The Pope John Paul II High School College Model United Nations (UN) Team participated in the Arkansas Model UN Conference from November 20th to November 22nd, 2008. The team continued its winning ways, earning 18 awards and raising their six year total to 158 awards.

During the past six years, Pope John Paul II (JPII) students have participated in eighteen Model UN Conferences in Tennessee, Georgia, Kentucky, Arkansas, North Carolina, Florida, Illinois and as far away as Washington, DC, competing at the local, regional, and national level at such fine institutions as George Washington University, Vanderbilt University, Georgia Technical Institute, and the University of Illinois. The team has seen great success at these conferences, earning 140 awards or an average of almost eight awards per conference. This is impressive in an activity where schools routinely earn few or even no awards at a particular conference, something that JPII has managed to avoid.

“The secret to our success is that we come prepared and determined to focus on the issues at hand in each of our committees,” stated senior Hannah Rankin. “We have high expectations to not come home empty-handed and that is what keeps us winning.”
On November 20th, 40 JPII students traveled to Conway, Arkansas to participate in the 43rd Annual Arkansas Model UN Conference sponsored by the University of Central Arkansas, Hendrix College, and the University of Arkansas. This year’s conference included over 330 students from 24 high schools from Arkansas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Tennessee. The students were lead by College Model UN Advisor Mr. Paul Saboe, parent chaperone Mrs. Arleen Zola, and Head Delegates Emily Bruchas (Comoros), Stephanie Kerrigan (Iran), Justin Hickerson (Kuwait), Ally Harpootlian (Lebanon), Reed Gonzalez (Morocco), Andreas Bunjor (Sudan), and Andrew Jefferies (United Arab Emirates). This group included 15 students who were new to the College Model UN Team and four who served as Pages.

The Arkansas Model UN Conference is one of hundreds of conferences sponsored throughout the United States and the world that enables students to experience a simulation of the United Nations. However, the Arkansas Conference is special among the conferences the JPII students participate in for several reasons. First, it is the first conference they ever attended and their first introduction to the Model UN world of diplomacy and debate. Second, during the 2005 Conference, the JPII students earned 18 awards, more than any other school. During the 2004 Conference, the JPII students topped themselves again by garnering 21 awards, including several of the most prestigious awards. Finally, this year’s conference marked the six year anniversary of the JPII team’s first attendance at a Model UN conference and the team wanted to mark the occasion by reaching or surpassing 150 awards.

During the two-day conference, the students simulated several UN Committees, including the International Court of Justice and the Special Political Committee, and also the Arab League. Through these experiences, the students gained the opportunity to become working diplomats and to learn from students from the surrounding states. In addition, the JPII students were actively involved in their committees, helping to write and sponsor 10 resolutions or 50% of the resolutions that were passed by their respective committees during the conference. Nick Cherry, Wilhelm Bunjor, Stephanie Kerrigan, Devin Patel, Andreas Bunjor, Ian Reding, Tommy Joe Bednar, and Ally Harpootlian all saw one or more of their resolutions approved by their fellow delegates.

“It is an amazing feeling to see a resolution that has been the subject of much debate and collaboration to be voted on and approved by your fellow delegates,” said sophomore Tommy Joe Bednar.

For the fifth year in a row, a JPII student was elected to serve as President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). This is the fifth year that the ICJ was simulated and senior Margaret Noah (Sierra Leone) was elected President to help the court preside over three cases. In addition, freshmen Schyler Cox (Morocco) was elected Vice President of the ICJ during her first College Model UN conference.

"I was extremely honored to serve my committee as President of the ICJ,” said Margaret Noah. “I feel like we all contributed and had fun and I am happy to have been a part of this experience.” After participating in the final committee sessions on Saturday, November 22nd, the JPII students went into the Awards Ceremony with high expectations. Those expectations were realized when the students received 18 awards, the third highest awards amount among the schools participating in the conference.

Pope John Paul II received three awards for Best Position Papers. JPII Countries recognized for this achievement included Sudan (Head Delegate Andreas Bunjor, Sarah Missimer, Ian Reding, Emily Garretson, and Tommy Joe Bednar), Iran (Head Delegate Stephanie Kerrigan,
Julia Ross, Nick Cherry, and Sarah Tompkins), and Kuwait (Head Delegate Justin Hickerson, Hannah Rankin, Margaret Ross, Kayce Resha, and Joseph Griggs).

Two students were selected by their fellow committee members for the prestigious award of Rappoteur or Best Delegate, Nick Cherry (Iran) for the Special Political Committee and Tommy Joe Bednar (Sudan) for the Model Arab League. These students accounted for two of the nine students recognized at the conference with this honor, tied for the most among the participating schools. Each received a special engraved gavel and gave a report before the entire General Assembly regarding their committee's progress during the conference.

“The conference was a creative and exemplary culmination of all my time with College Model UN, resulting in my accomplishing a major goal, to be Rappotuer at AMUN,” commented senior Nick Cherry.

Numerous students were recognized individually for their public speaking skills by the conference administrators. Julia Ross, Nick Cherry, and Tommy Joe Bednar earned Outstanding Delegate Awards while Wilhelm Bunjor, Andreas Bunjor, Stephanie Kerrigan, Reed Gonzalez, Margaret Noah, Schyler Cox, and Devin Patel accounted for JPII’s seven Outstanding Delegate Honorable Mention Awards.

In addition, Pope John Paul II earned an Honorable Mention Best Delegation Award for Sudan (Head Delegate Andreas Bunjor, Sarah Missimer, Ian Reding, Emily Garretson, and Tommy Joe Bednar), Iran (Head Delegate Stephanie Kerrigan, Julia Ross, Nick Cherry, and Sarah Tompkins), and United Arab Emirates (Head Delegate Andrew Jeffries, Jessica Roettger, Wilhelm Bunjor, Devin Patel, and Will Vanderslice). These awards are given to the delegations that best represented the character of their country in all aspects of the conference activities.

Overall, 22 of JPII’s 36 delegates or 61% received one or more awards at this conference. In addition, Nick Cherry and Tommy Joe Bednar each won four awards at the conference for Rappotuer, Outstanding Delegate, Position Paper, and Honorable Mention Best Delegation, the most awards possible for an individual. Overall, 254 JPII students, including 110 current students, have now attended nineteen College Model UN Conferences, earning 158 awards in six year's time.