most importantly from God?

Pilgrimage is very much like the rope maze – we can get ourselves into it, but we will just fumble blindly until we ask someone (GOD!) for help. The old saying is God helps those who help themselves, so we should make a plan, but we should include God in that plan and continually ask God to guide us along the path.

Pilgrim Discussion

What do you think of our plan? Will it work for you?

Who do we need to include that is not included?

What blessings do you think this pilgrimage will provide in your life? (or what blessing has it already provided?)

Pilgrim Project

Prayer Partners

An important part of being on pilgrimage together is holding one another in prayer. We do this both formally and informally. This project is designed to help formalize some prayer partnerships.

Have each pilgrim write his/her name on a slip of paper. (You can have them written out ahead if you want.) Each pilgrim draws a name and reads it without revealing who it is. As long as they did not draw their own name, they keep it.

Each pilgrim is now asked to keep their prayer partner in prayer throughout the pilgrimage. A simple prayer that could work is, "Lord, please keep NAME close to you today," or "God, please remember NAME while you are blessing people." It doesn't have to be fancy, just there. If they want to keep the slip of paper on their dresser or somewhere they will see it and remember to pray, even better.

Next, have the pilgrims write their first names on additional slips of paper. Give those slips to people who support the pilgrimage with financial contributions, and ask for their prayers along with money. Keep a list of these supporters as well, and assure them of the pilgrims' prayers.

Later in the pilgrimage we will develop ways of showing our prayer partners our prayers.

Announcements & Housekeeping

Pass the Pilgrimage Journal

Updates from Diocese and NFCYM

Closing Prayer

led by _____

IV. Pilgrimage: A Time for Bringing our Gifts

Date: _____

Recognizing the blessings around us (last session) is important. But just as important is recognizing how we are blessings for others. Too often, we think of how we are blessed, but forget that all we have been given, we are asked to return freely. We have been blessed in our lives, and so we must be blessings to others.

This session will help pilgrims recognize the gifts in them that make them blessings for others. It will encourage them to use their gifts in service and humility.



Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found on page 11.

Prayer

led by _____

pilgrims can create their own or use the following:

Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhzII5KGTno>

A Litany of the Person

-Anonymous Trappist Monk

image of God
born of God's breath
vessel of divine love
after his likeness
dwelling of God
capacity for the infinite
eternally known
chosen of God
home of Infinite Majesty
abiding in the Son
called from eternity
life in the Lord
temple of the Holy Spirit
branch of Christ
receptacle of the Most High
wellspring of Living Water
heir to the kingdom
the glory of God
abode of the Trinity

God sings this litany
eternally in his Word.

This is who you are.

Pilgrim Activity

Virtues in Us

Sometimes it is difficult to see our own greatness. We are assured by the psalmist that we are wonderfully made (Ps 139:14), but all too often, we fail to see that in ourselves. That's one of the joys of community! Our pilgrim community can lift up the wonderful we see in one another.

We've all heard of the Seven Deadly Sins, but did you realize that with each of those there is a virtue as well? Virtue is defined as "a habitual and firm disposition to do the good." The seven Christian virtues are:

Prudence – the virtue that allows us to use our reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and choose the right means of achieving it.

Justice – the virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor.

Fortitude – the virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good.

Temperance – the virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods.

Faith – the virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us.

Hope – the virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Charity – the virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbors as ourselves for the love of God.

Note, you can educate yourself further, or have the pilgrims educate themselves further by consulting the Catechism. These virtues are paragraphs 1804-1929.

Note #2, this activity could also be done with the Gifts of the Spirit as well (CCC 1831).

Noticing Virtues (one) *There are two versions of how to raise up virtues. Depending on a variety of factors, one may work better for your group than the other.*

Materials: clear ornament balls, 7 colors of confetti, strips of paper

Give each pilgrim a clear ornament. Assign each virtue a color, and in a central place, put 7 piles or bowls of confetti. Encourage each pilgrim to put the color confetti into another pilgrim's ornament for the virtue(s) he/she sees in the pilgrim.

At the end, each pilgrim should have an ornament with a variety of colored confetti in it. Give each pilgrim a strip of paper and have him/her write a short prayer of thanksgiving on it, something along the lines of "Lord, thank you for the many gifts you give me." Roll the slip up and add it to the ornament. It should uncoil slightly and look like a spring among the confetti.

Place all of the ornaments in a bowl or basket as a centerpiece reminder of the variety of virtues the group brings to the pilgrimage. Where one pilgrim may lack one, another can help.

Reflect with them about what colors surprised them in their ornament. Notice that sometimes people see virtues, gifts, or characteristics in us that we do not see.

There are many personality profiles (Myers-Briggs, Enneagram, etc.) that can tell us about ourselves and often encourage us to grow in areas where we score lower than others. For example, someone who scores as a high introvert is often encouraged to develop more extraverted skills. Strengths Finders is a profile that only gives you your top 5 strengths. The idea is that you then work to make those strengths even stronger. The focus shifts to what you have not what you are lacking. God has gifted us all – and no one was given more so that others have less. Rather we were given more so others can have more as well.

Noticing Virtues (two) *There are two versions of how to raise up virtues. Depending on a variety of factors,*

one may work better for your group than the other.

Materials: colored candy (such as M&Ms, Skittles, etc.), small cups

Assign a virtue to each color candy. (Note: M&Ms and Skittles both have 5 colors, not 7. You may need to either get extra colors or limit your virtues.) Put each color in a different bowl for easy access.

Give each pilgrim a cup to put before them. Everyone is then able to give candy to one another based on the virtues found in the recipient. Before enjoying their virtues, pilgrims should notice the variety of virtues seen in them.

As pilgrims enjoy their virtues, reflect with them about what colors surprised them in their cup. Notice that sometimes people see virtues, gifts, or characteristics in us that we do not see.

There are many personality profiles (Myers-Briggs, Enneagram, etc.) that can tell us about ourselves and often encourage us to grow in areas where we score lower than others. For example, someone who scores as a high introvert is often encouraged to develop more extraverted skills. Strengths Finders is a profile that only gives you your top 5 strengths. The idea is that you then work to make those strengths even stronger. The focus shifts to what you have not what you are lacking. God has gifted us all – and no one was given more so that others have less. Rather we were given more so others can have more as well.

Using our Gifts

Once we know what our gifts are, we have to realize they are meant to be gifts for others, not ourselves. Purely showing our gifts encourages others to show theirs as well. Just look how after 3 sessions people were able to see one another's giftedness.

Pilgrim Discussion

Were there any virtues you did not have represented that you think you have?

What virtue do you see in yourself most easily?

How do you see these virtues being useful in pilgrimage?

Pilgrim Project

Thank You Cards

One part of recognizing gifts in others and ourselves is thanking them for sharing those gifts. As part of the pilgrimage, have the pilgrims create or sign thank you cards for those who make the pilgrimage happen. The hand-written and thoughtful thank you cards can be sent out the week of NCYC so they are received while pilgrims are away from home.

Also consider having the daily Mass at your parish offered for the intentions of the benefactors of your NCYC pilgrimage on your travel day. Let them know they will be remembered at Mass on that day in your thank you notes.

Announcements & Housekeeping

Pass the Pilgrimage Journal

Updates from the Diocese and NFCYM

Closing Prayer

led by _____

V. “He broke it...”

Date: _____

The Fracture Rite has a rich history in our Church, and one that is often not known. It was originally intended that the bishop’s host would be sent to the various parishes in his diocese (city at the time) and included at their Mass. This link with the bishop was important to ancient Christians because it showed that they were a part of a universal Church.

But the breaking of the bread at the Last Supper was more practical. Everyone needed a piece, so Jesus broke it so it could be shared. In both instances, the breaking is meant to build community. Bread is broken so that our community will not.

This session will delve into the meal of the Eucharist. What it means to break bread with one another and how sharing a meal is one of the hallmarks of human community.

NOTE: This session is meal-based. It may be longer than the other sessions you have scheduled as it includes preparing the meal, eating together with discussion, and clean up.



Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found on page 11.

Use your time wisely – you may want to forgo an icebreaker at this gathering.

Prayer

led by _____

Use the following, or develop another. Even though you are praying again mid-session when you say grace, it is still important to begin your gathering with a prayer.

God of all blessings, we thank you for providing us with this meal and this community. Thank you for these ingredients (*name each one*). Be present in the preparing and sharing of this meal, and be present with those who have no food today. Show us how our lives can be a blessing to them, and lead us all toward that day when no one will suffer from hunger anymore. Amen.

Pilgrim Activity

As this session is the mid-way point to the journey, it is a fitting time to take a small break and just enjoy one another’s company. Since we are still on pilgrimage, we won’t leave behind our purpose, but we will see it through the lens of time spent with one another.

It may be tempting to have volunteers come in and help or even make the meal. That is not the point of tonight. Tonight is about coming together to make the meal work. Making, enjoying, and cleaning up from the meal are all microcosms of the pilgrimage.

This session is written with the idea of having a taco night together. If your group decides to share a different meal, make the appropriate adjustments.

Before dividing up tasks, take some time to discuss WHY you will share a meal. There are three main reasons: 1. Jesus shared meals a LOT. He formed community and friendships over meals, even with those he did not know well. 2. Our faith has a meal as its central focus. The Eucharist is, at its most basic level, a meal. Sharing a meal is simply who we are. 3. We are celebrating a milestone! We are halfway into our pilgrimage, and we celebrate together with a meal.

Making a meal

A lot goes into making a meal for a group. You will need to assign tasks. Be mindful to give more than just food preparation as tasks. We are preparing the whole meal, including the environment.

Tasks for Tacos:

Cutting up & plating the fixings (tomatoes, lettuce, olives, sour cream, jalapeños, cheese, etc.)

Browning the meat & seasoning

Preparing beverages (may including making lemonade or punch)

Setting the table:

Table cloth(s)?

Place settings: plate, fork, napkin, cup

Hot plates for food in the middle (unless you do buffet, then set that up)

Salsa on table

Preparing (and eventually leading) grace

Conversation starters (if you don't have these prepped early)

Enjoying a Meal Together

Meals are about more than feeding just our bodies. When we enjoy a meal together we build our community. We talk and grow. That is one reason Jesus shared so many meals with others, and why our main form of prayer and worship is a meal.

Taco Meal:

Be sure to let the teens know how much taco materials there are. Did you prepare enough for everyone to have one, two, three? tacos. Everyone should begin with a minimum and go back if they are hungry.

Say grace.

Enjoy a meal together. You can lead a conversation about Jesus' meals, or the Mass, or just enjoy one another's company. Tonight is about the meal more than the lesson.

Clean-up, clean-up, everybody do their share...

Cleaning up from a meal is no one's favorite part. When we all put in a little help, though, the cleanup takes less time and energy. Many hands make light work.

Taco Clean-Up:

Clear the table and wipe it down (Clorox® wipes are great!)

Bag & refrigerate any leftovers (waste not, want not!)

Wash & dry dishes (please don't snap the towel!)

Wipe down the counters (more Clorox® wipes!)

Pilgrim Discussion

Before everyone goes their separate ways, take some time to discuss how the night went.

What part of the meal was your favorite?

Was everyone busy all the time? Was everyone busy at least sometimes? (*This leads to a conversation about equal distribution of tasks.*)

When we prepared the meal, it was like preparing to go to NCYC. Enjoying the meal is like what we will experience while we're there. Cleaning up is like coming home. Did anyone notice the three phases of our night?

Pilgrim Project

As a group, begin to plan another meal for when you get back from NCYC. Rather than a meal for the pilgrims, however, plan a meal where the pilgrims can show their gratitude to any donors who make NCYC possible. You have plenty of time, but encourage everyone to think about what they would like to see at that thank you meal.

Announcements & Housekeeping

Pass the Pilgrimage Journal

Fundraising update

Announcements from NFCYM & the Diocese

Closing Prayer

led by _____

VI. God Breaks our Hearts of Stone

Date: _____



One of the very familiar Lenten themes is from Ezekiel 36:26: “I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts.” God intends for us to change into more loving, more compassionate, more Christian people. Pilgrimage is just a way we undertake that internal journey as we undertake an external journey.

A youth once taught the youth group that “God likes to break our hearts, because when he does, he breaks them open.... When your heart is broken it lets all the love come pouring out, and the grace of God come pouring in.” This session hopes to break our hearts to let more love out and grace in.

Before the session – take the logo designed in the first session and print it on large paper. If possible, reproduce it on poster board.

Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found on page 11.

Prayer

led by _____

Music or video: Change my Heart Oh God: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akyGUYCn1k4>

Leader: Lord, change our hearts that they may be more like you. Help us to use the gifts you have given us, and the community you have placed us in, to do your work. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Pilgrim Activity

At our last session we shared a meal together, much like we share the Eucharist as a community of faith. But just as the Mass is meant to send us to do more, so is our time as pilgrims. The Mass brings individuals together and allows each to become much more by joining in the Mystical Body of Christ.

Give each pilgrim a sheet of paper and have them create a collage of themselves using old newspapers, magazines, or other scraps from the recycling bin. They may find descriptive words, phrases, or pictures. They are simply making a collage that shows who they are as a person, and/or who they would like to be.

Optional: using markers, or colored cellophane make each collage a different color.

Today we will look at how God breaks our hearts so they can be reshaped. (Take your time with this discussion – seek input and ideas throughout. Your collages need time to dry!)

When we talk about the Mass, or about Jesus sharing a meal, we talk about how he breaks the bread. But in pilgrimage, that breaking takes a new shape. It is not about making our food into bite-size pieces, or even about sharing the meal with others. In terms of a pilgrimage breaking is about change.

The Catholic Church has a rich history of how we are supposed to help others, and how the Eucharist

is supposed to prepare us to make a difference in the world. We are not the same people when we go into Mass as when we come out. We are strengthened and changed.

St. Augustine encouraged us at Mass to “believe what you see, see what you believe and become what you are: the Body of Christ.” When we are given Eucharist, we open ourselves up to being transformed. Our hearts are broken, so that God can give us new hearts.

Broken Hearts

Break everyone’s heart... literally cut up the collages they made. Ask for the symbolism of this. The joy of symbols is that they could mean any number of things. In this case, it may mean “sin” or “being pulled in many directions” or “uncertainty”. Whatever reasons the youth give – remember that as humans we are broken. We have faults and are imperfect. It is through Jesus that those faults are healed, and we are blessed that Jesus has given himself to and for us.

The Japanese have an ancient custom. It is called Kintsugi (‘golden journey’) or Kintsukuroi (‘golden repair’). When a piece of pottery breaks, rather than throwing it out because it is useless, they mend it. But they mend it using a lacquer that is mixed with precious metals (usually silver, gold or platinum). The cracks are highlighted and shown off as a part of the pottery’s journey. The brokenness of the pottery makes it a beautiful piece. (more information here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kintsugi>)

Kintsugi could be seen as an image of how God creates a new heart for us. He breaks our hearts of stone, and reforms them into a beautiful heart that is more in the image and likeness of God – more capable of love and compassion.

When we are on pilgrimage together, any brokenness breaks all our hearts. We are in this together. The flip side is even more important! Any healing, or beauty, enhances all of us! Using the pieces of collage, re-create. Put them together mosaic-style to make your logo. No one’s image will look the same as it did before, but together we can make something beautiful.

As the group is re-assembling, read for them: (Ezekiel 36:16, 26-27)

“Thus the word of the Lord came to me: I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees.”

Point out your logo to the group – made up of each person here. The image is nice, but what makes it is beautiful!

Pilgrim Discussion

How has God broken your heart so you can become a better follower?

Has God ever put you in a place to help someone whose heart has been broken?

Pilgrim Project

We are moving into the last leg of our pilgrimage. It's time to look toward our voyage as well as preparing the pilgrimage. Look at oriental trading and other 'tchotchke' stores. Part of being at NCYC is trading tokens of home. What small, inexpensive token could your group take to trade with others? Remember they will want a fair number of tokens to trade, so keeping the cost to a minimum is important.

Popular ideas from years past: buttons, clothespins with parish name & location, self-addressed & stamped postcards, local sports paraphernalia, necklaces, etc. The goal is to reflect the theme, your pilgrimage, and your home. Someone from Iowa, for instance, may want to have corn, or from Ohio, a buckeye. If your parish or youth ministry has a social media presence, you may want to include your handle so people from around the country can follow you.

Announcements & Housekeeping

Pass the Pilgrimage Journal

Updates from the Diocese or NFCYM

Fundraising update/upcoming fundraising events

Closing Prayer

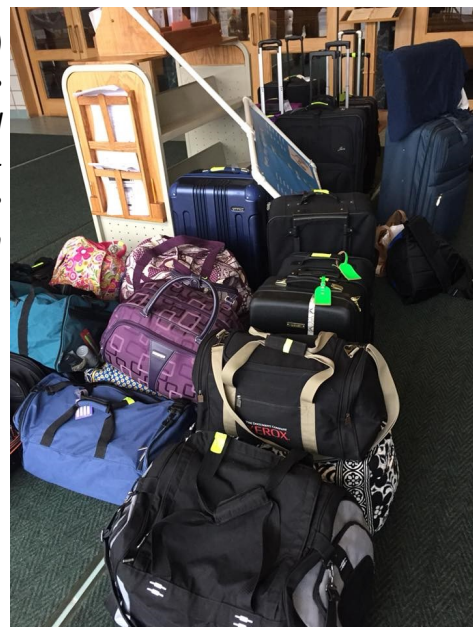
led by _____

VII. Pilgrimage: A Time for Packing Humanity

Date: _____

Pilgrimage is never an easy process. At times the excitement can replace the apprehension or questions, but if it is easy, we are not putting ourselves into the process. As humans we bring baggage, and not just luggage, to our pilgrimage.

This session aims to help pilgrims recognize the baggage (sins) they bring with them and through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, move through that experience and into a grace-filled journey. It is designed with the assumption that at least one priest will be present to hear confessions. If this is not the case, the service can be led by the pilgrimage leader and pilgrims encouraged to seek the grace of the Sacrament when it is available.



Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found on page 11.

Prayer

led by _____

Pilgrims can prepare a prayer, or the Reconciliation service can take its place.

Pilgrim Activity

Reconciliation Service

Before the service, recruit the following:

Priest(s) (Gospel, homily, examination of conscience, confessions)

2-4 Readers

Music? (or use recorded music)

Opening Song

Opening Prayer

Let us pray. You have given us, O Lord, the opportunity to grow. Bless us as we continue our pilgrimage, seeking to reconcile ourselves with you, our communities, and ourselves. Grant us, we pray, your merciful forgiveness and grace, through your Son who lives and reigns with the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

1st Reading (Exodus 12:1, 11-14)

A reading from the Book of Exodus.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This is how you are to eat it: with your loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in hand, you shall eat like those who are in flight. It is the Passover of the

Lord. For on this same night I will go through Egypt, striking down every firstborn of the land, both man and beast, and executing judgement on all the gods of Egypt – I, the Lord!

“This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all your generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord, as a perpetual institution.”

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

A sung psalm or song of your choosing

Gospel (Matthew 10:5-10a, 11-13)

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, “Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give. Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts; no sack for the journey; or a second tunic, or sandals, or walking stick. Whatever town or village you enter, look for a worthy person in it, and stay there until you leave. As you enter a house, wish it peace. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; if not, let your peace return to you.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily or Reflection

Examination of Conscience

Introduce the pilgrims to a scriptural examination of conscience. In place of an examination of conscience, each reading will be shared a second time, much as it is for Lectio Divina. As it is shared the second time, reflective questions are posed. Listen to how scripture can challenge us to look at our lives and prepare for the Sacrament.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,

Have I listened to when God speaks to me?

“This is how you are to eat it:

Do I listen to what God commands me to do?

With your loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in hand,

How do I present myself to others? Is it how God would want?

you shall eat like those who are in flight.

How often am I in a rush and not present to the moment? Do I ignore important things when I rush?

It is the Passover of the Lord.

For on this same night I will go through Egypt,

Do I believe God is present, among us in the world? Do I ignore his presence?

striking down every firstborn of the land, both man and beast, and executing judgement

Do I ever put my own judgement before God's? When do I think I know best?
on all the gods of Egypt – I, the Lord!

Do I put other gods before God? Placing more value on money, reputation, or possessions?
“This day shall be a memorial feast for you,

Do I remember why I do the things I do? Do I get so wrapped up in doing, I forget why?
which all your generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord,

Do I continue the good things from my family? Do I respect the traditions given to me?
as a perpetual institution.”

Do I go to Mass and celebrate my faith?

Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus,

Do I go where God wants me to go, or do I go where I want?
“Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town.

Do I avoid situations where I should not be, or do I put myself in situations where I am likely to sin?
Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Do I look for those who need me, or do I only look for what I need?
As you go, make this proclamation:

Do I exercise my role as prophet, proclaiming the Good News?
‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’

Do I believe God's kingdom is among us now? Do I act like God is already here?
Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, drive out demons.

Do I use my gifts to make others' lives better? Do I relieve their pain when I can?
Without cost you have received;

Do I recognize that God has given me great gifts? Do I accept my wonderfulness?
without cost you are to give.

Do I use my gifts for others or do I only use them for myself?
Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts;

Do I put more value on money than I do people?
no sack for the journey; or a second tunic, or sandals, or walking stick.

Do I spend more time planning so I can succeed than I do helping others?
Whatever town or village you enter, look for a worthy person in it,

Do I recognize the gifts of others? Do I tell them when I see their gifts?
and stay there until you leave.

Am I present to others when I am with them? Do I listen and strengthen my relationships?
As you enter a house, wish it peace.

Do I wish others peace or do I sow seeds of distrust through gossip and talking behind people's backs?
If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it;

Do I bring peace to those around me when I meet them, or do I bring stress?
if not, let your peace return to you.”

Do I accept the peace in my life, or do I worry about things I cannot control?

Individual Confession

While pilgrims are going to confession, have quiet music playing and a reflective activity. Provide a handout of the examination of conscience, or other examinations. Provide the Act of Contrition for those who need it. One activity that can be useful are adult coloring pages which allow the youth to be active and reflective at

the same time.

Closing Prayer & Blessing

Let us pray. Through the grace of this sacrament, O Lord, you have strengthened us for our pilgrimage. May our journey to NCYC be reflective of our faith journey with you and to you. Continue to guide us in your love and mercy, through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

May almighty God bless you,
+ Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Closing Song

Pilgrim Discussion

Why do you think we have a Reconciliation service as part of the pilgrimage?
How do you feel?

Pilgrim Project

This is left empty for this session so you can fill it in with anything your group needs. After the Reconciliation Service it may be difficult to keep attention for a project.

Announcements & Housekeeping

Pass the Pilgrimage Journal
Updates from Diocese or NFCYM

Closing Prayer

led by _____

This should be kept very simple this session as the whole time was spent praying.

VIII. “Gave it to the disciples...”

Date: _____

Jesus did not simply put on a show for his disciples. He included them in his actions, and shared with them his body, his blood, his soul, his divinity, and his life. Jesus brings us, too, into the story. He continues to give his body to us through the Eucharist, and asks only that we, in turn, share him with the world.

A gift is nothing if not given. It cannot be purchased; it cannot be found; it must be given. Otherwise it is a product or an accident. The gifts we have been given, including Christ’s very presence, is meant to be given away.

This session will explore what it means for Jesus to give the Eucharist to his Church. Through the rich tradition of prayers, art, and rituals, we will see how what Jesus did 2,000+ years ago continues today.



Before the session:

- Select and have ready a children’s book or story. It is recommended that you use one with the theme of either Eucharist or Gift-giving, so examples would be: *Sophie Wonders about Eucharist* by Debby Bradley; *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein; *The Legend of Old Befana* by Tomie dePaola; *The Weight of a Mass* by Josephine Nobisso; or *Jacob’s Gift* by Max Lucado ... or whatever you have on your shelf.
- Set up a bin or area to receive the gifts brought. If you are doing this session in July before NCYC, a Christmas-in-July Tree could be fun. You may want extra bags for those who forgot to wrap their gifts. You may also want to have a selection of knick-knack’s to use as gifts for those who forgot to bring something.
- Hang or place the images of Jesus around the room (found on pages 39-54), creating a prayer walk or gallery. (Additional or different images can be found through a simple online image search.)

Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found on page 11.

Prayer

led by _____
Pilgrims can develop their own, or use the following.

A Prayer Walk with Jesus

Encourage the pilgrims to “journey with Jesus” as they reflect on the images. Encourage the pilgrims to be conscious of which images create comfort and which are uncomfortable.

As the pilgrims view the images play instrumental music softly.

Closing Prayer: You have shown us your majesty, Jesus. As we look upon artistic images of you, let our hearts be turned toward you, that we may come to know you as you truly are. May we, in turn, reflect your image to those we meet. We ask this in your most Holy Name. **Amen.**

Pilgrim Activity

Giving Gifts

Gather the pilgrims into a circle. Give a gift to each at random – no need to worry about who gets what, they're not keeping it. Give them the following directions:

Do not open the gifts yet. We are going to play a two-part game with our gifts. The first part will see how well you pay attention, the second part will see how well we know one another. We are going to have "story time" just like when we were little – only this time you have a job beyond just being quiet. You have to listen for every time I say the word THE (or she, or he, or whatever word you want and that shows up a lot in your story). Each time I say that word, you have to pass your gift to the person to your right. Ready? Here we go...

Read the story and be ready for some chaos.

Once the story is read, one at a time have the pilgrims open their gifts. They have to guess who brought the gift they open based PURELY on what it could symbolize. "Suzy brought this recipe card because she follows directions very well." The group can decide if they think the person is right or wrong, and then the true gift-giver reveals him or herself.

Explain that the reason for this activity is to see two things: 1. The variety of gifts we all bring to our pilgrimage and 2. The way we see our own gifts. Two people could bring very different gifts to symbolize the same personality trait. For instance, nails and stale cookies are both hard. Or they could bring the same gift to symbolize different personality traits. For instance, a lion could represent the king or the scary killer depending on who interprets it.

Go the next step and explain that all of this is what we mean when we call ourselves a "Pilgrim Church." We each bring gifts to our Church and people only know those gifts when we share them. Likewise, our Lord gave us a gift to help us along that path – the Eucharist.

Eucharist – a Rich History

Over the centuries prayers and rituals have come in and out of use in the Catholic Church. But the Eucharist has never wavered. The rosary did not even come on the scene until the 13th century with St. Dominic. The Stations of the Cross are a 15th or 16th century addition of our prayer. Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises are from the 14th century. We see all of these prayers as valuable, but only the Eucharist has been with us since the beginning.

We call the Eucharist the Source and Summit of our faith. One meaning of that phrase is that the Mass is both where we draw our strength to use our God-given gifts and where we bring our gifts to offer back to God.

Pilgrim Discussion

What gifts do you bring to the celebration of the Eucharist?

How do you live out the sending to "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life?"

Pilgrim Project

Writing a Prayer Partner Prayer Service.

A sample service can be found on page 73. If your group runs out of time during this session, it can be used in place of a pilgrim-created service, or it can be used as reference as they create one.

Goal: To develop a short, yet prayerful service to reveal prayer partners while at NCYC.

Have the group write a prayer service that can be prayed one night of NCYC. It should include:

Prayer for the pilgrims (by everyone)

A reveal of who each pilgrim has been praying for

An opportunity for pilgrims to offer prayers

Prayer for those at home who are praying for the pilgrims/pilgrimage.

Note: as group leader, you may plan to have leaders of the parish hold individual pilgrims in prayer. This prayer service may serve as a good moment to reveal who back home has been praying for the pilgrims.

Announcements & Housekeeping

Pass the Pilgrimage Journal

Updates from NFCYM or Diocese

Closing Prayer

led by _____



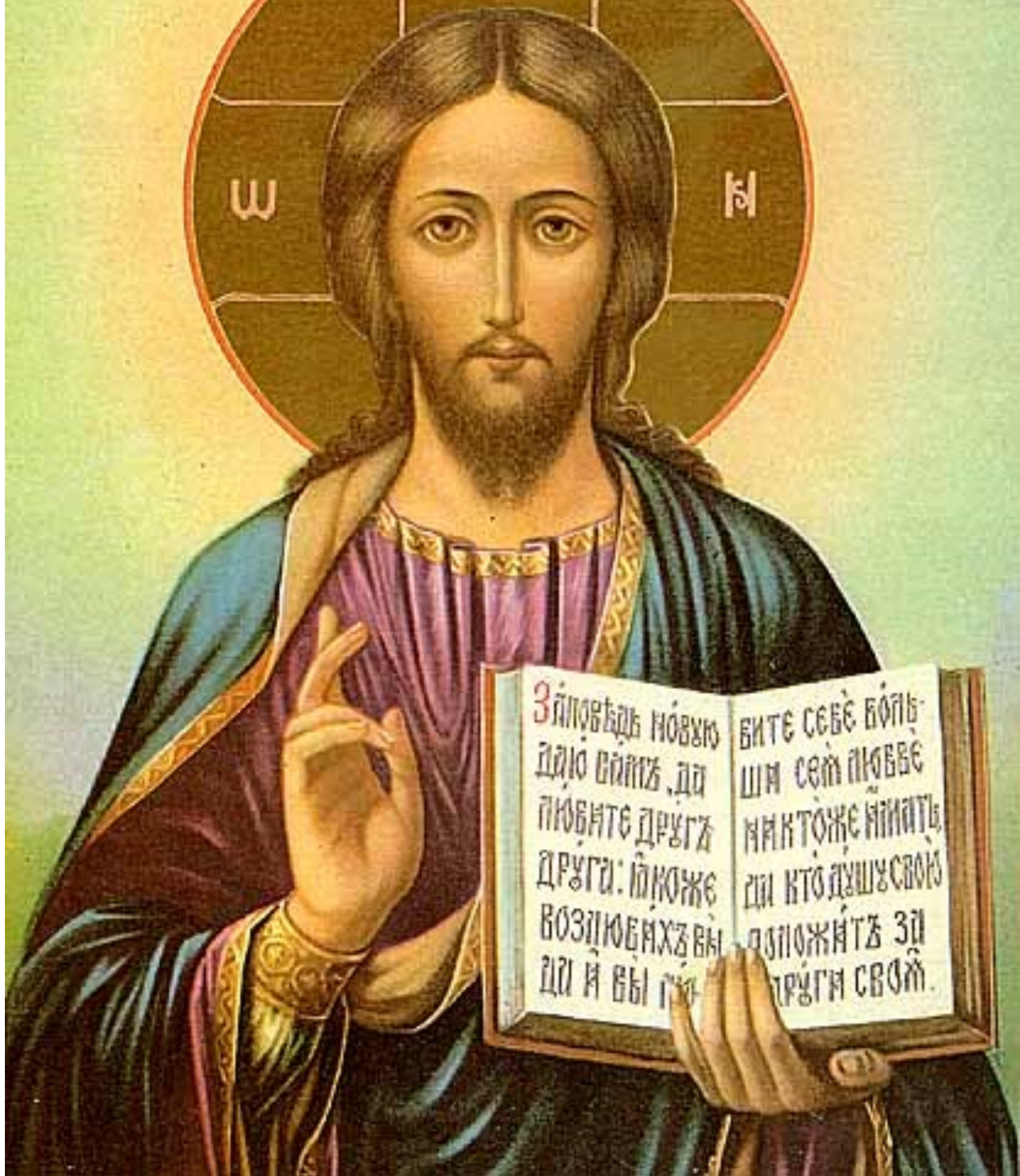
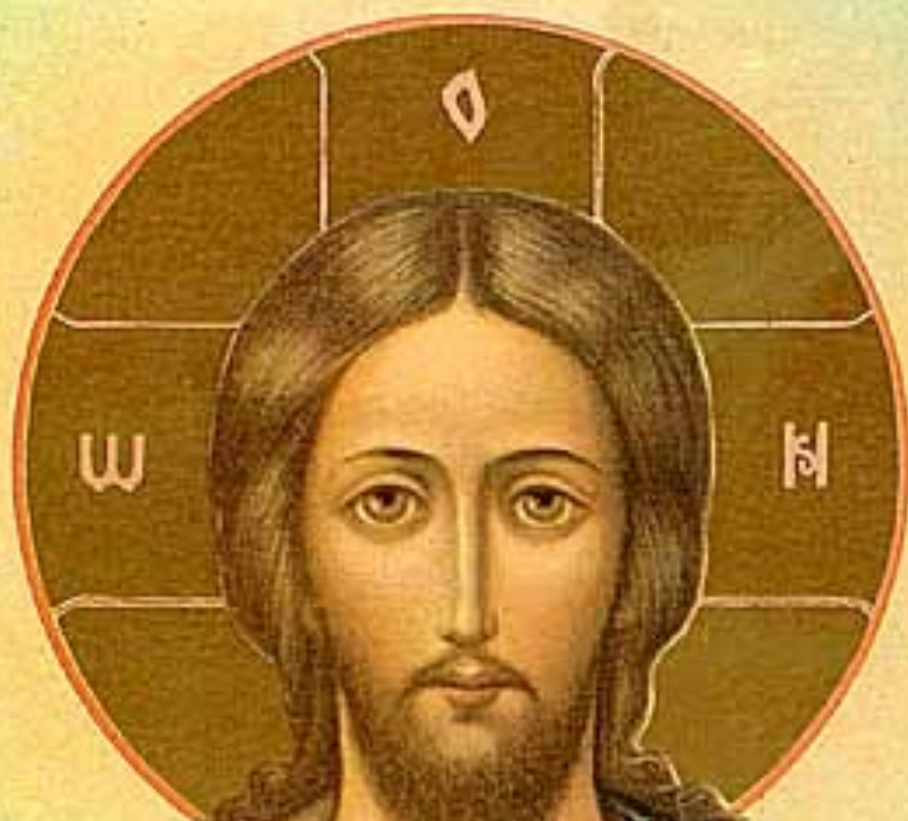
Jesus, I Trust in You!



Rgn

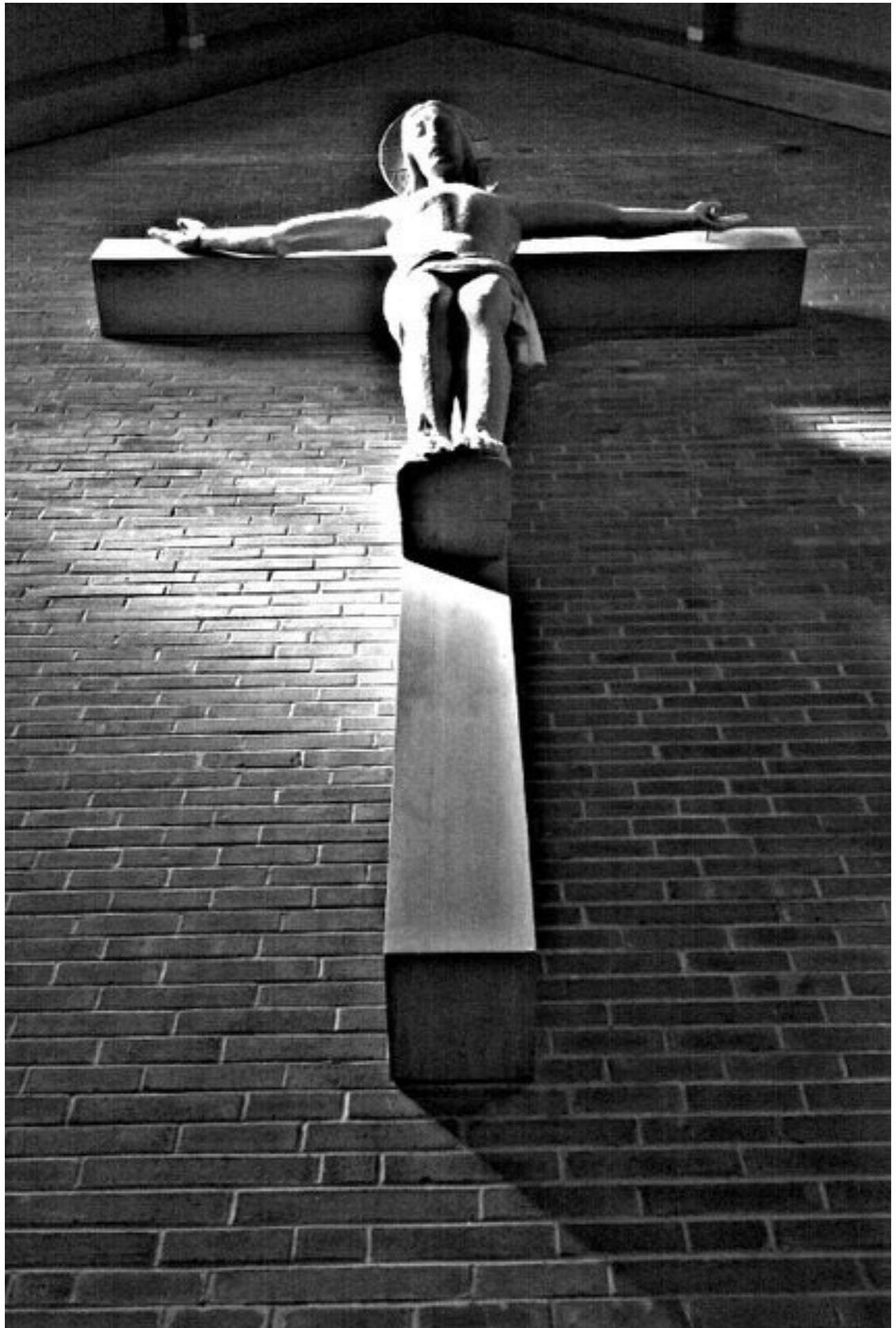
ІІС.

ХРС.



Зъповѣдь новую даю вамъ, да любите другъ друга: якоже возлюбихъ вы, да и вы любите себе волю: шн семъ любеве никтоже имать: да кто душу свою положитъ за другъ свой.











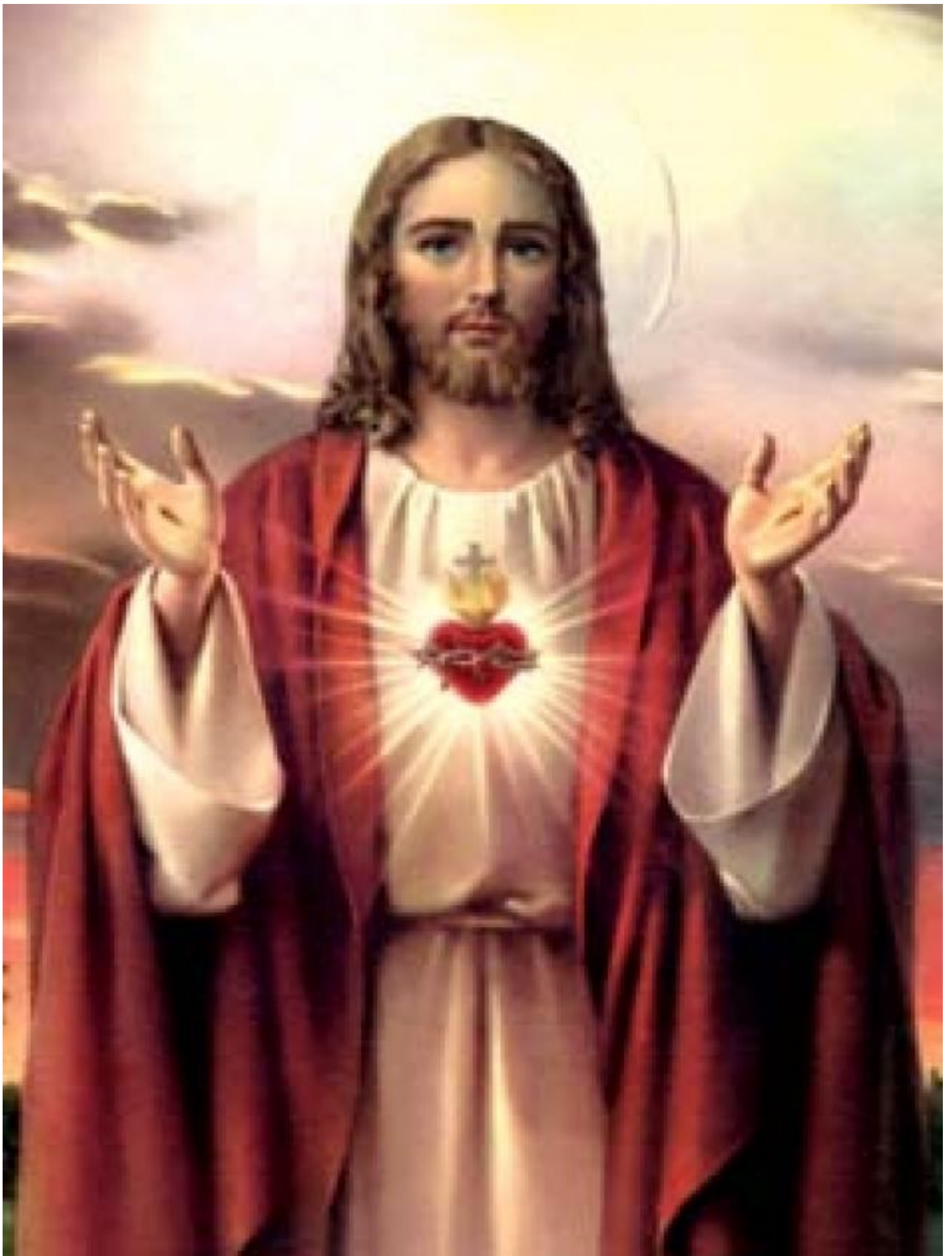






Computer composite of what the historical Jesus may have looked like









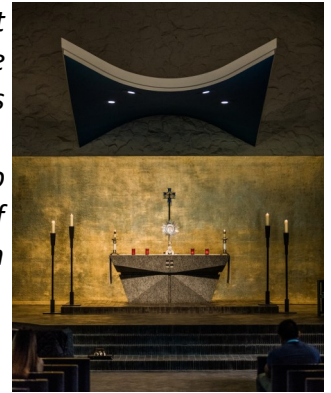


IX. See What You Believe, Become What You See

Date: _____

St. Augustine of Hippo told us that in the Eucharist we should "Believe what you see. See what you believe. Become what you see." Christ's presence in the Eucharist is meant to change us and help us be missionaries in the world. The Mass itself gets its name from the sending to "GO!"

This session aims to help pilgrims prepare to go – to go to NCYC from home; to go to school from church; to go from NCYC to home. Transition is an important part of our experience as humans, but it is made easier through our Church Traditions. Each transition has a paschal element where the old dies and new is born.



Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found on page 11.

Prayer

led by _____

Pilgrims can develop their own, or use the following.

The Breastplate of St. Patrick

I arise today through

God's strength to pilot me, God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me, God's eye to see before me,

God's ear to hear me, God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me, God's way to lie before me,
God's shield to protect me, God's host to secure me –

against snares of devils,
against temptations and vices,
against inclinations of nature,
against everyone who shall wish me
ill, afar and anear,
alone and in a crowd...

Christ, be with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ where I lie, Christ where I sit,
Christ where I arise, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.

Salvation is of the Lord.

Salvation is of the Lord.

Salvation is of the Christ.

May your salvation, O Lord, be ever with us.

Pilgrim Activity

For Catholics the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a core belief. We believe that Christ is fully present in the Eucharist, not merely as a symbol. Because of this belief, Catholics have developed a number of traditions around the Eucharist. For instance, Catholic Churches keep a tabernacle so the Blessed Sacrament can be kept for those who could not attend Mass. We bring Communion to the sick and homebound.

But because the Blessed Sacrament is kept in the church, it means we must recognize Christ's presence kept in the tabernacle. We genuflect when we approach or cross in front of a tabernacle as a sign of respect. We maintain reverence in the church. We visit the Blessed Sacrament to pray.

Even though the purpose of the tabernacle was originally to keep the Blessed Sacrament for the homebound, it became a source of comfort and prayer for visitors as well. Praying before the Blessed Sacrament is called Eucharistic Adoration. At times the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed for prayer. This session will give us an opportunity to pray before the exposed Blessed Sacrament, but first let's review what we do and why we do what we do.

What we use (vocabulary)

Monstrance – an open receptacle for viewing the consecrated Host

Incense – a symbol of our prayer rising to God

Bonus: thurible – the metal censer suspended by a chain for incense

What we do

At its most basic, Eucharistic Adoration is prayer before the Blessed Sacrament spent adoring and worshipping Jesus Christ. In formal Eucharistic Adoration, we go through a series of steps:

Exposition (kneel) – The Blessed Sacrament is placed in the monstrance and incensed.

Adoration (kneel or reverently sit) – We pray before the Blessed Sacrament. At times prayers, scripture, songs, or a brief homily may be used.

Benediction/Eucharistic Blessing (priest or deacon only, all others kneel) – Blessing with the Blessed Sacrament.

Reposition (kneel) – After being incensed, the Blessed Sacrament is returned to the tabernacle.

Acclamation (kneel or stand) – We sing or recite a song or prayer (usually the Divine Praises)

Why we do it

The format of the prayer for Eucharistic Adoration lends itself to mystery and inward reflection. It is meant to allow the worshiper to place him/herself in the presence of God, even among others. The use of incense and the historic use of certain prayers gives a sense of grandness. This is not to say there is no room for modern worship to be included as well.

An outline of the prayer (If you or your priest/deacon has another Eucharistic Adoration prayer already that you use or are more comfortable with, use that one.)

EXPOSITION—After the people have assembled, the following or another suitable song may be sung while the minister prepares the Holy Eucharist for adoration (Acc #381, CPC2 #353)

O saving Victim, open wide
The gate of heav'n to us below,
Our foes press on from ev'ry side;
Your aid supply, your strength bestow.
To your great name be endless praise,
Immortal Godhead, One in Three;
O grant us endless length of days
In our true native land with thee.
Amen.

O salutaris Hostia
Quae caeli pandis ostium:
Bella premunt hostilia,
Da robur, fer auxilium.
Uni trinoque Domino
Sit sempiterna Gloria,
Qui vitam sine termino
Nobis donet in patria.
Amen.

ADORATION—The Liturgy of the Hours may be celebrated during the period of exposition, or there may be prayers, songs, readings from Scripture and a brief homily to direct the attention of the faithful to the worship of the Lord. The following or another suitable Eucharistic song may be sung. (Acc #411 or 412, CPC2 #266, 267)

Down in adoration falling,
 This great Sacrament we hail;
Over ancient forms of worship
 Newer rights of grace prevail;
Faith will tell us Christ is present,
 When our human senses fail.
To the everlasting Father,
 And the son who made us free,
And the Spirit, God proceeding
 From them Each eternally,
Be salvation, honor, blessing,
 Might and endless majesty.
Amen.

Tantum ergo Sacramentum
Veneremur cernui,
Et antiquum documentum
Novo cedat ritui;
Praestet fides supplementum,
Sensuum defectui.
Genitori Genitoque
 Las et jubilation,
Salus, honor, virtus quoque
Sit et benediction:
Procedenti ab utroque
 Compar sit laudation.
Amen.

*BENEDICTION SONG—V. You have given them Bread from heaven (Easter: alleluia)
R. Having within it all Sweetness (Easter: alleluia)*

EUCCHARISTIC BLESSING—If the minister is a priest or deacon, there may be a blessing. Before the blessing, a prayer such as the following may be said.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you gave us the Eucharist
as a memorial of your suffering and death.
May our worship of this Sacrament of your body and blood
help us to experience the salvation you won for us
and the peace of the kingdom
where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

REPOSITION—After the blessing, the minister places the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.

ACCLAMATION OR SONG—The people may say an acclamation or sing another song such as the following.

Divine Praises

Blessed be God.
Blessed be His Holy Name.
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.
Blessed be His most Sacred Heart.
Blessed be His most Precious Blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary, most holy.
Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.
Blessed be her glorious Assumption.
Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste Spouse.
Blessed be God in His angels and in His saints.

Pilgrim Discussion

Have you ever experienced Eucharistic Adoration before this?

What did you experience? How did you feel?

What questions do you have? *(If you are uncomfortable fielding this one, ask the priest or deacon to stay for the discussion.)*

Can you imagine experiencing that closeness to Jesus among 20,000 other teens?

Pilgrim Project

As we get closer to the actual trip to NCYC, pilgrims need to start making practical plans. Check the NCYC webpage to see what information is out regarding workshops and keynotes. Some groups find it helpful to form “teams” to attend workshops so they can in turn bring that information/experience back to others.

If workshops are available, review them as a group. See if there is anything that particular pilgrims want to experience and STRONGLY encourage them to remember that a youth *conference* is not a retreat. They should go to workshops and broaden themselves beyond the experience of meeting people from around the country.

If your group is traveling a significant distance, or over a significant amount of time, make plans for how that will happen. Some decisions are purely the group leader’s to make, but there are some decisions the group can participate in making. What snacks are going on the bus?

Lastly, make a plan for prayer before/as you depart. Inform the group when the parish will bless them, and invite your pastor to come to your departure to bless the pilgrims and their travel.

Announcements & Housekeeping

Pass the Pilgrimage Journal

Updates from Diocese & NFCYM

Closing Prayer

led by _____

X. Pilgrimage: A Time for Being Open

Date: _____

Pilgrimage is a time to experience. Whatever expectations we have are best left at our doorstep, and the unique experience of NCYC embraced. Some elements may carry over, others will need to change.

This session is the time to give pilgrims the final overview of what they can expect. It is an opportunity to discuss practical elements of the journey, as well as an opportunity to prepare for the spiritual and religious elements.

In a world where parents have been and are involved in so much of their teens' lives, you may want to invite them to this session, especially the Pilgrim Project portion where communication and plans for travel will be discussed.



Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found on page 11.

Prayer

led by _____

Pilgrims can develop their own, or use the following.

This reflection is often credited to Nelson Mandela, but actually comes from poet Marianne Williamson. Listen to these words, and hear them as if God were whispering in your ear.

Our Greatest Fear

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond
measure.

It is our light, not our darkness
That most frightens us.

We ask ourselves
Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented,
fabulous?

Actually, who are you *not* to be?
You are a child of God.

Your playing small
Does not serve the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking
So that other people won't feel insecure around
you.

We are all meant to shine,
As children do.
We were born to make manifest
The glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us;
It's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine,
We unconsciously give other people permission to
do the same.

As we're liberated from our own fear,
Our presence automatically liberates others.

Pilgrim Activity

Looking back

Take some time to look back at the last nine sessions. Bring with you the logo the group designed, the stack of covenants, their broken heart mosaic, a white elephant gift (or the children's book used), and the ornaments with their virtues. As a group think of the highlights SO FAR of the pilgrimage. This is a good opportunity to once again set the context of NCYC and pilgrimage.

Hearing a History

If your group has previous pilgrims to NCYC, "interview" them to learn about their experience of going to NCYC for the first time with those who are new. Remember that each NCYC is unique and everyone involved is committed to making the next one better than the last, so things change. Where someone may lament that finding their workshop was difficult, NFCYM may have new signs – don't get hung up on "oh, you need to be ready for..." or "you'll be expecting this, but in reality..." kind of statements. Just tell stories.

Here are some interview questions to help this process.

1. What made you want to go to NCYC initially?
2. Who was the Emcee or a presenter you remember from NCYC?
3. What was one thing that surprised you about a gathering in the arena (Lucas Oil Stadium)?
4. What was your favorite thing to see in the convention center?
5. Do you still talk to anyone from your first NCYC?

Expecting the Unexpected

As a group watch this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=ubNF9QNEQLA (Test Your Awareness: Whodunnit?)

How many people noticed the changes? Pilgrimage is all about being aware of what is going on around us, and in us. As we draw closer to NCYC, we need to raise our awareness. Each day is about being aware that God is moving in and all around us.

NCYC is also a changing thing ... in multiple ways. It changes *us*, but it also changes. NCYC this year may keep many of the same elements as previous NCYCs, but it is its own thing. There will be changes, and certainly the group of young people is different. The stories you just heard are wonderful memories, but they are from past NCYCs. Now it's time to be ready for *THIS* NCYC.

Preparing Ourselves

As a group follow up on the pilgrim project from the last session. Take another look at workshops being offered. Encourage veteran pilgrims to experience new workshops rather than reliving ones they have been to before. Encourage new pilgrims to choose workshops based on their interests over the veterans' experiences.

It is important at this point to reassure pilgrims (especially those who have not gone to NCYC before) that the primary hope for NCYC is to provide them with a good experience. Nerves and anticipation are normal, but it is the sincere hope of everyone involved that NCYC be a true experience of Church for them.

Pilgrim Discussion

What are the greatest excitements for NCYC?

What has been the best part of pilgrimage so far?

On this pilgrimage, how have you been Blessed? Broken? Given?

How have you Blessed? Broken? Given?

Pilgrim Project

Practical Pilgrimage Packing

As a group plan and pack a suitcase or tote for your voyage, or dividing what needs to be taken among pilgrims so it can be packed in their own suitcases. What you need to pack will vary depending on where your starting point is. For those traveling by air, less packing is probably needed. Those traveling by bus will want to figure out what snacks and activities to take for the bus.

While you are at NCYC you will need some things. Consider making room for trading tokens, a bible, copies of any prayer services you will need, guides to Confession (including an examination of conscience and act of contrition), your pilgrimage journal, and any other things that your pilgrimage specifically needs to take.

Including the group in this process allows them to take more ownership of the pilgrimage, even if ultimately, as group leader, you are making the final decision. Remember that in YOUR packing you need copies of all health forms and any release other forms from your Diocese and NFCYM.

Personal Packing

Spend some time talking about what pilgrims should pack. They need comfortable shoes and their clothes, obviously, but what else might teens forget? Review FAA travel restrictions for airlines if you are flying. Your Diocese may provide a packing list for NCYC participants.

Communication System

Send home key contact information for parents to have. Even with cell phones, give the hotel phone number and address to parents. If your group will be using social media, give them those handles.

If you have not already, collect cell phone numbers from all your pilgrims for emergency. Be sure to follow your Diocese's Safe Environment or Communication policies. There are group messaging apps that ensure safety when communicating with youth.

Finally, let parents know when and how you will be communicating your return. If you are traveling by air, are you going to send a mass text as you board your final flight? If you are traveling by bus, are you going to call everyone when you are an hour away? Make those decisions and communicate them to the parents.

Parish Sending

Let the parents and pilgrims know (hopefully remind them) about if and when the parish will be sending them to NCYC. A sample Rite of Sending can be found on page x.

Announcements & Housekeeping

Pass the Pilgrimage Journal (if you are leaving for NCYC soon, collect it and bring it with you, if not, arrange a time to collect it before NCYC.)

Last minute announcements from the Diocese or NFCYM

Closing Prayer

led by _____

Post-NCYC I. Bringing the Real World Home

Date: _____

After a mountain-top experience such as NCYC, a retreat, or powerful prayer experience, it is often difficult to transition back into daily life. Coming from such a large conference where people share the same core values and beliefs into a secular world that often rejects those values and beliefs is difficult for teens. The desire to “fit in” trumps the desire to “be the change you want to see in the world.” This is compounded by the inability to express the experience to others. As a popular leader in the youth ministry world is known to say, “they are experience rich and vocabulary poor.”

This session aims to help teens transition from an experience where they feel close to God and their faith into a world where that is challenged. It also will strive to help them put words around the experience so it can be shared. Lastly, as a group, the pilgrims will prepare a report to the parish of their experience and thanking the community for their support.

Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found on page 11.

Prayer

led by _____

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina literally means Sacred Reading. This is a prayer that allows the participant to listen to the message a scripture passage has for them. You will hear the same reading three times. Each time, you are asked to listen for something in particular.

The first time, listen for a word that stands out – not a reason, just what word stands out.

Second time, listen for a phrase that stands out. Again, you do not need a reason, just a phrase.

The last time, where is your heart as you listen? What is your prayer with God?

Matthew 17:1-9

After six days, Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid.

But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and do not be afraid.” And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone.

As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, “Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

Pilgrim Activity

Putting Words on the Experience

We are Peter, James and John! We have experienced a Transfiguration of sorts, but like Peter we do not fully understand what it means. We could not stay to “build three tents” but instead had to come home. Now we may be finding that we cannot talk to anyone about the experience because it is beyond words. Let’s start with us. We’ve experienced it together, so let’s tell our stories.

As a group create a time-line of the pilgrimage, in particular the voyage to NCYC. Allow the pilgrims to tell their stories as they create the time-line. Everything from the crazy billboard in the airport or the popcorn snack at the first bus stop. There should be plenty of laughter as they tell their stories, and a lot of “Remember when...” comments.

Share some of the hopes that the group had come up with in the second session before NCYC that they had held in prayer between sessions. Compare those to the experiences the group had. Were their hopes met? Were they exceeded?

Developing a Common Language

One of the reasons we have difficulty expressing the pilgrimage to others is because they did not share the experience, and so they do not have a common language. Watch a digital native try to explain the internet or a computer game to a baby boomer. The languages used are worlds apart.

Ask the group to define the following words: (*pre- and post-Internet definitions given*)

	<u>Now</u>	<u>Then</u>
Bump	to move an online post or thread to the top of reverse chronological list	to encounter something that is an obstacle
Block	to prevent someone from contacting you on social media	to be placed in front of something, such as a road or path, so that nothing can pass
Catfish	a person who sets up a false profile for fraudulent or deceptive purposes	a freshwater fish with whiskerlike barbels
Cloud	any of several parts of the internet that allow online processing	a visible mass of particles of condensed vapor suspended in the atmosphere
Friend	(v.) to add a person to one’s list of contacts on social media	(n.) one attached to another by affection or esteem
Follow	to subscribe to someone’s updates	to go or come after or behind someone
Handle	screenname, or internet name	part of something that is designed to be held by your hand
Swipe	to drag a finger across a touchscreen	to steal
Tablet	a general-purpose computer contained in a touchscreen panel	a pad of paper, a flat piece of stone with writing
Tag	to link to someone else’s profile	to supply with an identifying marker or price
Text	(v.) to send a text message	(n.) a book or piece of writing
Troll	a person who sows discord	a dwarf or giant in Scandinavian folklore
Tweet	a short message on Twitter	a chirping note
Unplug	refrain from digital or electronics	to disconnect something from an electrical outlet
Viral	becoming popular quickly	of, relating to, or caused by a virus
Windows	Operating System for Computers	Glass openings in a wall

If vocabulary has changed this much just since the Internet, it is no wonder that language can be an obstacle for communication.

It is not all vocabulary that stands in our way of easy communication, however! We must learn to tell our stories in a way that inside jokes and unspoken details are not needed. Pick one experience from the timeline and write a story. Provide the background needed for someone who was not there to know what happened.

Pilgrim Discussion

What have the last ___ days been like?

Have you tried to explain something that someone just did not understand?

What event from NCYC do you keep reliving?

Pilgrim Project

Plan a dinner to say thank you to the people who made NCYC happen. Plan the menu; create the guest list; make the invitations. This will lead directly into the second Post-NCYC session.

Present this as a two-fold opportunity. 1. You can thank those who made NCYC happen without being able to join the group. And 2. You can tell your story to them.

Closing Prayer

led by _____

Post NCYC II. The Pilgrimage Continues

Date: _____

When the pilgrims return to their parishes, it may seem like everything is ended, and if this were a Catholic band-trip, it may be. But pilgrimage is about the inner journey, not just the external voyage. For that matter, we only focus on pilgrimage during a specific period, but we have been on this inner journey since baptism.

This session will provide the pilgrims an opportunity to process what the pilgrimage meant in their lives as they also thank those who made the voyage possible. Much like Session V: "He Broke It...", this session focusses around preparing and sharing a meal, only this time they are the hosts, not the guests.



Icebreaker

Icebreakers should be used as the group gathers to break them out of their shells and working together as a pilgrim group. A sample of popular icebreakers can be found on page 11.

Prayer

led by _____

Use a prayer you found at NCYC, or give the pilgrims an opportunity for silence.

Pilgrim Activity

Sending Invitations

Before going to NCYC, prepare an invitation to any donor who helped make NCYC possible for the pilgrims. This could be those who donated money, those who donated their talents, and those who donated their services. Be sure to include parents and parish staff in the invitation list.

Preparing the Meal

Hosting a meal makes things a little different. First you need a menu. There is no need to expect the pilgrims to prepare a five-star meal, but it should be something that is more than peanut-butter and jelly. Given when we return from NCYC, a soup dinner would be both easy and filling.

Suggested Menu: soup, bread, salad, beverages

Tasks for the Pilgrims:

Prepare the soup

Cut and plate the bread

Prepare the salad

Set the table(s) – this can include putting out place cards, and/or thank you cards.

Preparing & leading grace

Sharing the Meal

As with the shared meal in preparation for NCYC, this meal is about more than the food. It is an opportunity to share their experience with those who made it possible. Pilgrims should be spread around the group and prepared to engage in conversation about NCYC.

Cleaning Up

In a change from the expected, invite everyone to share in the clean-up. This is primarily to show that as the pilgrimage ends, the pilgrims rejoin and are a part of the community again. They are on an equal footing with the rest of the parish. It also allows the conversation to continue in a very informal manner.

A Final Gift

As a final gift for those who made the pilgrimage possible, give each of them a copy of this year's pilgrimage journal, or selected passages. How this is done depends greatly on the pilgrimage group. Some groups keep a journal that can be easily photocopied, others have penmanship or other obstacles to that and need to have typed copies.

If you were able to get enough postcards, a post card for each donor is often another inexpensive thank-you gift.

Closing Prayer

led by _____

A Pilgrimage Journal Guide

The pilgrimage journal has the potential to become a focus for the pilgrims. It functions as a focus to keep the gatherings and conference a pilgrimage. It also connects this pilgrimage with future pilgrimages if a common journal is used.

At the same time that the journal keeps the pilgrimage prayerful, it also grounds the pilgrimage. Entries will be down to earth and experiential. Pilgrims should be encouraged to write about what they have experienced as well as how that was a part of pilgrimage.

The following note attached to the journal may help:

Encourage each pilgrim to sign their name on the first page of the journal. Let them design that page to fit with their pilgrimage.

When the pilgrimage is completed, typed copies (or photo copies if handwriting is legible) can be made available to each pilgrim. Copies may also be made available to those who helped make the pilgrimage a reality, either through prayer, donations or other forms of support.



*_**

Dear pilgrim,

This is YOUR journal. It is also every other pilgrim's journal. It is OUR journal. We need your help to make this journal the best keep-sake of our pilgrimage. You are free to write whatever you feel is appropriate here. Remember that the other pilgrims will read it, as will our parish community.

Include the date and your name with each entry.

To help you know what to write, here are some focus topics:

What was the highlight of the pilgrimage today?

Where did you see God in the pilgrimage today?

Who or what did you hear that meant something to you?

What are you looking forward to experiencing, seeing, doing?

Were there any hurdles you had to overcome today? How did you? Did the group have to overcome any? How did they?

Do not feel you must answer any or all of these questions. They are just to help you focus. Remember, it's YOUR entry.

*_**

Parish Connection & Covenant

In an effort to keep the pilgrimage serious, and not simply a trip to a new city, the pilgrims are asked to sign a covenant with the parish. A covenant is more than just an idea – it is a full-fledged two-sided promise made before the community.

The covenants should be individual, each pilgrim committing something to the parish based on his or her own gifts and talents. Pilgrims should be encouraged to stretch themselves in what they promise, but they should always feel comfortable with the pilgrimage in whole.

Some ideas of what a pilgrim may promise would be to learn a new song and teach it to the community or to bring back a great ice breaker for youth group. Pilgrims will be exposed to fund raising ideas, service opportunities and groups focused on solidarity. Any of these concepts and programs brought back to the parish can reenergize already existing programs and initiatives.

The completed covenants should be presented to the parish community since they are represented in the agreements. This could be done at a Mass or other parish event. In the case of extremely busy parishes, this presentation could be made to a representative body such as the parish council.



Sample Covenant

The parish of _____ hereby promises to support the pilgrims going to the National Catholic Youth Conference, spiritually, financially and through any means available. We will pray for them while they prepare and while they travel. Each pilgrim is special in God's eyes, and so too is each one special in the eyes of our parish. Through the designated pilgrim leader, our parish will provide leadership for the pilgrimage and will encourage the pilgrims to grow in their faith as well as challenge us all. We look forward to their return and the new insights into our faith they bring.

In turn, I, _____, promise to fully engage in the pilgrimage, to attend the gatherings and help with the fundraising efforts. I will use my gifts to help the pilgrimage and the parish, in particular:

Pilgrim

Pilgrim Leader

Pastor

Commissioning & Sending Prayers

These are modified from the Book of Blessings specifically for NCYC. It may also be appropriate to have the pilgrims develop, write and lead their own prayer service.

Commissioning and Blessing at Mass

Before the final blessing, the pilgrim leader introduces NCYC and what the pilgrims have been doing to prepare. He or she then introduces the pilgrims as follows:

Our parish is sending the following adult pilgrims to guide, learn and celebrate with our youth:

List Names

Our high school students who will join with their peers in great friendships and discoveries:

List Names

Blessing of Pilgrims

After the pilgrims are introduced and standing before the congregation the priest goes to aisle, facing pilgrims.

To Pilgrims: My brothers and sisters, you have been preparing for this journey to the National Catholic Youth Convention for some time. In doing so, you have been participants in pilgrimage. Bow your heads and receive God's blessing.



To Congregation: Please extend your right hand in blessing over these pilgrims.

All-powerful and merciful God,
You reign from Your throne of service.
Help these, our sisters and brothers,
to continue their pilgrimage as they journey from their homes.
Show them the way of service to each other and those they meet.
Help them understand and appreciate all they encounter.
Under Your protection
let them reach their destination
and come home at last, to a welcoming
and loving community.

May the Lord remain constantly at your side
and in His mercy guide your journey
in ways that are pleasing to Him.

May almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit

Amen

Commissioning and Blessing outside Mass

Leader who is not on pilgrimage:

The priest or other parish representative joins the pilgrims as they prepare to set out for NCYC. If the leader is joining the pilgrims on pilgrimage, make changes accordingly (you to we or us, etc.)

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

Leader: May God, our strength and salvation, be with you all.

All: And with your spirit.

Leader: Brothers and sisters, as you set out, you should remind yourselves of the reasons for your resolve to go on this holy pilgrimage. The place you intend to visit is a gathering of devotion and prayer. People are traveling there in great numbers to be strengthened in the Christian way of life and to become more determined to devote themselves to the works of charity. You must also try to bring something to the faithful who are there; your example of faith, hope and love. In this way both they and you will be enriched by the help you give each other.

Reading (Luke 24:13-16, 28-32)

A Reading from the Gospel According to Luke

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and

broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.

The Gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Leader: God is the beginning and the end of our pilgrimage. Let us call on God with confidence, saying

R. Lord, be our companion on our journey.

Father all-holy, of old you made yourself the guide and the way for your people as they wandered in the desert; be our protection as we begin this journey, so that we may return home again in safety. We pray to the Lord. **R.**

You have given us your only Son to be our way to you; make us follow him faithful and unswervingly. We pray to the Lord. **R.**

You gave us Mary as the image and model for following Christ; grant that through her example we may live a new life. We pray to the Lord. **R.**

You guide your pilgrim Church on earth through the Holy Spirit; may we seek you in all things and walk always in the way of your commandments. We pray to the Lord. **R.**

You lead us along right and peaceful paths; grant that we may find peace in our pilgrimage. We pray to the Lord. **R.**

For these and all the prayers we hold in our hearts we pray. **R.**

Prayer of Blessing

All-powerful God,
You always show mercy toward those who love you and you are never far away from those who seek you. Remain with your servants on this holy pilgrimage and guide their way in accord with your will. Shelter them with your protection by day, give them the light of your grace by night, and, as their companion on the journey, bring them to their destination in safety.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Concluding Rite

Leader: May the Lord guide us and direct our journey in safety.

All: Amen

Leader: May the Lord be your companion along the way.

All: Amen

Leader: May the Lord grant that the journey you begin, relying on him, will end happily through his protection.

All: Amen



Prayer Partner Service at NCYC

One night during the conference during regular parish sharing time, you can include as part of the prayer time a recognition and blessing of prayer partners. Following is a sample blessing, but it is also encouraged to have a group of pilgrims design and guide their own prayer service.

Join together in a circle of pilgrims. You will need room to move around as well as a bowl or glass of water.

Opening Reading: (Eph 4:1-6)

Leader:

Confident in the unity of the oneness that Christ bestowed on us, we join together in prayer.

We are given many signs of unity. Among them are the waters of baptism. Through baptism we are made priest, prophet and king. As a priest of baptism you have the right and responsibility to pray for and bless those around you. Throughout our pilgrimage we have prayed for each other and in particular for our prayer partners.

Join me in asking the Lord's hand to work through this water.

Blessing of the water:

Lord God, giver of all that is good. Use this water to show Yourself to us through each other. We know that through the waters of baptism You washed away our sins and made us part of the Body of Christ. Let us now use this water to re-affirm that unity and to raise up the Body of Christ to better serve You in this world. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Leader:

We will now bless each other with this water. When you are blessed, hold out your hands. When blessing, simply dip your finger into the water and make the sign of the cross on the hands of your prayer partner. Speak whatever words of

blessing you feel are appropriate. Remember that there is no wrong way to pray. God will make it right.

OR

We will now bless each other with this water. When you are blessed, hold out your hands. When blessing, simply dip your finger into the water and make the sign of the cross on the hands of your prayer partner. While making the sign of the cross simply say "May the Lord bless and keep you. You are a child of God and you are in my prayers."

The leader then blesses his/her prayer partner who in turn blesses his/her. Pilgrims will have to move around to get to their prayer partners, and depending on the size of the group this could take some time. This should make its way around the circle ending with the leader. If the leader is blessed before everyone else, simply begin with the first person not already blessed and start the second circle of blessing. Soft music may be needed in the background.

After Blessing:

Leader:

Lord, you make all things new. Continue to renew us through this pilgrimage. Allow us to continue on our journey through NCYC. Bring us safely back home and always keep us in the palm of your hand.

Continue with prayer or sharing as normal.



Welcoming Home

It is important to welcome home our pilgrims. Now that they have had this experience, the parish has an obligation to recognize the experience and change in the pilgrims. Just as we send them on pilgrimage, we must welcome them home from pilgrimage.

Following Communion the pilgrims are called by name to stand before the congregation wearing some sort of unifying attire (parish, diocesan or regional shirt?). Adults and youth should be called forward together with no distinction between them.

Presider:

Your pilgrimage has been a privileged period of grace given to you and to us by God. The places you have visited and the people you have met are signs of that house not built with hands, namely the Body of Christ, in which we are the living stones built upon Christ, the cornerstone. As you have returned home, live up to the vocation God has given you: to be a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people God claims for his own, so that you may everywhere proclaim the goodness of him who called us from darkness into his marvelous light.

Bow your heads and ask for God's blessing.

Blessed are you, O God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
From all races of the earth
you have chosen a people
dedicated to you,
eager to do what is right.
Your grace has moved the hearts of these,
your friends,
to love you more deeply and to serve
you more generously.
We ask you to bless them,
so that they may tell of your
wonderful deeds
and give proof of them in their lives.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen



Turning to the congregation:

And for those of us receiving these pilgrims back into our community, bow your heads and ask for God's blessing.

Blessed are you, O God, Father of our
Lord Jesus Christ.
Through your Son you made the deaf hear
and you gave sight to the blind.
Your grace has worked through
this community,
teaching us to love and serve.
We ask you to bless us, so that we might
listen to the lessons
and see the proof of your presence in the
lives of these pilgrims.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen

NCYC Report to Parish

Part of pilgrimage is sharing how we have grown. The pilgrims should develop a means of communicating these lessons and experiences to the parishioners of the parish. This can be done through a presentation, bulletin, open gathering, or another method. The important thing is that this comes from the pilgrims. Be creative.

Post-Pilgrimage Gatherings

Following NCYC, the pilgrims will find it helpful to gather once or twice as pilgrims to talk about and continue to grow from the experience. Allow them time to process the experience internally, but allow them a place and time to gather. You will find two sessions designed for such a follow-up on pages 63 & 66.



Parent-Pilgrim Discussions

The experience of NCYC can be difficult to put into words. Parents and others who did not experience NCYC may find it frustrating when they only get simple answers to probing questions. This is more often because pilgrims are still processing the experience than because they do not want to share it.

Share with parents a set of good questions such as:

Rather than asking....

How was it?

What was the best part?

What did you do?

What was your favorite thing?

Consider asking...

What was one thing you will remember?

What did you write in the parish journal?

What was a prayer experience you enjoyed?

Did you learn any new songs or prayers?

Other good conversation starters...

- What was one thing you heard that you do NOT want to forget?
- Who was the best presenter you saw? What did (s)he say that stood out to you?
- When did you feel closest to God while in Indy?
- What was the hardest part about going to NCYC? What challenged you?
- How would you describe being with so many other teens who share your beliefs, values and faith?

