

## My Experience at Federation of North American Explorers Timberwolf Campout

I am a new leader to FNE and my two sons are Timberwolves in FNE program (boys age 8 to 12). Our family was drawn to FNE because it is a 100% Catholic program. We are still learning and experiencing the FNE program.

We recently attended a FNE Timberwolf camp out in Colorado. One of my sons was not excited to attend because he did not know anyone at the camp out. When we arrived, we were immediately welcomed by the leaders and the Timberwolf boys made my sons feel a part of their group. Shortly after arriving at campground, a mother who was camping next to us, was frantic about not locating her 2 year old son. The leaders and Timberwolves, stopped what they were doing and after a very short search the small child was located by the boys.

Next we went on a moderate 5 mile hike. During the rest breaks on the hike our leader (known as "Akela") discussed with the Timberwolves, about the sacrament of Penance, what is a sin, and why it is important for our Catholic faith. The boys had several good questions, and I was impressed of their knowledge and interest in the faith. On the way down from the hike, two hikers, stopped to ask for assistance, as one of them had recently cut himself. We stopped the bleeding, cleaned wound, and made sure wound was covered. It was not a really serious cut, but it was more than an average scratch or cut.

The boys had a great time and played several outdoor games. They started their own fires, and cooked over the fire with interesting meals, such as having an apple turnover for breakfast on a stick. We did other events like digging for fossils and learning about geology. They practiced and performed skits based on Jungle Book themes. We prayed together before meals and during evening campfire. The boys also learned about indulgences and the doors of mercy during this jubilee year.

We participated in the sacrament of Penance and to prayed the Rosary at a local Catholic church. Prior to attending the church, I wrote down the process of confession and the Act of Contrition prayer. I wanted to be ready if one of the boys had a question or needed help. While at the church, a man asked about the line for confession and said he had not participated in the sacrament in many years. I assured him that the line would go pretty fast and I was moved (by Holy Spirit) to talk with him. He was a Catholic who attended church regularly but had not received the grace of the sacrament in many years. He was between jobs and working on a certification program in the health care field. I gave him the notes I had created on how to participate in Confession. I encouraged him that I too had been away from the Sacrament for long time and that God is merciful and wanted to be reunited with him. I watched and prayed for this man as he waited anxiously in line. I would like to think seeing the Timberwolves in uniform and participating in the Sacrament gave him encouragement. He got up at one point, leaning toward the door to leave, but he finally did go into the confessional. I thought about Jesus rejoicing in heaven having a lost sheep return to him. This event puts the FNE motto into perspective. The goal of Explorers is "to save souls".

The following day we attended mass. Unknown to us, the Bishop of the dioceses was the celebrant of the Mass. For me it was a wonderful mass experience, witnessing how reverent the Timberwolves were at the mass. We received the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus on our knees and on our tongue. My boys and myself are thankful to have this experience to live and practice our Catholic faith with new friends who feel like new family members.