

Catholic teens travel to Toronto to see Pope

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A busload of teen-agers from St. Michael's Catholic Church in Cherokee Village embarked last week on a once-in-a-lifetime journey to see Pope John Paul II in Toronto July 28.

The group of 16 youths and four adult chaperones pulled out of a parking lot full of parents, friends and well wishers from St. Michael's after Father Kevin

Atunzu blessed their bus.

Rose Brandenburg, who is making the trip along with her husband, Bernie, said the youths will return changed from the event, World Youth Day.

"It's a pilgrimage," she said. "We are definitely hoping it will change their lives and renew their commitment to Christ. You can't go to something like this and not come back a better person."

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Photo/Goings

TORONTO BOUND: Youth from St. Michael's Catholic Church was good-bye just before leaving for Canada last Friday.

Pope

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She said the event is expected to draw around 1 million youths from around the world.

The group will camp three nights on the way to Toronto and two nights on the way back, with a stop at Niagra Falls.

The highlight of the event will be a papal mass celebrated on July 28, Brandenburg said.

The teen-agers have been preparing for the trip for two years. Preparations included painting the bus; orange and yellow flames stream from the wheelwells, and a blue silhouette of the pope is painted on the side.

A passenger van carrying the travelers' gear as well as tools and repair items will follow the bus.

The group from St. Michael's is the largest from Arkansas, Brandenburg said. The youths will also meet with Bishop of Little Rock Peter Sartain.