

On the `Youth Summit` Quebec City May 19th – 22nd, 2006

This past May 19th to 22nd marked the pilgrimage of seven young delegates from the Peterborough Diocese to a Youth Summit in Quebec City. It would serve as spiritual preparation for the International Eucharistic Congress to be held in Quebec in June of 2008. The event was well attended with over 600 youth (ages 18-35) from across Canada (as well as New York and Maine) - in fact, even doubling the anticipated number expected by the organizing committee!

The weekend began with the presentation of the Ark of the New Covenant, which is patterned after the biblical Ark of the Covenant. The ark, a chest covered with iconic images related to the Eucharist, blessed just last month by Pope Benedict XVI, began its journey from Rome to Quebec City for the Youth Summit and shall travel the country in preparation for the Eucharistic Congress. The theme of the Youth Summit "Here I am" was both a time of renewal for delegates in deepening their faith and a call to be witnesses to the gift of the Eucharist. Joy was the common thread throughout the week-end which was celebrated in fellowship, worship, adoration, communal prayer and catecheses. To experience all of this was to awaken the deep love, the spirit of sacrifice and the pure joy which comes from the mystery of Jesus in the Eucharist as found in Holy Mass and in lives of faith and devotion. It was a transformation of those participating, including myself, to being and becoming true living witnesses of our faith.

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Archbishop of Quebec City and Primate of Canada, celebrated with young delegates throughout the summit. He brought a clear call for all in attendance to be powerful witnesses and to renew the joy and vibrancy of the Church today; to take this message home to parishes, schools and communities and to let it awaken our faith, deepen our unity and set our hearts on fire with the love for Christ. A call echoed by participants "Amen, Alleluia"!!

The International Eucharistic Congress itself will be celebrated in Quebec City in June of 2008. The theme of this Congress is: "The Eucharist, gift of God for the life of the world" and will include one full week of celebration, adoration and catechism. It is important to prepare spiritually for this Congress in our own parishes by fervently deepening the meaning of the paschal mystery and by re-discovering the vibrancy and joy which come from this gift so central to our faith. Christ is as relevant for us today as he has always been. His message "Here I Am" is a call to us to examine ourselves, to find where we stand and to respond: `Here I am before you, Lord. What would you have me do?`

Let us draw closer to our Lord in preparation for this unique event in the life of the Church: The International Eucharistic Congress June 15-22, 2008.