

2005 WWME National Convention Report

by Bob & Joy Hernandez and Fr. Chuck Kosanke

Dearest WWME Family,

WOW! We just returned from Towson University in Baltimore after experiencing our 2005 WWME National Convention! This was definitely a high point in our leadership and in our Ecclesial Team relationship!

As you know, the theme of the Convention was "In God We Trust". The 2005 Convention Mission Statement was "to call people to a radical trust that, through our loving God, anything and everything is possible; and that by living our commitment to our marriages and WWME more deeply, we will renew the Church and change the world." The patron saints of the Convention were the Holy Family - so appropriate for our family Convention. We welcomed members of our Interfaith community to celebrate with us, as well as members of the Widows & Widowers Community.



Bob & Joy Hernandez and Bishop Jack Kaising

We began on Friday with Priest Day. The focus was on our relationship with the Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We shared the day with our newly selected International Coordinating Team, David & Bronny Lea (New Zealand) and Fr. John Rate (Australia) - plus three of our dear Bishops - Bishop Jack Kaising (WWME Episcopal Moderator and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Military Services), Bishop Joseph Kurtz (Bishop of Knoxville), and Bishop Francisco Gonzales (Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, D.C.). It was a powerful and Spirit-filled day!



Bob & Joy Hernandez and Fr. Chuck Kosanke

At the conclusion of Priest Day, the opening ceremony for the 2005 National Convention began with a Parade of Banners from each of the 19 U.S. Sections - 13 English, 5 Hispanic, and 1 Korean. This was followed by the announcement of the winners of our national **Inviting Challenge** - Section 19 (Korean)! Section 19 had the largest **percentage increase** of the previous six quarters - **51% increase!** During the Inviting Challenge, WWME U.S.A. encountered 17, 551 couples and 89 priests! Yea, God!



Gary & Marcia Daigle read the Inviting Challenge results

Saturday in Baltimore dawned bright and beautiful and full of promise. The children attended the Children's Convention, closely supervised by adults & teens from the local YMCA/YWCA. It was a

special time to create understanding and learn acceptance of differing cultures as English, Hispanic, and Korean youngsters spent the day together building friendships. The Widow/Widower Convention convened to share on Faith, Hope, & Charity.



Sonia & Benny and Chris Melendez enjoying the Convention as a family

The 2005 Convention presentations were offered in a creative new format with small vignettes representing a sharing circle, a Weekend, and a post-Weekend gathering. The themes were: In God We Trust, Wrestling With God's Plan For Us, Journey To Trusting In God, and Impact of Trusting In God. We, as the "audience", were allowed to "eavesdrop" on the powerful personal testimony of priests & couples who shared their faith journey in the presentation. For perhaps the first time, we listened to our Korean and Hispanic brothers and sisters sharing together with our English-speaking couples & priests. Their stories were deeply moving and inspiring, leading us into dialogue/trialogue to explore our own journey to trust in God.



A presentation gives the audience a look into a sharing group setting

Saturday afternoon, the three of us gave a brief presentation, touching on some of the highlights of our 2005 State of the Movement address. We felt humbled and uplifted by the warm and loving reception we received during our presentation. Throughout the Convention, we were greeted and hugged by so many who told us of their love and support for us and our leadership. We have memories to treasure for a lifetime!



Bob & Joy and Fr. Chuck address the audience

Following our presentation, we introduced David & Bronny and Fr. John, who shared their delightful love story and their hopes and vision for the WWME World Council. Their recounting of the tremendous selfless sacrifices of couples & priests throughout the world to introduce and preserve the Weekend brought tears to the eyes of many, including ourselves. They praised and thanked WWME in the United States for their unwavering and continuing generosity in reaching out to less fortunate countries that would otherwise be unable to sustain the Weekend. We, and all those at the Convention, fell in love with them! Please continue to pray for their relationship and their leadership of our worldwide movement.



David & Bronny Lea and Fr. John Rate

Saturday night was Family Fun! In a carnival atmosphere, 300 children and their parents played various carnival games, ate popcorn and cotton candy, had their faces painted, and tried their luck at “dunking” Fr. Chuck, John Geer, and Don Flanders in the (cold!) water tank!



“Dunkees” Fr. Chuck Kosanke and John Geer

Sunday we experienced a rousing keynote address from Fr. Tom Frank, our English-speaking “narrator” throughout the Convention. Fr. Tom ended the Convention where we began on Saturday morning - In God We Trust. His charismatic speaking style was motivational and had us all saying “AMEN” in unison!



Cardinal William H. Keeler presides over Mass

The Convention concluded appropriately with Celebration of the Eucharist. Our Principal Celebrant was Cardinal William H. Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore. It was a joyous celebration of who we are as a movement for our Church and as members of the Body of Christ. Of course, we closed the Convention by singing "our song" - *There's A New World Somewhere!* Alleluia and praise God!



Our next National Convention will be in **2008** as we gather to acknowledge **40 years** of WWME in the United States! The location is yet to be decided, but the date will most likely be in **July**, so circle the entire month on your 2008 calendar! Just as in any family gathering, we miss you when you are not with us and our celebration is less without you!

With much love,
Bob & Joy and Fr. Chuck