

2018 Winter Camp Review

It is hard to fathom that St. Michael's first ever winter camp has come and past so quickly. Like the past summer camp in 2017, we were extremely blessed by St. Michael the Archangel and the Holy Family. As camp co-directors we will endeavor to share some of the ways in which we experienced these blessings. It must be noted however, no one could possibly know the full extent in which St. Michael watched over us. Likewise Claire and I could never write a report justly capturing all the incredible moments everyone had.

To begin, Winter Camp had twenty-one campers, fourteen girls and seven boys - with a majority of campers coming to St. Michael's for the first time. Many of these newcomers would eagerly inquired about Summer Camp sessions towards the end of our week. Our campers ranged in age from nine to fifteen. Along with a range in age we also saw a variance in faith-backgrounds. There were seven campers who came from the Ukrainian Catholic tradition, ten campers who belonged to the Latin Rite tradition, and four campers who were protestant (one Lutheran, one non-denominational, and two Evangelical). Despite the age ranges and various backgrounds the campers bonded quicker than anyone expected.

From a faith perspective, it was beautiful to see how each of the campers embraced the rich Ukrainian Catholic Tradition. We were able to pray a daily rosary together, and every team took turns leading. Each morning and night we prayed together, and being in the season of lent, we learned about prostrations and the prayer of St. Ephrem. Fr. Warren Dungen was extremely involved with the camp, and blessed us with another dimension. He led us in morning prayer on Tuesday, and then spoke to us about the Sacrament of Confession. On Wednesday we turned the hall into a chapel and he celebrated Divine Liturgy for us at camp. He would stop periodically during the Liturgy to explain what was happening...it was truly Heaven on Earth. On Thursday, Fr. Warren joined us for lunch, before meeting with each of the campers and offering them the opportunity of Confession or Spiritual Direction. On Friday we went into Kamsack and attended a Presanctified Liturgy at St. Josaphat's. St. Michael's Camp is indebted to Fr. Warren for the countless graces which were offered to us through him...only in the next life will we see all that he provided for us.

In addition to praying and learning the faith, each day was spent doing new and challenging sports. The first day was spent downhill skiing. It was truly rewarding to see all the campers advance from the bunny slope to the tougher tails on Duck Mountain, especially after a majority of campers had done little to no down hill skiing prior. The next few days we did a variety of sports including ice skating, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, tobogganing, and ice fishing. Not to mention during one of the mornings everyone took part in the various sports of the indoor winter olympics! These adapted events included bobsledding, synchronized skating, javelin, the hundred meter butterfly, football, hurdles, shot put and discus, just to name a few.

One of the biggest highlights came on Thursday evening when we were able to stop in to Eaglestone Seniors Centre in Kamsack. The campers had spent a majority of the afternoon baking and decorating cookies, as well as making cards for the seniors. After we sang a few campfire songs for them, we were able to distribute our "presents" which were enjoyed by all. We proceeded to play a few games of bingo, which brought out competitive spirits in young

and old alike. Both residents and campers had a delightful time, and it is an event which we will surely have to do again.

Next we must mention our magnificent counsellors M squared and D squared (Maggie, Maria, Dima, and Daniel). They were INCREDIBLE!!! They were constantly engaged with the campers, always supporting them and encouraging them. A memory which exemplifies this is when we went downhill skiing. As stated above, some campers were new to the activity. The counsellors patiently gave them pointers, and then once the camper had gained confidence and competence, a counsellor would personally escort two or three of them up and down the ski-hill until they built up enough confidence to go up and down by themselves. Even before the camp started the counsellors showed their willingness to help out in any scenario, as they spent a few hours preparing wall decorations for the camp, shoveling out the campfire pit and tennis court as well as setting up activities and sleeping arrangements. They even spent time after Sunday's Divine Liturgy helping the Kamsack community pack noodles for St. Josaphat's UCWL. From playing and praying to serving at meals and taking photos, the counsellors were an absolute joy to have at camp!

St. Michael's campers and staff were extremely blessed to have Rose as our cook again. To say the food was delicious would be an understatement. The meals were nothing short of extraordinary, and the snacks were incredible. A camper was so impressed with Rose's sugar cookies that she asked for the "secret recipe", which Rose gladly passed along. Rose also passed on Ukrainian tradition by guiding the campers in the art of making pascha bread. Rose donated some supplies to help us make pysanka and she was also able to track down a gas powered auger, which allowed us to effectively drill a hole in the ice and provide the campers with an ice fishing experience. The camp would not have been the same without her.

Finally, no camp can be run without the incredible people who work behind the scenes. Bonnie, Tracie, Dani, Lana, and Lawrence (and of course Rose too) make-up an impeccable camp committee. The support, knowledge, encouragement and prayers they provide through all stages of camp is astounding and much appreciated. A month before we opened camp there were two campers registered, but thanks to their optimism by the time we started, we had twenty-one! It is truly a great privilege to work with such driven souls.

In closing, we were overjoyed with how St. Michael's First Annual Winter Camp ran. From the memories made and songs sung, to the loud laughter and radiant smiles of all, it was a sincere pleasure to have been a part of winter camp 2018.

God bless,

Claire Aalerud and Jonny Lashyn