

Testimonial Letters from Two Students at the Nov. 2009 Young Christian Leadership Challenge

From: Shannon Sullivan, 10th grade, Home School. Age 15

TO: Dunrovin Retreat Center Director, Jerome Meeds

RE: November 2009 Young Christian Leadership Challenge at Dunrovin

Before the retreat, I was feeling a little apprehensive about giving up a whole weekend to go and do something I didn't know much about. I had never been on a weekend retreat with just 18 youth before, so I didn't really know what to expect.

Right away when we (the St. Peter's kids) got to Dunrovin, we felt a little out of place because everyone knew each other and seemed to know what was going on, but we didn't have a clue. When we asked who was leading the retreat and who was on it, we found out that everyone was on the retreat and everyone was leading it. We were a little confused by this, but we thought we'd wait it out and see what they meant.

On the first day/evening, we really got to know the other kids and started feeling a little more at home. We heard a few presentations by some of the youth, I think it really made a difference hearing those ideas and concepts from people our age instead of adults. We learned a little bit about team unity, and played some ice breakers to go along with it. That night we had evening prayer that was very powerful and beautiful. The music was led by youth which, again, made a big difference compared to professional musicians or adults. We felt a welcomed part of everything that was going on.

The next day we did more team building games that really helped us work together and learn to be leaders among leaders. We did a service project (building up rocks around a well) that made us feel helpful and accomplished. I can't say enough about how encouraging everyone was (youth and adults) and how much the obviously wanted us to learn about leadership. We played basketball together, which was SO much fun. We really began forming strong bonds together. No one really worried about age, everyone was the same. I liked that. That night the we (the new kids) had a chance to give presentations like the ones we had already heard. I think that was very rewarding to actually use the skills we had been learning and imitating. That night, evening prayer was very powerful and inspiring, we heard some testimonies and sang amazing songs. That night some of the girls decided to sleep in the chapel, with God. I had never done that before and it was a very beautiful experience for me. I think Dunrovin was a perfect place for this retreat. It was beautiful inside and out, with the living presence of Jesus in the tabernacle.

The giant pillow fight we had together that night was SOO much fun!! It was cool to see everyone so focused and serious during prayer and testimonies, then having so much fun and acting so relaxed together just fooling around.

Coming out of the retreat, I feel ready and willing to become an active leader in my church and community. The things I learned and the people I met will stay with me and in my heart for the rest of my life.

I'd like to say thank you to everyone who helped to put on this retreat, and thank you to every single person who was there. It was definitely one of the most rewarding experiences of my life and I will remember it forever. Last but not least I would like to thank God for my life, and for this opportunity. I know he will do great things with my life if I listen and obey.

In Christ,

Shannon Sullivan, 10th grade, Home School. Age 15.

Second Letter Follows Below

From [Maria Kraker, age 16, grade 10, Trinity High School.](#)

Re: November 2009 YCLC Retreat

The Dunrovin leadership retreat weekend was definitely one of the most powerful spiritual experiences I have ever had. On this retreat, I experienced an newfound intimacy with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. As I was praying in the chapel with my fellow retreatants, I was completely free from any distractions, and I felt a peace I had never known before. I was so completely aware of my own sinfulness and unworthiness, and yet so conscious of God's love. I was so terrified and so humbled, but I knew that God accepted me anyways.

Everyone was so impacted by the prayer time that we all eventually went back to the chapel later in the night to pray for hours.

One amazing thing about this retreat is the trust and freedom given to us. There really is no distinction between the retreatants and the leaders. We are unified by our desire to know Christ, and we know that we all can learn from each other. On this retreat in particular, the teaching and the learning is reciprocal. We are all equal as members of the body of Christ. We learn to relate to each other as fellow Christians, with no distinctions of superiority/inferiority concerning age, knowledge, popularity, etc. I was able to become friends with people who normally I wouldn't relate to in every day settings. This retreat taught me that anyone can be a leader, and that we need everyone if we are to accomplish anything. We learned to work, worship, and have fun as a team.

I would definitely recommend this leadership retreat to anyone who has a desire to be a good Christian, or even anyone who desires to make a difference in the world. I learned how to take better control my attitude and my actions, and I learned the importance of trusting other people. I grew in my relationships with everyone there, and most importantly with God. When I come into the presence of the Eucharist, I recognize Jesus. I visit Jesus in the Eucharist more often now that I know He is truly present and that He is there for me whenever I need him.

Maria Kraker, age 16, grade 10, Trinity High School.