

the GRAPEVINE

GOOD NEWS FROM CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN OUTREACH

SPRING 2005

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Igniting the JP II Generation

John Paul II personally encourages CCO two months before dying

by JEFF LOCKERT, CCO President

How could we, young people involved with Catholic Christian Outreach, demonstrate our gratitude and appreciation for the many gifts that Pope John Paul II has given to our movement? This question was at the heart of the commissioning evening held on December 30th at CCO's Rise up National Conference in Toronto. Since our founding nearly 17 years ago, Pope John Paul II had been a tremendous witness in both word and deed to all those involved with CCO. In fact, he is the only Pope most students have ever known. They are the "John Paul II" generation.

The conference speakers and activities culminated in a moving presentation by Fr. Thomas Rosica C.S.B. which inspired students to become "agents of change" through small acts done with great love, humility, and boldness. As a response to this challenge, students were invited to

come forward and sign a letter addressed to Pope John Paul II which affirmed their commitment to live out the values he had been inviting them to for the past many years.

One by one by one, hundreds of university students came forward to sign their names. At the same time, they received a commissioning blessing from Archbishop Emeritus Adam Exner O.M.I. and Archbishop Luigi Ventura, the Apostolic Nuncio. It was a powerful moment for everyone present.

Later, we asked Archbishop Ventura if he would personally give this letter of encouragement to the Holy Father. He agreed to send it along with his Christmas greetings to John Paul as soon as he returned to Ottawa.

You can imagine my surprise when one month later a package from the Nunciature arrived on my desk. As I opened it, I was

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Igniting the JP II Generation

...continued from page 1



▲
Archbishop
Exner blessing
students.

overcome with emotion as I read the introductory letter from Archbishop Ventura. After sharing his appreciation for his personal experience at Rise Up, he wrote the following:

"I am pleased to inform you that your message was presented to the Pope by Archbishop Stanislaw Dziwisz, his private secretary. The Holy Father has responded in turn, by signing in his own hand, a copy of the text and returning it to you, as an expression of recognition to the organizers of the initiative and all those who participated.

I have been charged to convey to you, to the

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Board of Directors, and to all the participants of the Rise Up Conference 2004, the heartfelt gratitude of the Holy Father for this gesture of faith, while assuring you of constant remembrance in his prayers, he willingly imparts his Apostolic Blessing which he extends from his heart to the dear young people of Catholic Christian Outreach."

I immediately turned over the letter and there was the copy with the Pope's signature! I thought to myself, in shock and amazement, "He actually took the time to read our letter and to respond by signing it!"

I promptly copied and scanned it, in order to email it to the CCO staff and Rise Up 2004 participants (to see this copy, go to page 6). I could not contain the excitement I felt that the Holy Father had received our encouragement, and had in turn, taken the opportunity to very personally respond to it.

Especially in light of his death, this recent encouragement has a great significance for CCO. Firstly, it demonstrates John Paul II's enduring commitment to young people. It is recorded that even as he lay dying, he heard the voices of 50,000 young people singing in St. Peter's Square on Friday evening. His secretary told John Paul II that thousands of young people were singing and praying in the square. The Pope uttered these final words: "I sought you out and now you have come to me... I thank you." As a movement, CCO has felt this incredible commitment from our leader.

Secondly it is a great source of

encouragement for CCO to receive a personal endorsement from this very holy man. During the funeral, many people carried signs and chanted "Santo Subito" or "Sainthood now". It is a great blessing to know that CCO has received John Paul II's Blessing, both for our members and our ministry.

Thirdly, it affirms the responsibility that we have, as a movement, to continue our work and the legacy which John Paul II inspired. In December, following World Youth Day 2002, John Paul II sent a letter to CCO on the occasion of the Rise Up Conference in Edmonton. In that letter he wrote:

"I confidently renew my appeal to you: listen to the voice of Jesus! Let His light shine in your lives, continue steadfastly on the path of holiness, share with everyone 'the good news of a great joy which will come to all the people' (Lk 2:10)."

CCO must continue to be Jesus and to share Jesus with the countless university students searching for meaning in their lives. We have a great responsibility, by the power of God's grace, to live up to John Paul II's appeal to CCO. This is how CCO has and will continue to change the world. As the Holy Father said at World Youth Day 2000, "If you are who should be, you will set the world ablaze!" ♦



Students signing letter to John Paul II. ►

Agents of *Change*

RISE UP 2004 CONFERENCE

by MICHAEL HALL

Three years ago, World Youth Day brought an incomparable excitement to the city of Toronto. Hundreds of thousands of Catholic youth from around the world descended upon the city and brought a spirit of joy, celebration, and a love for Christ and His Church. The only Pope these young people have known is John Paul II. They are the John Paul II generation.

This past December, CCO's Annual Rise Up Christmas Conference brought that same spirit back to Toronto. Three hundred university students from across Canada gathered at the Marriott Eaton Centre Hotel for five days to celebrate their Catholic faith. This year's theme was "Apostles for the New Millennium: Igniting the JP II Generation". The sessions included many topics such as: Signs of the Times, The Sleeping Giant, We Wish to See Jesus, Agents of Change, and New Generation of Builders. Keynote speakers Archbishop Emeritus Adam Exner, OMI and Fr. Thomas Rosica, CSB challenged students to become apostles for our generation as they presented reflections on John Paul II's teaching for young people. In our world today, we were told, it is the Apostles of the New Millennium that will bring the life-giving message of Christ to our society.

Rise Up is not only a great chance for students to be encouraged in their faith, but it is also a time of conver-

sion. It is a time when hearts come to discover, or re-discover, the love of Christ. One such student, Nabil, came to Rise Up on a whim. His brother invited him to the CCO Christmas Party in Ottawa, his first CCO event, just a few weeks before Rise Up. Everyone at the party was invited to consider attending the Rise Up conference. By the end of the night, Nabil decided that he would make the conference in Toronto his second CCO event. A few short weeks later, he was on a bus with 50 other Ottawa students heading to Toronto.

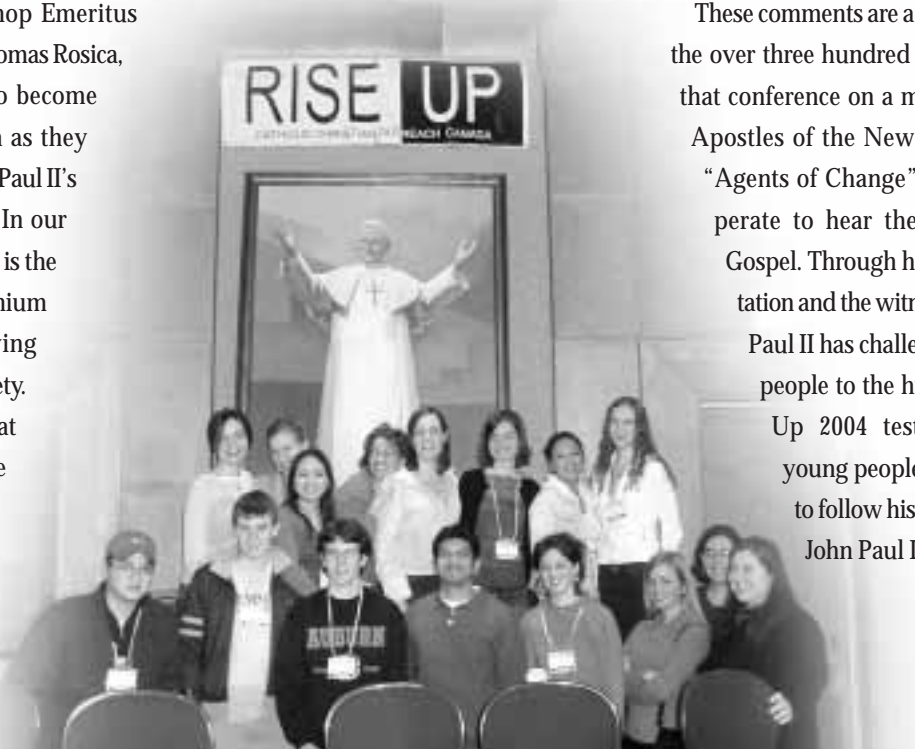
While in Toronto, Nabil enjoyed the talks and the fellowship with other students. But on the second night of the conference, something changed. He met Jesus in a profound way. During a night of adoration, he came to realize that Jesus truly loved him personally. From that moment on, everything he had ever been taught about God, Jesus, and the

Catholic faith started to make sense. The faith that he had left behind years before in high school, he now recognized as truth which had implications in his life. Nabil went to Toronto on a whim, but he left on a mission.

Many others left changed as well. One participant wrote on the conference evaluation: "The conference was amazing, but what's even more amazing is what is to come next on the path as we say Yes. You've each inspired me to be even more excited about belonging to the family of Jesus! Man, with God in each [of us] in each part of the world, the world as we know it will be transformed."

Fr. Rosica commented after the conference, "I am still on a high from the [Rise Up] meeting last week. It was a magnificent experience and you should be very proud of being a part of this real revolution in Canada."

These comments are a small sampling of the over three hundred students who left that conference on a mission to become Apostles of the New Millennium and "Agents of Change" in a society desperate to hear the message of the Gospel. Through his words of exhortation and the witness of his life, John Paul II has challenged these young people to the highest ideals. Rise Up 2004 testified that these young people are truly seeking to follow his example, to be the John Paul II generation. ♦



CCO Student meets John Paul II

by AMY PELOSO

I have always wanted to be a teacher. It would bring tears to my eyes when I would be tutoring someone, and all of a sudden, things would just “click” for them. I loved seeing people overcome obstacles and begin to understand things.

This was my attitude even before I really surrendered my life over to Christ. I consid-

ered myself a good person, but I was not attending Sunday Mass, and my prayer life was essentially non-existent. Having just ended a six year relationship in my second year of university, I was searching for something to fill the emptiness I was feeling. While I was taking a CCO Faith Study I realized the only thing that could fill the emptiness and bring direction to my life was a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The members of CCO were there to teach me and help me through the obstacles in my spiritual life.

I have discovered that God has a purpose for me beyond my wildest dreams. Recently, CCO was asked to have a representative on the Canadian delegation to pass over the WYD Cross to the German youth. I pondered with my

parents at the dinner table which staff member would go. Would they send the founder, André, or would Jeff, the president, go? Imagine my surprise when I received a call asking me to represent CCO on the Canadian Youth Delegation!

There is so much to recount of my pilgrimage to Rome, including our group having a 40 minute personal audience with Pope John Paul II and personally receiving Christ in the Eucharist from the Vicar of Christ, but if there is one thing I realized in my experience in Rome it is this: There is not an army of people sitting in the Vatican’s back yard waiting to be deployed to various parts of the world at the command of the Church. There is an army, and you and I are part of it, and we are being asked to share the faith with all we meet.

I have decided to respond to God’s call in my life by serving in full time ministry with CCO this fall. My passion for teaching has not changed, but it has been intensified with the curriculum - the Good News of Jesus Christ. ♦

NOTE: This article first ran in the Summer 2003 edition of the Grapevine. Amy is now a full time CCO staff member serving in Ottawa.

Amy receives a rosary and blessing from Pope John Paul II.



Founder reflects on JPII and CCO

by ANDRÉ REGNIER, CCO Founder

As I traveled to Rome to say goodbye to Pope John Paul II, I found myself reflecting on his life and the influence he had on the founding of CCO. Seventeen years ago the word evangelization was not commonplace in the average Catholic experience and youth movements were relatively unknown in

North America. However through the writings of John Paul II, I found great encouragement and confirmation of the vision I had for CCO, a movement dedicated to evangelization.

The Pope believed that youth are the hope of the Church and called them to find their identity in Christ. The Pope wrote that



André in St. Peter's Square. ►



“youth must not simply be considered as an object of pastoral concern for the Church. In fact, young people are and ought to be encouraged to be active on behalf of the Church as leading characters in evangelization and participants in the renewal of society.” (John Paul II, Youth and Evangelization, The Pope Speaks, Vol. 37, No. 3). This quotation helped to form CCO’s mission statement. (See lower box on page 12.)

The Holy Father’s writings were also instrumental in instilling a sense of urgency and expectancy, necessary ingredients for the growth of CCO. Even though we started with just a few university students in Saskatoon, the Pope’s words called us to be committed to our work on campus. We rallied around his words that indicated that the Church was moving into an evangelistic age:

“God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel. I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of

the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.” (John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio, 1990)

In its beginning nearly seventeen years ago, Pope John Paul II has encouraged our movement in many ways. He stated that the Church’s message is not only relevant, but necessary for all mankind. He challenged us, the Baptized, to courageously and generously give ourselves to the service of the Church. Time and time again, he repeated the importance of relying on the Holy Spirit as he asked us to “live radically, live a holy life, be a saint”.

This, to me, remphasizes the universal call to evangelization

and to holiness, both of which are part of the mission of CCO.

As I write this article, I am on my way home from Rome where I represented CCO at the funeral of Pope John Paul II. I had been in Rome to express thanks to this great man who inspired and encouraged me to begin CCO. Heartbreakingly, because of the crowds, I was not able to get into St. Peter’s Square during the Funeral Mass. I was incredibly disappointed and upset, but God used this disappointment to stir in me a profound time of reflection and prayer.

If I would have been in St. Peter’s Square I may have only brought home a memory, but instead I had to search deeply inside myself for meaning. I realized again what will have a lasting and historical contribution to the Church and the world is not the memory of John Paul II, but our acting upon his words.

CCO exists today and is experiencing tremendous growth due in large part to the holy and obedient life of John Paul II. In taking his challenging words to heart and by taking action, CCO helped to rekindle the faith of thousands of young people. Now even more, we should be motivated to intensify our efforts to proclaim Christ and to establish the Kingdom of God amidst the civilization of man. ♦



Personal Encouragements *from* John Paul II *to* CCO

Rise Up

A Catholic Conference for Young Adults
December 28, 2004 – January 1, 2005
Laurier Marine Hotel, Toronto, Canada

Apostles for the New Millennium: Igniting the JPII Generation

Dearest Holy Father, Pope John Paul II:

The Catholic youth of Canada and the world, work to commemorate our deepest appreciation for your witness to Christ, who is the fullness of truth and love. For the past few days we have attended a conference dedicated to "Building Apostles for the New Millennium" and "Igniting the John Paul II Generation." We are that generation! This conference is taking place in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, home of the 2002 World Youth Day. Our speakers have challenged us by delivering messages based on your most common themes especially those specifically directed to the youth of the world.

Dear Holy Father, we are reminded of your vision of renewal in the Church, especially in Canada. Our nation has seen changes since your visit in the summer of 2002, particularly in the spiritual interest of young people on the university campuses across Canada. We look forward to your visit and God's Blessing as we prepare for and celebrate the 2008 International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec City. We long for Canada to experience the New Springtime of Christian life and faith that you have spoken of so often and prayed for so intensely. We wish to see Jesus! Not only for ourselves but for every man, woman and child on the face of the earth! And to this end, we will give ourselves generously and unreservedly to the work of the New Evangelization, especially on university campuses throughout Canada. Dear Pope, we hear you encouraging us to live our lives in light of eternity and to build the city of God inside the city of man. Holy Father, we are with you, we love you, we pray for you and we cannot wait to see you in Germany in the summer of 2005. Together, we shall contemplate the face of Jesus, in Whom we find ultimate joy and peace and purpose. Conferred with you, His Word, we will receive our marching orders and by God's grace, we shall respond in generosity and charity.

Until we see you in Cologne, we remain in love and fidelity.

Catholic Christian Outreach, Canada

Joannes Paulus II



SECRETARIAT OF STATE
FIRST SECTION · GENERAL AFFAIRS

From the Vatican, December 28, 2002

It is a great joy for me to greet you on the occasion of your National Christmas Conference. The memory of my meeting with you and so many other young people from around the world in July of this year remains vividly etched in my mind.

At the World Youth Day Prayer Vigil held in Downsview Park on Saturday, the evening of July 27, I called for a new generation of builders to respond to the aspiration of humanity for a civilization of love marked by freedom and peace. Indeed I entrusted this hope of mine specifically to you, my dear young people. As members of the Catholic Christian Outreach you are generously responding to that appeal through your courage to be disciples of Jesus, living the life of the Beatitudes on campuses throughout Canada. In this way, as you strive to be the salt of the earth and light of the world for others, you become shining beacons illuminating the way of the Lord, answering the question that stirs in the hearts of all young people: "to whom shall we go?" (Jn 6:68).

Yes, Jesus Christ is the sure foundation of your hope and joy. Immersed in him and his paschal mystery your own lives will grow in holiness, which is the authentic path of true witness to the light of his loving presence in our world. And so I confidently renew my appeal to you: listen to the voice of Jesus! Let His light shine in your lives, continue steadfastly on the path of holiness, share with everyone "the good news of a great joy which will come to all the people" (Lk 2:10).

Invoking upon all of you the joy and peace that the birth of our Savior brings, I cordially impart to you and your families my Apostolic Blessing.

JOANNES PAULUS PP. II

▲ On the evening of December 30th, Rise Up Conference participants were invited to sign a pledge to the Holy Father as a demonstration of their commitment as the 'John Paul II Generation'. It was a gesture of faith and courage. This pledge was sent to the Pope by Archbishop Luigi Ventura, the Apostolic Nuncio. Pope John Paul II responded in January of 2005 by signing a copy of the pledge, in his own hand, and returning it to CCO.

◀ The letter to the left was written by His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, to Catholic Christian Outreach Canada on the occasion of the Rise Up 2002 Christmas Conference in Edmonton, Alberta.



Pope Benedict XVI: *Love and Joy*

by GREGORY N. SMITH

The crowd roared its approval as the white-haired figure of Pope Benedict XVI stepped out to greet us on the balcony of St. Peter's last evening. Even in that moment of enthusiasm, I paused to consider that not everyone was going to be as delighted as we were with the cardinals' choice.

Popes do not spend much time defending themselves against criticism, and Benedict XVI will likely follow this rule. But those interested in his answer to his critics, past and present, need look no further than the homily Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger delivered Monday at the Mass beginning the papal election.

His bracing words called Christians to become adults in the faith, to come of age. They spoke of spiritual maturity in an age

"that recognizes nothing as definitive and has as its measure only the self and its desires." In place of adolescent rebellion against unchanging truth, the future pope proposed a mature faith that is "profoundly rooted in friendship with Christ."

This clear-cut faith, he acknowledged, is labelled as fundamentalism. In other words, he knows what's been said about him. But he is unmoved: "an 'adult' faith does not follow the waves of fashion and the latest novelties." The time has come to resist being tossed about by "every wind of doctrine."

The news that students at a large Canadian university cheered loudly when the name of the new pope was announced on television did not surprise me. Many young people, Christian or not, appear to have tired of what the homily called "the dicta-

torship of relativism." Already energized by the teaching and example of John Paul II, they are ready for Benedict XVI.

What will they—and all of us—hear from the new pope? Having listened to him preach twice in as many weeks, I think Pope Benedict XVI may launch the Church "into the deep," where his predecessor urged us in a letter written in 2001.

Christianity in general, and Catholic Christianity in particular, is lived at many levels, ranging from a moral code to mystical union. Still, all attempts to produce Christianity "lite" are doomed to failure, for powerful reasons that Cardinal Ratzinger stated Monday. "The mercy of Christ," he said, "is not cut-rate grace" and evil "is not something banal." In other words, faith is serious business. *...continued on page 12*

Life at CCONationalHeadquarters

In the growing movement of Catholic Christian Outreach, the National Headquarters (HQ) office is becoming more and more important to the life of this lay youth movement. There are currently 4 staff members working at the CCO HQ in Saskatoon, but there are many more opportunities for people to join CCO in its national work.

With 30 missionary staff, there is a lot of valuable administrative support which generally occurs behind the scenes, but is critical to the success of the movement on the university campuses. People have been asking: "What goes on at the CCO National Headquarters? How can I help?"

Here is a glimpse of a few important areas of the HQ. All CCO materials that are used on all campuses (like Faith Studies, the Ultimate Relationship Booklet, The Grapevine Newsletter, etc.) are developed and published through the HQ. All special and monthly donations to CCO are processed through HQ. Last year, there were 7000 donations processed in support of CCO staff, regions, and projects. As well, the talented HQ staff coordinate all of CCO's accounting structure including the processing of

regular finances, reimbursement, bills, and invoices.

Another important area is information technology. Development and maintenance of the CCO and Soul Snack web sites and all technical support are also based at HQ. Many projects including summer missions and Rise Up Conferences are also coordinated through the HQ. Also the Office of the President, residing at CCO HQ, works to oversee all of CCO's ministry in Canada and abroad, as well as maintaining relations with Canadian Bishops, Church authorities, and other Catholic youth organizations throughout the world.

There are many ways you can help the CCO National Headquarters. Perhaps you might be interested coming to work with our HQ team. Whether you are interested in a career change, giving a year of missionary service in our National HQ, or willing to offer some of yourself as a part-time volunteer, you would be most welcome. Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit how you might be able to help our HQ team. If you have any questions or are interested please call us at (306) 652-5100 or email us at hq@cco.ca.



CAMPUS

CLOSE - UPS

FROM ACROSS CANADA

Compiled by DENISE TOECKES

Halifax

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Continuing on with the momentum of Impact, this successful first year on campus has been a time of grace. With prayer a priority and a focus on learning what it means to "be CCO," students, especially the 40 who attended Rise Up, are seriously looking at how they can serve God in a deeper way. Faith studies have become their main initiative. One student came to campus after being on Impact where he had grown tremendously in his understanding of his baptismal call to be a missionary. He emailed his classmates inviting them to join a faith study. Now, in the second semester, one of the young men who

joined is also leading a study himself! The biggest challenge for CCO in Halifax has been the weather!

Ottawa

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Students at Carleton are taking leadership, not just talking about it. One of the many ways they are actively sharing their faith is by taking their peers to the sacraments. After going to Confession for the first time, one student said, "I thank Jesus for my new relationship with Him!" This exclamation reflects the large number of conversions happening. Another student, an outspoken, practising pagan, agreed to join a faith study. Every week she would learn more about a personal God who loved her. When she heard for the first time that Jesus bridged the gap between her and God, she expressed that she had always thought of Jesus as someone stuck in history, but now knows Him as her Saviour and Lord!

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

More than ever before, Ottawa U students have a great desire to know God and make Him known. They are making generous time commitments, eager to invest in others. One student grew so deeply that she said, "Leading a study was the next best thing in my life to my conversion."

Another student expressed how when she fell in love with Christ, she fell in love with souls: "I walk around campus and I want to tell everyone I see that God loves them."

After finally experiencing God in a personal

way, one young woman was so exploding with joy that she wanted to tell everyone. She stayed up late baking muffins to share on campus so that she could share her news at the same time!

Saskatoon and Regina


UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

What could have been a long, boring trip turned out to be a powerful experience for the U of S students who rode the bus to Rise Up in Toronto. The students took advantage of the long ride by planning community and faith building activities. After the conference, the students were actually excited about getting back on the bus to travel home. They passed the time with hours of sharing what Christ had done for them and what they wanted to do for Christ. This amazing attitude has continued into the semester with students stepping up to leadership, taking initiative, making personal evangelistic efforts, inviting people to faith studies, and helping with follow ups. They are already planning for next year's conference!

UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

Regina CCO students are so committed to winning the spiritual battle for souls that they named their main event Frontline (see Ephesians 6). One young woman unexpectedly found herself at Rise Up after having a conversation about the movement with one of the leaders. Attracted by what she saw and heard, she brought her registration form and conference fee the very next day. Her life is now transformed: she





is in a Discovery study, eager to pray, and going regularly to the sacraments. Even though she had been involved in church events before, she said that seeing so many people her own age living authentic Catholic lifestyles has made all the difference.

Vancouver

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Of the 1700 students who participated in SFU's "Sixty Second Survey," staff and students are following-up the 500 who indicated interest in learning more about God. CCO co-hosted Jesus Week where many evangelistic conversations occurred. One of these conversations led to unique sharing of the gospel when a Communications student on assignment to report a news-

worthy topic interviewed a staff member about Jesus and evangelization. In explaining her job, the staff member was able to share the gospel in a clear, simple, and transferable way. This student then repeated the gospel

message as part of a presentation to her entire class! God will use any vessel, and is certainly using the efforts of CCO students at SFU to touch hearts.

CAPILANO COLLEGE

New on the North Shore, CCO Capilano has experienced some Holy Spirit-sized growth. Student leaders are seeing the fruits of their hard work in the exciting number of new people coming out. Starting the semester with a Sixty Second Survey, they had over a hundred contacts to follow-up and now have eight Faith Studies. On one follow-up, students shared a glimpse of Christ's love with a young woman who only knew Jesus as a historical figure. After speaking with them, she immediately wanted to know more. She even came to mass! There is no doubt that prayer is behind this expansion.

DOUGLAS COLLEGE

The number of faith studies at Douglas more than doubled from last semester,

and God is moving through them. Two young ladies from China had never heard of Jesus before meeting CCO. After watching and discussing the Jesus video, they are now in the Discovery study, very eager, inquisitive, taking the challenges to pray, and going to Church. Another student in one of the studies recently expressed her joy in discovering that life isn't only about being good, but that God has a personal love for her. The students hosted a Seder supper where a young Buddhist student responded to an invitation to accept Christ. Students at Douglas are very interested and open to hearing about Jesus, and CCO is there to respond. ♦

Sights and Saints

For 25 days this summer, 73 students from across Canada will journey to Germany and Italy on an unforgettable faith adventure. The theme for the pilgrimage is "Fixed on Jesus" (taken from Hebrews 12:1-2). It will give students a chance to experience the richness of their faith through some holy sights of Catholicism and through the witness of some great European Saints. It all starts in Germany, with the team participating in the Youth Arise International Festival in Essen, CCO will then join young people from around the world for a week at the 20th World Youth Day (WYD) in Cologne. Following WYD, Fr. Tom Rosica, CSB will lead the team on a nine day pilgrimage from Cologne to Rome. Students will reflect on the lives of modern-day Saints, like St. Edith Stein, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Gianna Molla, Blessed Giorgio Frassatti, St. Francis, and St. Clare, who serve as shining examples of our Catholic faith. Learning from the model of these and other Saints, the participants will come away with the true meaning of having their eyes "fixed on Jesus".



CCO Impacts *young professionals*

by MICHAEL YAREMKO, *Teacher*

The experience that was gained through my involvement with CCO has impacted my vocation as a Catholic teacher. I graduated from the U of S with two bachelor degrees; one in Science and one in Education. I am currently teaching grades 6 and 7 at a Catholic school in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. Although I grew up a Catholic, CCO helped me learn much more about the riches of our faith and the graces that God provides through the Sacraments, teachings and liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church.

My involvement with CCO actually helped in my discernment to be a teacher. There were several CCO events that I was called upon to speak publicly, which helped me gain confidence and experience in speaking in front of a crowd. I remember speaking up in front of a small crowd at a retreat. Shortly after I finished presenting what I had spontaneously summarized from an important discussion my small group had about Jesus, several people came up to me and told me that I would make a great teacher. Although I tend to be a quiet person, when I have something to say that I am passionate about, I have little trouble speaking and being articulate in front of a crowd. By the time my first degree was complete, I felt called to be a teacher.

As a new teacher, I know that God must

shine in the daily example given by adults - both at school and outside of school. Youth look towards the example being set before them to define their goals in life. If that example is weak and selfish, it gives them little to strive for. It makes it difficult for the Spirit to awaken in them. This is no small example that must be set, but in learning to trust God's lead, it is possible. Sharing my gifts and talents encourages youth to do the same. Being a witness to youth at school and in the parish can be done by participating in various ministries at school masses, youth group gatherings, and special events at Church. One thing I am involved in at my parish, for example, is music ministry.

Through participating in and leading faith studies as a university student with CCO, I gained knowledge and leadership skills that are now extremely helpful when teaching - particularly in teaching religion. I am so glad I learned how to explain the faith because my students now pepper me with challenging questions. The practical resources I found during my time with CCO have better equipped me to provide solid answers and thought-provoking information for the students. One of the best ways to encourage my students is through teachings that interest them; to provide an opportunity for them to creatively and critically think about the influences of the world

around them. It could be as simple as playing a song that introduces students to an alternative style of music that does not seek to gain attention through vulgar content and language.

The one thing I have developed through my CCO experience was the ability to live and walk a Christian life. CCO helped me develop a prayer life which has become an essential foundation and naturally filters into my role as a teacher. One thing that is often in my prayers is, "Am I using the tools I've developed and the gifts I've been given to encourage the personal and spiritual growth of my students?" Now, although it is very challenging at times, I know that my relationship with God needs to be evident in all areas of my life. Because as they look to me, the best lesson I can teach my students is to keep Jesus at the centre of lives too. ♦



Grandma's PRAYERS

by SARAH BOLDICK

I attended the Catholic Church sporadically my whole life. My mother was a Catholic and my father a Protestant. My siblings and I were never baptized, mainly because my parents couldn't decide what church to baptize us in. When I was sixteen, I thought about becoming a full member of the Catholic Church, but I never did anything about it. My grandmother, who is a devout Catholic, was always praying for us, and unbeknownst to me, God was working through her to bring me closer to Him.

Soon after I moved to Saskatoon to attend university I received a phone call one night from my grandmother. She told me she had given my name and phone number to a CCO member she met on a pilgrimage in Rome. I was very, very annoyed with my grandma. She'd given my name to some stranger associated with some religious group! A few nights later I received a call from CCO, they wanted to know if I would like to join a small group Faith study. I surprised myself by saying yes!

I didn't know what to expect and I honestly thought about not showing up. Well I did show up, quite nervous, but got through that first day and had some fun doing it. I continued going to the study, and after each

one, I could feel a little bit of the empty place inside me starting to fill up. The thought I'd had when I was younger about getting baptized came back to me, and I began to seriously consider it, but I didn't know how to go about doing it.

At that point, I had a meeting with a CCO staff member regarding the progress of the study. I ended up sharing with her my desire to be baptized. She said she'd see what she could do and by the end of the day I had enrolled myself in a RCIA (Rite of Catholic Initiation of Adults) program.

It's been about 6 months since that point, and I'm now 8 days from the Easter Vigil and the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, and I couldn't be happier. I know there has been a change in me, a change of heart. My view of the world has changed, as though blinders have been removed from my vision. The programs I watch on TV and the books I read have changed, and my understanding of other people has shifted from a superficial level to seeing who they are inside. I have also had to alter the

amount of time I spend with friends. I have increased the amount of time I spend with people who encourage me in my faith journey, and have decreased the amount of time with those who are a negative influence.

Through CCO and at my parish I've found a community waiting to welcome me with open arms. The part of me that felt I've been missing something has been filled with the love of God. I felt lost at the beginning of the year, but I've been found, just like the lost sheep the good Shepherd returned to the flock. That's truly what I feel has happened to me. I have been found, through the Grace of God (and with the help of Grandma's prayers!) ♦

Editor's note: Sarah just celebrated her one year anniversary of being initiated into the Church. She continues to attend CCO Faith studies and is also leading CCO Faith studies. Sarah is also on CCO Saskatoon's student executive.



Love and Joy

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Given this intensity of purpose and such direct statements, will the coming pontificate derail ecumenical initiatives begun under John Paul II? I think it more likely that the new pope's theological sureness will sustain them, particularly with the Orthodox churches, which are well accustomed to a dialogue based on strong and uncompromising positions.

Those who knew Cardinal Ratzinger only through media caricatures will face a greater challenge: to have confidence in his leadership, they will need to come to know him as an individual. This is likely to happen as direct images of the modest and soft-spoken new Pope replace the simplistic verdicts passed on him over the years. The unassuming figure I sometimes saw along the

street when I was a seminarian seemed unchanged on the balcony of St. Peter's last night, appealing in his simplicity.

There are also those who shrink from the thought of taking the plunge into the deep waters of discipleship. They may have been able to admire John Paul II for his contribution to the fall of communism or his social teaching without accepting his other messages. Will they accept the new pope's offer of a demanding but liberating friendship with Christ, even at the cost of their membership in the post-modern culture?

During these past weeks in Rome, I asked many people what they wanted in a pope, even as I asked myself the same question. The most common answer: a holy pope, a pope who will help us become holy.

St. Benedict, named a patron of Europe in modern times, had one central purpose in writing his monastic rule: to help others to follow Christ. The future Pope Benedict XVI concluded his homily, the Monday before his election, by inviting the congregation to pray—insistently—for a pastor who, following the great John Paul, would lead us “to the knowledge of Christ, to His love, to true joy.”

Love and joy. May these words be our response to this new pope. ♦

Monsignor Gregory Smith is a member of CCO's National Board of Directors. He is the former Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Vancouver and is currently pursuing doctrinal studies in Rome. This article first appeared in the Vancouver Sun.

CCO Staff watching the announcement of Pope Benedict XVI.



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