

Reminiscences From St. Michael's 2017 Summer Camp

Glory Be to Jesus Christ!!

While reflecting on St. Michael's 2017 Summer Camp, there are indeed many reasons to proclaim "Glory Be to Jesus Christ". To say we were blessed as directors would be a major understatement. We most certainly cannot give a report sufficient to encompass all our sensational experiences; however, we will endeavor to mention a few memorable moments from the camps.

For youth camp, we were fortunate to have two weeks of amazing campers. We had nineteen campers the first week, and seventeen the second week, with one of the campers attending both weeks. Some of the highlights activity-wise included: going to the beach and using the "Giant Neptune", playing the "Dinosaur Game" as well as "Mission Impossible". The goofy olympics seemed to be enjoyed by all the participants, as we had the "Hamburgers" vs the "Hot Dogs" during week one, and then the "Hamburgers" vs the "Pizza" for week two. Thanks to some brainstorming by the counselors and Sr. Janet we were able to put a twist on an old camp tradition. In the past a "Monk" dinner had been held, where campers had to silently eat spaghetti with a silly utensil such as a spatula or flipper. This year however, we coined it our "Super Silly Spaghetti Supper", where each person, including counselors and directors, had to eat their spaghetti with a unique serving "tool". From salad tongs, to potato mashers, we spun together a memorable meal complete with Italian music, courtesy of Sr. Janet. Additionally, during the second week we planted trees, some of which will hopefully be around for years to come. For both camps, we went on a mini-golf excursion and ended the week with a water balloon fight!

From a spiritual perspective, we prayed the rosary in a variety of ways...sometimes using the giant rosary on the grounds, sometimes alternating boys and girls leading, and sometimes in smaller groups. We walked through the mysteries of the Rosary during our talks, and learned about the choirs of angels as well. Each morning we would start the day in the chapel with morning prayer and briefly reflected on the gospel reading for the day. In the evening, we would end off the day with a saint story around the campfire before closing with night prayer. Lastly, we were blessed to have many religious visit us. Bishop Bryan Bayda celebrated Divine Liturgy with us to start the week. He told us about Our Lady of Guadalupe and sang for us too. Fr. Frank from Kamsack celebrated Mass with us a few times during the week, and Fr. Ray Lukie co-celebrated Divine Liturgy with the Bishop. For our finale, which we did on Saturday for the parents, we processed holding candles, icons, crosses, and the shroud of Our Lady of Guadalupe, from the chapel to the fire-pit while we prayed the rosary.

In regards to what we may like to implement in the future - it would be nice to have a standard time for Mass or Divine Liturgy throughout the week. There were times when we were expecting a priest to come, but didn't know when exactly he would show up. Thankfully the campers and the counsellors were flexible and patient with us directors whenever we would call a last minute audible. It would likewise be nice to know whether the camper has received First Holy Communion or not. This would allow us to respect the camper and the most Holy Eucharist, by not accidentally having the camper receive the precious Body and Blood, when the camper has not been properly catechized in regards to the Sacred Mysteries. If we added

something like “Has your child received his/her First Holy Communion?” to the registration forms it would make for less confusion, as we found some campers didn’t know what to do when going up for Holy Communion. We could even extend this to the counsellors when they apply, just so we are all on the same page. Having one time slot towards the end of the week for confession might be something we can try to coordinate with one of the priests in the future as well. From a financial perspective, one option could be to increase the price of the camp, but offer discounts to those who bring a first time camper with them. We could also have directors/counsellors call last year's campers and invite them to camp again and have directors/counsellors speak at parishes and schools to promote the camp. Lastly, depending on numbers, it may be beneficial to see if we could get another bow or two and a few more arrows.

Teen camp was a remarkable experience. This year we stayed in the new building, which made for some unforgettable new memories. Change can be difficult but we are proud of the campers for adjusting to and trusting in our decision. Regarding some of the work we accomplished...Fr. Ivan taught us how to make triangle bandages, clean toilets, as well as the proper painting and scraping techniques. We put our newly acquired scraping and painting skills immediately to the test as we scraped and repainted the outside of the boy’s dorm. A few brave souls also helped Larry Perpeluk clean up the crawls spaces. Looking back at the work we accomplished, it is amazing to see how much the campers did in such a short amount of time...it was fantastic to be a part of a team with so many astonishing young men and women.

Some of the lighter activities which we partook in were: using only one utensil for a meal (i.e. getting and using only the fork for breakfast, the spoon for lunch, and the knife for dinner - we even used popsicle sticks once!), a marvellous game of musical chairs and intense afternoon of competing in the goofy olympics. This was followed by an informational beaver quest, which included Fr. Ivan consuming “Beaver droppings”. Once the shock of this wore off however, he revealed that it was only a granola bar he had been hiding in his pocket...thanks Fr. Ivan!! To end the camp Larry graciously gave us a demonstration on the power of water pressure using his homemade water rocket. This was subsequently followed by a giant water balloon fight.

From a spiritual standpoint we celebrated Divine Liturgy by candlelight, visited a cemetery and did a Panachyda service. We also sang morning vespers at a nearby lake as the sun rose majestically above the trees. Each day we prayed the rosary, and during meal time we were able to share a few personal testimonies which gave insight into people’s backgrounds, and how Christ had helped to bring them to where they are today. Lastly, aside from morning and evening prayer, we also watched a movie and had a brief discussion afterwards.

Some points of feedback and possible changes could include: making teen camp longer, possibly going from Sunday evening until Thursday evening or Friday after lunch. There were things which would have been nice to incorporate, but we ran out of time. A common comment from both the campers and adult leaders was that teen camp was too short. The movie we watched was inspirational, but may not have been suitable for all present. In the future it might be best to watch the movie as a staff first or possibly get permission from the parents to avoid potential issues. For future reference for the directors, it’d probably be best to make sure the movie doesn’t end at, midnight; the discussion after the movie was concise since people were

tired from a long day's work. Lastly, it would be nice to add a little bit more of a religious education component to the teen camp. During youth camp we tried to make sure we got at least an hour of instruction on the Faith. Although we did a lot, in regards to both physical work and different liturgical celebrations, we unfortunately didn't get much instruction about our rich Ukrainian tradition during our time at teen camp. Next year we could look at incorporating a half hour of instruction to go along with the various Ukrainian Catholic Services which we take part in (Divine Liturgy, Panachyda, Vespers etc).

Last but most certainly not least, Little Mike's was an incredible experience. It was a change from both youth camp and teen camp, as one had to constantly be a few steps ahead of the campers, to make sure their short attention spans were always engaged in an activity. It was also rewarding to work with the parents, they were wonderful! The campers and their families went canoeing, did archery, made picture frames, and bangle bracelets. We also had a blast mini-golfing, having a dance party, catching bugs while hiking to Pickeral Point, going to the beach, making and decorating cookies and then of course eating them! We ended off our time together with Mass followed by a little water fight and scrumptious pancake breakfast on a gorgeous Sunday morning.

From a spiritual point of view, we had Divine Liturgy on Thursday and Friday and Sunday Mass. We also watched a half hour video on a saint each evening, did morning prayer along with a brief bible story as well as night prayer in the evening. One evening the campers got dressed up, and marched around in animal costumes as the families and counsellors sang the "Noah's Ark Campfire Song". We wanted to subtly incorporate virtues and manners into each of our activities. Some examples of this included: encouraging the campers to help clear the table of both their dishes, and their parents dishes, and to make an effort to say thank you whenever possible. Lastly, the campers were also enthusiastic about washing dishes...hopefully this energy carried over to when they got home!

In the future what are some things which we could possibly do? As directors we enjoyed having Little Mike's run from Thursday evening to Sunday afternoon. We thought that amount of time was perfect for the campers and their parents. However we didn't have to worry about trying to get them to sleep or having to wake them up in the morning. It might be worth seeing if the parents want it to be shorter or longer. This is something we could look at playing around with if we received enough feedback one way or the other. It would also be nice to try incorporating a little "parent's only time", where the campers are taken care of for a half hour and the parents can relax and talk and not have to worry about their children. This may have to be played by ear however, as one really cannot know the dynamic of the camp and how the campers will react being away from their parents until actually working with the campers. Overall "Little Mike's" was a honour to be a part of and our outstanding counsellors, campers, cook and parents, ensured it ran like a well oiled machine.

Even though in the past counselors, cooks, spiritual directors, support staff and board members may not have been included in the report, we feel it is of the utmost importance to recognize their extraordinary efforts. Our counselors, Kathryn, Mya, Maggie, Abbey, Daniel, Dima, and Anthony were MARVELLOUS!!! They were outstanding with the campers, and simply a pleasure to work with and bounce ideas off of. They were flexible and optimistic...a

director's dream!! In the kitchen, we were blessed by the presence of the two Roses'. There is nothing better than "Baba's cooking" and we were spoiled rotten to be able to eat like royalty for a whole month. Sr. Janet and Fr. Ivan were a tremendous team to work with - their energy and passion for the Faith is inspiring. The meetings and advice we received from Bonnie, Tracie, and Dani were invaluable, and helped immensely as we prepared for our first camp. Lastly to the community, and board members who worked behind the scenes to support us, we greatly appreciate your efforts. Specifically a big "thank you" to Orest and Larry for their help with cleaning and maintaining the main hall, especially when the water was broken, and to Lawrence for helping to keep the grass nicely trimmed.

In closing we are indebted to the countless hours of volunteer work, prayers, planning, and organizing which was done to help us. It was an incredibly special experience to be a part of St. Michael's camp!! It has truly been a blessing to meet so many dedicated and inspiring souls. We are grateful to have been a part of the 2017 Summer Camp and we eagerly look forward to what the future brings.

St. Michael pray for us, protect us and guide us,

Sincerely your St. Michael's 2017 Summer Camp Co-Directors,

Claire Aalerud and Jonny Lashyn