

**2010 OCY Celebration of Youth Banquet**  
**May 6, 2010**  
**Keynote address by His Excellency Bishop Vincent Nguyen**

For almost 10 years, the Office of Catholic Youth has set aside an evening in May to celebrate the gifts, spirit and energy so readily shared by you, our young people with our family of faith in the Archdiocese of Toronto. Tonight we are once again gathered together for this wonderful event.

Over the years this evening has taken on many and varied themes. Perhaps in this way it has been constant in reflecting the many facets of you all, your backgrounds, the experiences of your young lives, and the newness of the many things you are discovering about what Our Lord has given to you as you grow into the people He has called you to become.

This evening we are celebrating the particular contributions of 6 young people that have demonstrated courage, love and commitment in their parishes, schools or communities. Without question, the work of these young people is a response. A response to a need, perhaps to an absence of justice, a need for a greater sense of community or a need for a greater witness to the love of God in these troubled times. In the same way, actions of the kind we are seeing tonight are themselves posing a question. A question we also find in our World Youth Day theme for this year: "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Moved by the Holy Spirit to draw close to Christ in some way, you ask him "how do I draw closer to you?" "If I act in love, will that help me find my way to you?" You act in response to a deep longing, and that response becomes, in a sense, a question of ultimate meaning.

The Catechism tells us that our "prayer of petition is a response to the plea of the Living God." God desires us to desire Him and our movement to pray, to ask Him for guidance, is a response and sure sign that His Holy Spirit is already at work in us.

It is this dynamic of question and answer that will feature prominently throughout your lives; it is the very condition of growth. I have already mentioned this year's World Youth Day theme: "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" this scripture passage was one of the main themes of John Paul II's Apostolic Letter to Young People many years ago. In that letter the Holy Father compares your own growth to the growth "in wisdom and in years" of the young Jesus during his "hidden life" in Nazareth. He himself is your model, your companion and guide. Do not be afraid to turn to him often.

In your growth during these important years, you will likely find, and may have already found, many opportunities to share your time and talents. In youth ministry, it is common to speak of four "pillars" of a young person's life; they are the school, parish, home and community at large. These together form the foundation of your formation. In the same way, these areas are not just opportunities to give but also to receive. Every time you engage the world with that special enthusiasm that is yours you open yourselves up to a new opportunity to encounter Christ, in sacrament or in those around you He comes to meet you and look upon you with love, like the rich young man in the Gospel story from which we take our World Youth Day theme. I hope you will never be afraid to step out beyond yourselves for, in doing so; you will form lasting relationships and have definitive experiences that will shape you for years to come.

Finally, the qualities I am speaking of: questioning, response, openness and joy, are also key qualities found in what we are ultimately celebrating tonight: leadership. Not leadership as the world defines it, but as Christ demonstrates by washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper. This is servant leadership, this is Catholic leadership, and

this is a leadership motivated by love. As we enjoy the rest of this evening, please remember, true leaders never pretend to have every answer. They are themselves driven by questions. As you grow, do not be afraid of questions, and do not be afraid of the answers! Both are, ultimately, Christ. Christ your source and end, Christ your brother and friend. He is beside you and within you. With that knowledge may you step out in faith, hope, love and courage in order to become the leaders the world so desperately needs you to be.

Let me close by simply adding my wish and prayer that Jesus be with us, standing at our sides, journeying with us as He promised: "I am with you." May we have that confidence as we journey through life, as we ask the question: "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life."

Thank you and may the Lord bless you always.

