

Thank you, Trinity, for all your support these last months with all our fundraising efforts to attend the National Youth Gathering in Minnesota. Each month we would just celebrate the goals that were met. We know that was a lot to ask. You all gave so generously. Thank you for your support.

I loved traveling by plane to Minneapolis! Then we traveled by the Metro train from the airport to our wonderful hotel that was in Downtown Minneapolis. We arrived a day early and thanks to a successful car parking fundraiser on the 4th of July we had money to use for our adventures at the Mall of America! Our group had fun working through an escape room and riding the roller coasters! It was fun to just hang out together.

The next day the Gathering started! One thing fun about the Gathering that participants look forward to is the backpack! We got our purple backpacks and off it all started.

The Mass events were in the evening held in the US Bank Stadium. These were special. The speakers were great and talked about God's presence and how (Psalm 46:1) tells us He is our refuge and strength in every storm. There will be times when we feel alone but to never lose hope because John 16:33 tells us "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world". Real life is broken and messy. Jesus is real and He is present in our lives. The word real means "something we can touch, physical" and "being honest and vulnerable". Listening to the teacher from Indiana that stopped a school shooting was incredible. He was a man of faith and so brave. There was also a young gal that spoke about her struggles with being bullied and how it affected her. God was present in their lives. We would hear about prayer and scripture in each session or Mass event. I loved the many different breakout sessions that were available. The topics were awesome and too many to list. One that I attended was about relationships with others and also 321 Improve 😊.

After the Mass event one night was a Toby Mac concert- that was cool! Another night was the Skit Guys. If you haven't seen them- you should. They are hilarious and always teach a faith lesson. This night was also the night we got to eat dinner with other churches in the Florida-Georgia District and it was glow night. We blinged out in all our glow bracelets and necklaces! One more night I AM THEY performed.

The biggest take away for me was my experience being in the Mass Choir for the closing worship. I had rehearsals each day with the music that was sent in May under the direction of Dr. David Mennicke from Concordia Saint Paul. These were such beautiful hymns! "We Praise You and Acknowledge You" was the processional and it was so spirit filled with the choir and Wind Symphony leading. The choir continued to lead the worship and hymns that included Communion for over 23,000 people! That was an incredible experience. God was real and present in in all of what we did but that worship was special. It gave me a glimpse of what heaven will be like one day. Maybe not in matching t-shirts (again- thank you!!), but there will be rejoicing!

I hope to attend the next NYG which will be in HOUSTON in 2022 but this time as an adult leader!

Submitted by Angelina B.