



After celebrating the Sunday liturgy together, the community, residents and guests gathered recently for this semester's first CONVERSATIONS AT THE CENTER at the Assumptionist Center in Brighton, where the overriding theme was "Launch Us on the Adventure of Mercy!" More specifically, the presentations zeroed in on the inspirations gleaned by attendees at this summer's World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland as experienced by Fr. Ron Sibugan, AA, campus minister at Assumption College and Cameron Martin, a member of the college's choir and a teacher at Algonquin Regional High School.

The theme for this year's WYD was, "Blessed are the Merciful for They Shall Obtain Mercy." After visiting several significant sites in Italy and France where the U.S. Assumption pilgrims traveled in the footsteps of Fr. d'Alzon and were greatly touched by his spirit and his love of the Church, youth, the poor and marginalized. Moving on they met up with the international Assumptionist pilgrims in Brussels and then on to Krakow, Poland where they represented fourteen countries. According to Fr. Ron and Cameron, what was most striking during this pilgrimage was the over whelming experience of celebration, openness, hospitality, diversity, fraternity, love, solidarity, commitment, trust and compassion experienced not only by meeting other pilgrims but by living with host families in Poland. Because of the many languages represented during daily encounters with folks, there were many creative methods of communicating devised that were quite successful!

The events of the week consisted of worship, praise in song, lectures, workshops and group activities. The attention given to the poor, the stranger, the marginalized neighbor was striking. Through the eyes of mercy, how do we welcome minorities? How can we become more attentive and faith-filled neighbors to others?

Certainly the most heart wrenching experience of the pilgrimage was a visit to the concentration camp in Auschwitz where the pilgrims experienced a profound solidarity with those who suffered and died there and for some, during their lifetime.

When asked about the overall take away experience for those who attended WYD, the presenters commented on the sheer numbers who attended and the hope they witnessed for the future of the Church around the world. It was also noted that the attendees were not only youth but a significant number of older adults.

Plans will soon be underway for the next WYD gathering in Panama three years from now.