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Youth and families learn and celebrate

The youth of St. Mary in Lakota, St. Lawrence O'Toole in Michigan and St. Joseph in Tolna had the wonderful grace of encountering Christ July 25 through 29 with Jeremy Mohler, Tara Splonskowski and Laura Schlosser in the Young Disciples Camp, sponsored by the diocesan apostolate of Young Disciples.

From the very first, this blessing was apparent. At Mass on the first day, when the pastor, Father John Aerts, was presenting the witness of the Young Disciples during the homily, he asked the children attending, "Do you think Jesus wants you and everyone to become holy and witness Jesus to the world — to be young disciples?"

Two-year-old Landers, who was there with one of the camp's volunteers, directly blurted out "yup," to which everyone laughed as Father Aerts shared, "Yes, you see, as Jesus said, 'out of the mouths of babes,'" adding, "this wonderful grace is for you because Jesus needs you to be his young disciples in your families, parishes and communities, with all your friends. Our world needs this."

In this week, the children encountered the goal of discipleship with Christ and caught on right away. One young girl came politely to Father Aerts on break and asked if it would be OK if she could be a lector when she got into high school, as she would really like that! Father Aerts told her that would be great and there are other things she could do, too. This young disciple, Alexis Herda, then went around the desk, patted Father Aerts on the back and said, "Thank you Father Aerts, I very much appreciate your time."

On Thursday evening, the parishes came together to be with Jeremy, Tara and Laura in a potluck where they got to meet them again and to see firsthand some of the things they taught the children.

A couple of days later, to crown the week, the tri-parishes celebrated their annual Mass and picnic at Stump Lake on Sunday, July 31. Lectors and servers from the various parishes witnessed their ministries and the women from the three parishes shared their culinary talents while the men provided expert barbecuing for the hungry — having been satisfied in soul, they were now to be satisfied in body.

Various games were played and child-like exuberance on Stump Lake's swings and playground were also enjoyed. Father Aerts even tried to race the youth to be the first to touch the top of the metal canopy over the swings with their feet — but a young lady, Jennifer Schneibel, was the victor. The gentlemen will have to wait for next year for any hope of redemption. Some basketball games rounded off the rest of the day.