



Reflections from the August 2024 PCYAC retreat



From August 23-25, members of the Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus (PCYAC) from Alabama, California, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Virginia, Wisconsin gathered for the annual PCYAC retreat, held this year at the Stuart Center in northeast Washington, DC.

The retreat offered an opportunity for young adults to deepen their call to nonviolence; explore what that means individually and communally; meet Charlene Howard, Pax Christi USA's new Executive Director; participate in a public prayer witness outside the White House; have social time getting to know one another; celebrate Mass with 2005 Teacher of Peace Msgr. Ray East; and contribute to future planning as the Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus.

Alexa Bituin (she/her) - Alexandria, VA

This was my second time attending the PCYAC retreat and I feel like my faith has been reinvigorated. What made this retreat so amazing was meeting people of different backgrounds come together striving for peace. I was attending a parish where I felt I did not belong, and after this retreat I felt compelled to leave my current parish and attend a different parish. I also met a lot of queer Catholics and as a Catholic who is a part of the LGBT+ community, this was so comforting to me. Attending the witness activity at the White House was an experience I'll never forget. Protesting against the funding of the genocide in Palestine while in a busy area brought me out of my comfort zone. Even though we had hecklers, there were also people supporting us. I can't wait to attend the next PCYAC retreat and continue practicing peaceful activism.



Creede Caldwell (he/him) - Helena, MT



In my life I've grown to love many of the uncomfortable, grimy or even dangerous activities of peacemaking... except for protests. As someone high in both introversion and agreeableness, I hate making a fuss. And, I often thought, what good are signs and slogans in a world where every opinion is screamed into the so-called public square of social media?

However, my paradigm shifted instantly as PCYAC stood together in front of Joe Biden's house, singing out our solidarity for Palestine. An Arab family stopped, taking pictures with us and pointing out our Palestinian flag to their children. That day, Biden didn't internalize that Catholics stand against colonialism, racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia. But, I have hope that the seven-year-old did.



Gavin Rice (he/him) - Endicott, NY

At the beginning of our weekend together, we spent some time in prayerful sharing. We had each been instructed to bring a "sacred object," an item which in some way represented our faith: our relationship with God, with others, and with ourselves. We each shared our sacred objects, explaining their significance and placing them one after another on a small table in the center of our communal prayer space. As each of us shared, I quickly came to feel that, no matter what we brought to the table (literally and metaphorically), we were willing to accept one another as we were, and that we were already being drawn together by the Spirit of the One who is Love.



As we prepared together for Mass on Saturday evening, we brought our table into the chapel, laden not only with our sacred objects, but with all the people, places, and experiences they represent. To these we added the time spent together in prayer, in public witness, in conversation and fellowship. Lastly the proverbial "cherry on top" was added to our table: the bread and wine to be consecrated on the altar. As we sang out our offertory hymn, all of the people, places, and experiences which were represented on our table, along with all of our hopes and fears and dreams and longings, were brought forward to the altar in symbol with the bread and wine, to be transformed by God's Word into God's very Presence among us. We received the Eucharist, God's total gift of Self, and as we sang the familiar words "I will go, Lord, I will hold Your people in my heart," I reflected on how we had brought everything we have, everything we are, to God; now God was sending us out, sanctified and filled with life, commissioned to proclaim the Good News of justice and peace to all. The Second Vatican Council tells us that the Eucharist is the "source and summit" of our lives; I think I'm beginning to understand what that really means. We give ourselves completely to God, and God gives God's Self completely to us; if that's true, how can we help but give ourselves completely to one another.



Learn more about PCYAC at <https://paxchristiusa.org/pax-christi-young-adult-caucus-pcyac/>, or contact Michelle Sherman at msherman@paxchristiusa.org.