

Forum Internacional
de Acción Católica

International Forum
of Catholic Action

Forum Internazionale
di Azione Cattolica

NOTICIAS NEWSLETTER NOTIZIE

Numero

2009/1

Youth Coordination (2008-2009)

Dear friends,

I am pleased to inform you that since the CA Youth Pilgrimage in the Holy Land, between the 28th December 2007 and the 6th January 2008, so many things have happened. During these last two years, we have kept up our friendship with our friends in the Holy Land. We have done this through twinnings with CA groups in different countries and through conjoint voluntary work and formation programmes. We have also given our support in the organization of the collection for the Holy Land which is held universally. Young people from the Holy Land have also participated in our summer activities. We are now working on a project, which will include all the different initiatives undertaken in this area and which will be more structured. This will embrace other associations and foundations which work for and with the Christians in the Holy Land.

The Youth Coordination Group and the IFCA Secretariat met twice: in March and October 2009. These two meetings were attended by CA young members from 14 countries. Those who attended shared their experiences of exchanges and information about CA and its characteristics in their respective countries. They also spoke about centres of spirituality, formation meetings with theologians, writers and United Nations officials, preparations for the forthcoming WYD in Madrid and plans for the coming Youth Coordination activities.

We hope to meet you all in 2010 during the different IFCA Continental Meetings!

Chiara Finocchietti
IFCA Youth Coordination

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About the international Pilgrimage to Holy Land (28.12.07 - 6.1.08)

150 young catholic action members and leaders from 26 different countries went on a pilgrimage to the holy land from the 28 december 2007 to the 6 january 2008.

A dream, which started in cologne during the wyd 2005, came true: the pilgrims wanted to go through an intensive experience of faith and of being a church, by following the steps taken by jesus. they wanted to visit the holy places with the young people and the pastors of the christian communities who are presently living there. they also wanted to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the setting up of the world day of peace, celebrated on the 1st january, in Jerusalem.

Forty years ago, on the occasion of the world day of peace, paul vi sent a group of young members from the ica to Bethlehem.

He asked them to take the lamp of peace and place it in the grotto. likewise, this year, young ca members from all over the world, went together to Jerusalem as witnesses of peace and unity.

The young pilgrims were welcomed at the bethlehem catholic action centre, in the parishes in jerusalem and in families in nazareth. the spirit of friendship and fraternity which prevailed made them all feel very much at home.

The days were very full. there were visits to holy places and meetings with the christians living there and their pastors. the holy sepulchre was visited every time the group went to jerusalem until the 1st january in the early morning. the young pilgrims could pray in silence at the golgoltha and at the place of the resurrection.

The special characteristic of this journey was the opportunity which the young pilgrims had of mixing with the christian population of the holy land thus building bridges of hope in a land marked by the constant building of walls and divisions. the bond of friendship was strengthened even more as some young people from bethlehem, jerusalem, taybeh, haifa and nazareth joined the international pilgrims on this pilgrimage. they also met people, mostly religious men and women, in houses of spirituality and solidarity in bethlehem as well as in Nazareth.

Through this direct contact, the pilgrims could get a first hand experience of what the patriarch said when he addressed them:

"we are two peoples, three great religions and god has gathered us here together.

This land does not belong to anyone in particular. Today, the lack of freedom of movement makes everyone lose hope but we should still believe in peace".

The custodian of the holy land, p. pierbattista pizzaballa said: "here, the need for dialogue is felt even more strongly especially between jews and christians as here, one must remember, the division has an institutional dimension. there is then the question of ecumenical relationships, where very often the problem concerns 'joint ownership' more than the church itself. the differences concern the management of holy places.

This does not mean that one should stop all dialogue, rather we should persevere in it.

Undoubtedly, the most impressive moment was the 1st of january in jerusalem during the eucharistic celebration presided over by patriarch sabbah. when addressing the young people he said: "dear young people, be great, like jesus and not like the worldly so-called great, because you have to serve others before yourselves". He then presented a young representative, of every country present, a hand-made ceramic lamp of peace, in the shape of a dove, produced by a local christian cooperative.

H.E. Mgr. Domenico Sigalini, bishop general assistant of the italian catholic action and bishop of palestrina, together with 15 priests from different countries accompanied the pilgrims. On the 31st december, he presided over the eucharistic celebration, with the singing of the te deum, in the latin parish of saint catherine in bethlehem and on the 2nd january in jericho.

daniel attinger, a monk from bose, who lives in jerusalem, conducted the daily meditation with a reflection on the incarnation.

Each young pilgrim will surely treasure for a long time the beauty of the places where Jesus walked with his disciples, the streets of Galilee and Judaea and Jerusalem. He will long remember the beaming faces of the persons he met, especially in the small christian communities. they are definitely a precious sign of peace and of gospel witnessing.

In the name of christ, who became man in that land and who rose from the dead for all humanity, we have gone there with a great desire to build bridges and have come back with an even greater conviction to do so.

With simplicity and hope, humility and courage and looking beyond the walls, let us go on with our efforts to sow friendship and fraternity.

This is also shown in the pilgrimage's logo. The lines, which depict the colours of the flags of israel, palestine and the vatican, intertwine in such a way as to form a bridge with a swing towards peace and justice.

And now our journey goes on in our parish and diocese but with a greater responsibility towards those who live in the holy land, a better disposition to organize meetings and exchanges and a deeper joy when we read, meditate and study the word of god.

Oana Tuduce Oradea - Rome 6 april 2008



Youth Coordination Meeting - March 2009

Participants

| | | |
|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| Yvonne | Ndayikeza | Burundi |
| Salvator | Niciteretse | Burundi |
| Chiara | Finocchietti | Italy |
| Marco | Iasevoli | Italy |
| Marco | Sposito | Italy |
| Joe | Teuma | Malta |
| Marvic | De Bono | Malta |
| Dulce | Rivera | Mexico |
| Zuzanna | Karmanska | Poland |
| Oana | Tuduce | Romania |
| Codruta | Fernea | Romania |
| don Iuliu | Muntean | Romania |
| Maria | Palau Melet | Spain |
| Elio | Moran Villalobos | Venezuela |

Programme

14 March

The participants attended the course at the Pontifical Gregorian University organized by the International Forum of Catholic Action and the Italian Catholic Action in collaboration with the Christian Life Community under the patronage of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. The course started this semester.

The programme included a theological debate on the laity based on *Christifideles Laici*. Prof. Marco Vergottini and Prof. Stella Morra were the lecturers.

The afternoon was free. In the evening, the participants joined the National Council of the Italian Catholic Action for Vespers.

15 March

This was an intensive day. During the morning, Sandro Calvani UNICRI (UN agency) Director spoke about the contribution which Catholics can make to the governments of the world in the context of the current crisis.

During the afternoon, after the opening address of welcome by Emilio Inzaurraga, IFCA Coordinator, the members of the Secretariat and of the Youth Coordination Group had an interesting discussion with Sandro Calvani on the morning's presentation. This was in fact an in-depth study of aspects related with CA's main task, namely, formation.

Each country then made its presentation and this gave a clear picture of CA youth in the different parts of the world.

The evening ended with a short presentation given by Prof. Stella Morra about "the challenge of presenting CA: content, target audiences, language used and communication aids".

16 March

During the morning the participants paid a visit to the Pontifical Council for Lay where they were received by the Secretary, Bishop Msgr. Josef Clemens, the Under-Secretary Prof. Guzmán Carriquiry and Fr. Eric Jacquinet, responsible for the youth sector.

A working session with Fr. Eric Jacquinet followed. Each country gave a short presentation about the challenges which their youth have to face and what the Church and

Catholic Action in their country can offer. A general outline of their Formative Projects was presented.

As a follow-up of the work carried out on Sunday and the presentations given in the morning, during the afternoon we split up into two working groups and worked on two projects: a project for the Holy Land and a project for the promotion of CA among youth. We discussed the involvement of CA Youth in the preparations for WYD 2011 which is being held in Madrid. We proposed to draw up a preparatory itinerary and to organize a meeting for CA youth who will be in Madrid for the WYD 2011.

We also discussed the possibility of creating a video about CA Youth in the different parts of the world and of organizing a meeting for CA youth every 2 or 3 years.

The Youth in Action Project, which was planned during the January meeting and which could be a resource for the next meeting, was presented.

17 March

During the morning the two working groups carried on with their work at the IFCA Central Office in Via della Conciliazione 1.

The group which worked on projects for the Holy Land presented a concrete plan, developed by IFCA and CA Italy. A copy of the plan is attached. The first proposal was to support the collection for the Holy Land which takes place each year on Good Friday. A poster with an appropriate text was prepared. Another proposal was to do something on the occasion of the Pope Benedict XVI's visit in the Holy Land (8-15 May). It was agreed that a message of support is to be sent and that an appeal is to be sent to CA in the different countries to organize prayers at local level.

In the group which worked on the promotion of CA among youth, it was decided to prepare material which answers to the following questions: Who are CA youth? For whom is CA? Why is CA a good proposal? What do we do in CA? Where does CA stem from?

We all agreed about the importance of sustaining CA at parish, diocesan, national and international level. To support this idea it was proposed to create a spot (a sort of advertisement) which breaks the already existent stereotyped concepts.

The group also proposed to use the website and to issue a newsletter, which will be published every three months and which will include different initiatives at local and national level. It was also proposed that there has to be someone or a group which caters for CA at international level.

Another task was the finalization of the project Youth in Action which is to be submitted to the National Agency by the Italian CA by the 1st April. In this project Spain, Malta and Romania agreed to work with Poland and Bulgaria.

At noon the participants attended a meeting with Card. Leonardo Sandri, the Prefect of the Congregation for Oriental Churches including the Holy Land. So the group presented him with the projects concerning the HL.

In the afternoon the conclusions of the meeting were drawn up and presented during a meeting with the members of the Secretariat.

The priorities for the Youth Coordination Group are:

- The drawing up of the poster to support the Collection for the HL which is held on Good Friday.
- The setting up of a discussion group which will help to facilitate communication among the participants
- The preparation of a message of support for the Pope's visit to the Holy Land.
- The finalization of the project Youth in Action and its submission by the 1st April.
- The preparation of CA promotion material aimed at youth (power point or video)

The next Youth Coordination meeting is planned for October 2009

On the 19th we all participated together in a Holy Mass in the church of San Paolo alla Regola. This church is found in Trastevere and was built on the site of the house where St. Paul lived as a prisoner.

Codruta Fernea
ACRO National Secretary

Sydney 2008 - Madrid 2011

International Meeting of WYD organizers
Pontifical Council for the Laity
Rome, 3 - 5 April 2009

The IFCA Youth Coordination Group took part in an international meeting for WYD organizers. This meeting offered all those who attended a splendid opportunity to appreciate the positive results of the WYD held in Sydney. The organizing committee of the WYD to be held in Madrid spoke about the pastoral, spiritual and organizational aspects of the 2011 WYD. We would like to invite National Associations to start preparing their young people for the coming WYD by using the material available on the following link, <http://www.laici.org/index.php?p=homegiovani>.

We would like to draw your attention to the interventions by (Fr. Eric, Fr. Salvatore (Burundi) and Joyce (Youth Desk Federation Asian Bishops' Conference).

Towards WYD 2011

We are starting to give you some guidelines regarding the preparations for the WYD in Madrid.

- a) CA Young members, as members of the local Churches, should participate in these World Youth Days, with their respective dioceses
- b) We are working on a space Infopoint Catholic Action on the IFCA website where you can find useful material and helpful information.
- c) We should stick to the information which we receive through our dioceses however, in the meantime, we could establish contact and twinnings with dioceses in Spain where CA is established. For indications and information about these dioceses, you may write to info@fiacifca.it
- d) Together with the Spanish CA young members we are thinking of organizing a short meeting for young CA members who will be in Madrid, just as we did on the occasion of the WYD in Cologne in 2005, before the start of the Catecheses.

Some Speeches: Fr Salvator Niciteretse, Joy Candelario, Fr. Eric Jacquinet - pag. 17-35.

Summer in Holy Land 2009

IN BETHLEHEM

A. participation in the CHILDREN'S SUMMER in the Bethlehem Catholic Action Centre from the 21st June - 31st July 2009.

Raluca Fernea Gabriel Codrut Morariu CA youth from Cluj - Romania
Gabriele Pinca and Alessandra Perticoni 2 CA youth from Assisi - Italy
collaborated with the volunteers from the parish under the guidance of Vincenzo Bellomo, a Fidei Donum lay person, who drew up the programme, coordinated and animated the children's activities

B. service in the parish

Domenico Montenuro - young student from Basilicata studying in Rome
pilgrim in the Holy Land as part of the IFCA pilgrimage and was also in Bethlehem last August

FROM AC ROMANIA Volunteers in the Holy Land

Our experience in the Holy Land. Codrut Morariu and Raluca Fernea

Catholic Action of Bethlehem is organizing this month, a summer camp for the children of Bethlehem. Through the International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA) there were invited to participate some volunteers from differentes Catholic Actions in the world, out of which the Catholic Action of Romania.

Young people from the Catholic Action of Romania had the opportunity to meet young people from the Catholic Action Bethlehem during the international pilgrimage in the Holy Land (8 December 2007-6 January 2008). As a continuation of that pilgrimage and the contacts made with the Catholic Action of the Holy Land are these activities carried out together.

Two persons representing the Catholic Action of Romania, Raluca Fernea and Codrut Morariu gave their disponibility to participate at this summer experience.

Here are some impressions after the first week of activities:

After a 3-hour flight, started in Romania, a night landing in Tel Aviv, we opened a gate to a world full of charm and contradictions, where the answers always raise new questions. Occurrence of the day and a strong sun brightness revealed a barren ground, but covered with vegetation, whose source of water it launches another theme of thought. I realized that the will of God has guided us in these lands, roads once travelled by the steps of Mary and Joseph, hearing - like a bridge over time - words of the Scripture: "And the word was made flesh and lived among us".

Entering into the Church Nativity I felt it as an accomplishment, as a watering of the soul at the wellspring of the faith in the light of the Star that sunrise on the humanity's sky. Aware of the power of prayer without limits, we brought in our hearts feelings of people you carry in the soul and mind; rising to the heavens as thanks for what mission he was entrusted.

Help us, Lord, not to deviate from the path you have prepared for us, and that we can be light that come to confess, with hearts penetrated of fire that we love you.

Under the motto, "Go to your homes and tell them all that the Lord has done for you", a summer camp was organized by the Catholic Action of Bethlehem that gathered daily activities for over 100 children.

Split into teams, 3 age groups, participants take the shirts of different colours, bearing the name of three saints: the smaller, blue, apprentices' of St. Francis. Group two, yellow, apprentices' of St. Joseph, and the largest in gray are apprentices' of St. Anthony.

After the Morning Prayer and the games and energizers, the volunteers help teams to accompany children to activities on the workshops: religion, music, practical skills and dynamic games. There are special workshops for viewing movies or games in the pool.

Initially little timid, then increasingly active, we realized our role in these activities, intervening when necessary to boost the participants in this campus, through games, songs and banes, or by suggesting ideas and conducting workshops.

Children's activities are held from 8 - 12.30, but volunteers continue to work each evening by providing spatial and logistics required organising activities for families: bingo, watching movies, shows, and party nights at the pool or sports.

The day of Saturday was allocated to travel by Bethlehem on the route once traveled by the steps of Mary and St. Joseph in fulfillment of their destiny: the Nativity Church, Milk Grotto, and Field of the shepherds. Children and volunteers have come along the road of history, living with this thought pushed towards a better future.

Youth Coordination Meeting - October 2009

SEMINAR

Hand in Hand We Stand

Rome, 17th -22nd October 2009

PROGRAMME

SATURDAY 17

- h. 10 Secretariat is working
- h. 13 lunch
- h. 15.30 INTRODUCTION
Going through programme
Icebreaking games
- h. 18 Presentation of organizations.
Building blocks
- h. 20 dinner
- h. 21.30 Eurotaste
More acquaintances with ICA
Youth from Rome and from different regions in Italy

SUNDAY 18

- h. 8.30 Breakfast
- h. 10 SESSION
MY Y/OURope - workshop
- h. 13 lunch
- h. 16 SESSION
Piero Pisarra Paris - Journalist, writer
This is MY SHARE
The European Youth Pact
- h. 20 dinner
free evening

MONDAY 19

- h. 8.30 Breakfast
- h. 9.30 SESSION
Meeting with Father Eric Jacquinet - PCL Youth Section

- h. 13 lunch
- h. 15.30 SESSION
Hi...I'm YiA
- h. 17 SEMINAR Justice Peace and Reconciliation in Africa
- h. 20 dinner
- h. 21 AFRICAN MUSIC

TUESDAY 20

- h. 8.30 Colazione
- h. 9.30 SESSION
Project Management
- h. 13 lunch
- h. 16 SESSION
Leaders in Action
- h. 20 dinner
- h. 21.30 Visit the city

WEDNESDAY 21

- h. 8.30 Colazione
- h. 9.30 SESSION
Go Concrete
- h. 13 lunch
- h. 16 SESSION
Mirror Exercise
- h. 20 dinner
Farewell party

THURSDAY

- h. 22 departures

RELIGIOUS PROGRAMME

- 17
- h. 15 opening prayer
- 18 - 19- 20 - 21
- h. 8 Holy Mass

The meeting, organized by the Youth Coordination Group from the 17-22 October in Rome, was attended by young people from 6 European countries (through EU funding) and some young priests and lay leaders from Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Argentina, Myanmar and Jerusalem.

They worked on four projects, which indicate four main areas where CA young members all over the world will be focusing their attention:

1. A programme for the preparation of CA young members for the WYD in Madrid
2. A meeting on the Ecumenical Prayer for Peace
3. A formation session for Justice and Peace
4. Support, through voluntary work, to the Holy Land

On the IFCA website, on the pages dedicated to Youth Coordination, you can find a summary of the workshops and the 4 projects

Countries of the Participants on March and October 2009 Meetings

1. Argentina
2. Burundi
3. Italia
4. Myanmar
5. Polonia
6. Bulgaria
7. Kenya
8. Malta
9. Messico
10. Romania
11. Rwanda
12. Spagna
13. Terra Santa
14. Venezuela

(IFCA SECRETARIAT 2008-2012)

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Soon, the IFCA website <http://www.fiacifca.org/> Youth Coordination Section could become a CA Youth site on condition that... we get everybody's cooperation!

Send us reports about your activities in your native language AND in English and/or Spanish and /or French. Send us also CD DVD with photos or short videos for the photo gallery, in view of a possibility of getting some space on the You Tube.



MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE WORLD ON THE OCCASION OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH WORLD YOUTH DAY 2009

"We have set our hope on the living God" (1Tim 4:10)

My dear friends,

(...) I recall with deep gratitude to the Lord the meeting held in Sydney in July last year. It was a most memorable encounter, during which the Holy Spirit renewed the lives of countless young people who had come together from all over the world. The joy of celebration and spiritual enthusiasm experienced during those few days was an eloquent sign of the presence of the Spirit of Christ. Now we are journeying towards the international gathering due to take place in Madrid in 2011, which will have as its theme the words of the Apostle Paul: "Rooted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith" (cf. Col 2:7). As we look forward to that global youth meeting, let us undertake a path of preparation together. We take as our text for the year 2009 a saying of Saint Paul: "We have set our hope on the living God" (1 Tim 4:10), while in 2010 we will reflect on the question put to Jesus by the rich young man: "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk 10:17)

Youth, a time of hope

In Sydney, our attention was focussed upon what the Holy Spirit is saying to believers today, and in particular to you, my dear young people. During the closing Mass, I urged you to let yourselves be shaped by him in order to be messengers of divine love, capable of building a future of hope for all humanity. The question of hope is truly central to our lives as human beings and our mission as Christians, especially in these times. We are all aware of the need for hope, not just any kind of hope, but a firm and reliable hope, as I wanted to emphasize in the Encyclical *Spe Salvi*. Youth is a special time of hope because it looks to the future with a whole range of expectations. When we are young we cherish ideals, dreams and plans. Youth is the time when decisive choices concerning the rest of our lives come to fruition. Perhaps this is why it is the time of life when fundamental questions assert themselves strongly: Why am I here on earth? What is the meaning of life? What will my life be

like? And again: How can I attain happiness? Why is there suffering, illness and death? What lies beyond death? These are questions that become insistent when we are faced with obstacles that sometimes seem insurmountable: difficulties with studies, unemployment, family arguments, crises in friendships or in building good loving relationships, illness or disability, lack of adequate resources as a result of the present widespread economic and social crisis. We then ask ourselves: where can I obtain and how can I keep alive the flame of hope burning in my heart?

In search of "the great hope"

Experience shows that personal qualities and material goods are not enough to guarantee the hope which the human spirit is constantly seeking. As I wrote in the Encyclical *Spe Salvi*, politics, science, technology, economics and all other material resources are not of themselves sufficient to provide the great hope to which we all aspire. This hope "can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain" (no. 31). This is why one of the main consequences of ignoring God is the evident loss of direction that marks our societies, resulting in loneliness and violence, discontent and loss of confidence that can often lead to despair. (...) But how can we speak of this hope to those young people? We know that it is in God alone that a human person finds true fulfilment. The main task for us all is that of a new evangelization aimed at helping younger generations to rediscover the true face of God, who is Love. To you young people, who are in search of a firm hope, I address the very words that Saint Paul wrote to the persecuted Christians in Rome at that time: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:13). During this Jubilee Year dedicated to the Apostle of the Gentiles on the occasion of the two thousandth anniversary of his birth, let us learn from him how to become credible witnesses of Christian hope. (...)

Rome, 22nd February 2009

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Some Speeches during the PCL international Meeting

Rome, 3 - 5 April 2009

The impact of WYD in Burundi

Abbé Salvator Niciteretse
Secrétaire de la Commission Episcopale pour L'apostolat des Laïcs (CEAL)
Conférence des Evêques Catholiques du Burundi

FORUMS AND GATHERINGS OF YOUNG PEOPLE THAT ARE INSPIRED BY WYD AND ARE THE RESULTS OF WYD

We shall deal here with forums and gatherings of young people at parish, diocesan, national and regional levels that were supported by the Episcopal Commission for Lay Apostolate in collaboration with the diocesan commissions for lay apostolate. We shall also speak about the pilgrimage of the WYD Cross in Burundi and about the Burundi National Youth Cross, and we shall conclude with the impact of WYD on Burundi.

I. PARISH AND DIOCESAN FORUMS AND YOUTH GATHERINGS

The first national forum in Burundi took place in August 2005 at the same time as WYD was taking place in Cologne. However, there had previously been forums in the diocese of Bujumbura since 2003 with the support of the Emmanuel Community. Since that time there has been an annual national forum as well as several parish, vicariate and diocesan forums and gatherings. For the national forums we invite representatives from neighbouring countries like Rwanda, RDC and Tanzania. Sometimes representatives come from western countries. Since 2006 we have had at least three forums per year of three to five days duration in each diocese. Some dioceses like the Archdiocese of Gitega have had up to seven forums each year, and this does not include gatherings organised in the parishes. These forums and gatherings take place in a climate of faith, prayer and devotion.

Huge numbers of young people join these gatherings. For the year 2008 the total number who have taken part in one-day gatherings throughout the country amounts to over 200,000 young people, and the forums of three to five days have been attended by around 70,000. These figures refer to the gatherings and forums that have involved the Episcopal Commission for Lay Apostolate which has given financial support and some of the talks. There have been several parish forums and youth gatherings organised without the assistance of the CEAL.

Most of these young people are members of Catholic Action movements and others are from the new communities. They contribute generously and voluntarily to the organisation of these forums, and then they in turn organise them in parishes and attract thousands of young people.

We would also like to emphasise that in all these forums, our bishop pastors and numerous priests and religious are always present to accompany the youth with spiritual and moral help and to give them catechesis. The presence of the Apostolic Nuncio at the forums contributes to the dimension of the universal Church and encourages our youth.

We would also like to point out that the International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA) has supported the CEAL in coordinating and training young people in Burundi, Rwanda and the Kivu Region of RDC. IFCA also helps us to better coordinate them for all-round training that will help them to become more involved in pastoral ministry.

II. THE WYD CROSS AND ICON OF OUR LADY IN BURUNDI FROM 19 OCTOBER TO 2 NOVEMBER 2006: greatest impact

These precious signs of our faith were expected to arrive at Bujumbura international airport on 19 October 2006 coming from Congo-Brazzaville. Unfortunately, they did not arrive until 23 October, and they had to leave on 2 November 2006.

In spite of this setback, the pilgrimage of the WYD Cross and Icon of Our Lady in Burundi saw a massive participation of Christians, particularly young people, during the pilgrimage throughout the dioceses of Burundi. Of a population of eight million of whom sixty-five per cent are Catholic, over 700,000 people welcomed these sacred symbols of our faith with great devotion. The veneration and respect shown by the Christians for the Cross and Icon as they passed was obvious to all. Some of them fell to their knees, others pressed forward in order to touch the Cross and Icon, reminding us of when Jesus was on the lake, on a mountain or in the villages and the people hastened to reach him in order to hear his words and to be healed by touching him.

Miracles took place. The rain fell continuously wherever the Cross went on this pilgrimage, yet there had been a lack of rain before that time. As the Cross passed by, some people were healed of their infirmities. Members of other religious confessions and other Christians joined with their Catholic neighbours to welcome and venerate the Cross and Icon of Our Lady. We noticed the presence of Muslims and Protestants.

The bishops, priests and religious welcomed the Cross and Icon with devotion and faith. They spent days and nights with the people praying. This can be said also for the priests and the team of six people who accompanied the Cross throughout the country. The priests sometimes heard confessions until four o'clock in the morning.

The Cross and Icon were generally well received in Burundi. This pilgrimage renewed and reaffirmed the faith of the Christians of Burundi in general and of the youth in particular. Continuity was provided by the Burundi National Youth Cross that was blessed by our bishops on 17 August 2007 in Ngozi. That pilgrimage was certainly of huge impact in affirming the faith of the Christians of Burundi and in particular of the young people.

III. PILGRIMAGE OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH CROSS IN THE DIOCESE OF NGOZI: continuing the impact of the WYD Cross

The National Youth Cross of Burundi that was blessed by our Bishop pastors on 17 August 2007 at the third National Youth Forum in Ngozi went on a year-long pilgrimage throughout the diocese of Ngozi. It passed through all the parishes and ecclesial communities before being passed on to the diocese of Muyinga.

The words of the Bishops of Burundi delivered during the blessing of this Cross are written on the plaque: "Dear young people, receive this Cross as a sign of God's love for humanity and as a sign of unity and reconciliation as Christ commanded us".

As in the pilgrimage of the WYD Cross, each community celebrates with a solemn Mass of the Glorious Cross, adoration of the Cross, the Way of the Cross, Marian prayer, prayer vigils until dawn (1500 to 2000 people) and confessions.

Catechesis on the meaning of the Cross are given before, during and after the pilgrimage of the National Cross. This pilgrimage certainly brings about many spiritual benefits. Over 182,620 people from different parishes and areas took part with faith and devotion at the various welcome ceremonies for the National Cross in 2008 in the diocese of Ngozi.

Other consequences of the WYD Cross visit to Burundi

- These youth forums and gatherings help to refocus the faith and lives of young people on the person of Jesus Christ who reconciles us while he hangs from the Cross and makes us brothers and sisters. For this purpose there is a pilgrimage of thousands of young people with the National Youth Cross and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the night that concludes with Mass. The faith of young people, currently threatened by the proliferation of sects and the rapid expansion of Islam, is given new strength.
- The utopia of universal fellowship can be felt: young people from different ethnic groups are hosted with families they do not know. At the beginning they are afraid they will be killed, but after three or five days, they become friends of these host families. Youth networks for peace are started with young people in other dioceses or in neighbouring countries.
- The desire to experience the joy of faith: Young people experience the joy of faith during youth forums and gatherings. For this reason many parishes ask for these events to take place in their areas.
- Youth engagement: Young people strive for a culture of peace, reconciliation and forgiveness in a country where the social fabric has been torn by war and ethnic, regional and political rivalries. When the young people in the Catholic Action and spirituality movements are given responsibility and become more active in their parishes and Church groups, they begin to take responsibility for many youth activities.
- A youth network in the sub-region: A youth network is being set up to foster a mature and responsible faith and a culture of peace and reconciliation between Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is for this purpose that the youth of these three countries invite each other to their forums in order to exchange experiences of faith and look at the challenges that stand in the way of peace and reconciliation or that erode human dignity in the sub-region. From 29 July to 3 August 2009 a similar forum will take place in Bujumbura if the means allow.

I cannot conclude this talk without paying tribute to the wonderful response of the young people

and their spirit of sacrifice and self-giving for the sake of others. I also wish to point out that our bishops show great interest in these forums. They remain the activities organised each day. We are very grateful to the International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA), Catholic Action in Spain, the Fund for Evangelisation in Spain and the Episcopal Commission for Lay Apostolate in France who have supported us financially as well as in organisation. As long as parallel WYDs are not organised in Africa, African participation will be limited for financial reasons, and also on account of those young people who do not want to return to their country of origin because they are in search of a better future.

May Pope Jean Paul II, founder of WYDs, be canonised!

The impact of WYD in Asia

Joy Candelario

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FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences)-OLF-YOUTH DESK

A. ASIAN YOUTH STORIES

The Union of Catholic Asian News faithfully covered the World Youth Day in Sydney through various interviews, news updates and opinion articles on the event and with the young Asians as their primary subjects. Let us take a look at some reflections they have of the WYD.

I have learned the importance of unity and reconciliation, and that has made me feel more confident and motivated, said Shahzad, who lives in Hyderabad, 150 kilometers northeast of Karachi (Pakistan). In his view, such activities are needed for Christian youths "living silently" in this Muslim-majority country.

Deviana Wijaya of Bandung diocese in West Java, Indonesia told UCANews on August 2, *One big lesson I have taken from WYD is about giving. We should just give and give, and never think of what we'll get back. He also said WYD really gave me a strong impression of togetherness, peace and solidarity.*

Hin Rothana, of St. Joseph Parish in Phnom Penh, Cambodia: *I cannot speak English,* he admitted, but added he made many new friends through holy language. The youth said he appreciated the music during the WYD events. *I didn't understand the lyrics, but listening to the music made me fall silent in the heart even though there were thousands of young people around me.*

As I had scrawled on a pilgrims' wall just a few days previously: We have come from Singapore to meet Jesus! And there, in the Blessed Sacrament, I met Jesus. And I understood that had I not had such a terribly disappointing day, I would not have been able to experience the God of comfort in such a wonderful way.

I have seen mutual international friendship. It strengthens my faith. Our host families were lovely. They treat

us as if we were their children, added Busaraphan Bootsala, a young man from Chiang Mai province, northern Thailand.

The experience urged me to lead a life in the spirit and try to be a witness to Christ, Adrian Ho said. Already an altar server at Blessed Sacrament Church in Kuching, eastern Malaysia, Adrian said he is now motivated to become a lector and take an active role in the parish youth ministry.

Sirikunya Makullawanichnun, 34, said seeing a group of tribal youths receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation impressed her most as Thai youth coordinator. *Some said they hadn't received the sacrament for five years. Most of them had forgotten how to confess.*

However, the Holy Spirit changed that and kindled in them the fire of God's love, she recalled.

These stories suggest the impact World Youth Day has created among Asian young Catholics. In a discussion with fourteen (14) heads of youth commissions within Asia, these heads shared that youth delegates from their countries found the event significant for many reasons:

a. It provides an experience of the universal church.

With only 3% Christians in this most populated region in the world, the WYD helps young Asians experience what it is to belong to the Catholic community. Celebrating the Mass in a language not their own, praying with people from all over the world, listening to the same truth spoken to them in catechism but presented in different approaches, they realize that they are not alone in living the faith. They are with millions of others who center their life in Jesus.

b. It helps them to celebrate and enjoy their young life as Catholics.

Especially for young Asians coming from countries with socialist governments and places where poverty and strife are ordinary realities of life, the WYD gives them time to celebrate and appreciate the gift of being young. With youthful music, song, dance, and other lively elements expressed in the various WYD events, they are encouraged to appreciate their giftedness and explore possibilities for growth around them. Their encounters with counterparts from all over the world enable them not only to see the world in a different way, but also to appreciate more the basic essentials in life.

c. It develops community spirit among them.

Journeying as one delegation, sharing stories, going through struggle and pains and dreaming together, they become a church – a small community desiring to see God in others and in themselves. In the process, leadership capacities are also enhanced. This makes for fertile ground for deeper ministry for the young.

d. It renews them in their faith: discovering Jesus and the Church.

The experience is life-changing to young Asians. The formative experiences as well as the spaces for

contemplation and communal worship help them grow in faith and to understand it better. Coming back, they feel empowered to share their faith and to live it radically. Many of them volunteer their services to the parish, while still others discover their vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life.

B. ASIAN CHURCH AND YOUTH MINISTRY

Most Catholic churches in Asia have already developed their own structure to care for the needs of their young populace. While some countries like India, the Philippines, and even Indonesia have a very clear and systematic structure for their youth ministries, many, like Laos, Mongolia and Cambodia, are still young as their local churches are also slowly emerging. Yet, despite these diversities, it is interesting to note that most of these countries organize a contingent for the WYD.

Mongolia, for instance, sent fifteen (15) young people out of only five hundred twenty-five (525) Catholics throughout the country. It might even be the most well represented Catholic church in Sydney! Vietnam had more than three hundred (300) delegates in the recent WYD, a far cry from its very small contingent in the past.

a. WYD, a major youth ministry event

Youth commissions also take the WYD as a major event in their youth calendar. Through the years, they have developed their own mechanism to make the tedious process of organizing effective and efficient. Some commissions, like Hong Kong, create a separate committee and employ personnel to handle the process of promotion, screening of delegates, and coordinating WYD-related activities with them. Dioceses are also given the proper orientation for endorsing delegates so they are screened from the parish up to the national level. In the aspect of finance, despite the economic realities in our region, it is amazing how countries are able to raise funds and how groups are willing to expend resources. In the Philippines, various creative approaches have been employed by would-be delegates to raise funds. From the classic solicitation letters and request for second collections in Masses, some young people also raise funds by organizing concerts, house to house serenading, crafts making, and others.

But there are also countries, Nepal, for instance, which chose not to send any official delegation.

According to a church official in the apostolic vicariate, *The Church in Nepal had given youths the opportunity to attend such events in the past, but the results were not satisfactory. He said he wanted the youths to attend such events and put into practice what they learned, but this has not happened so far here in Nepal.* The other reason for the Church not sending youths to WYD this year, he added, was that a Catholic youth from Nepal went missing during the last international WYD celebration, in Germany in 2005.

These sentiments are not isolated. Many youth ministers have also expressed the constant fear of

losing people in the WYD. This is especially true in Southeast and South Asia, where people have migrated to other countries for more financial stability. As the financial crisis looms all over the region, this occurrence will surely continue in the next WYDs.

At the same time, the huge amount needed to send each delegate is enough to finance several programs for young people in a diocese or a parish. While the spirit of solidarity and oneness achieved by the event is incomparable, there might be more pressing concerns in the local level which the young need to face.

b. Pre-WYD Programs

1. Catechesis

Pre-WYD formation programs are organized by most countries. This is a venue to prepare their delegates spiritually for the event. Thai youth, for example, have studied the WYD 2008 theme, learned about the 10 patron saints, and reflected on Pope Benedict XVI's message for the WYD 2008 as preparation. In other countries like India and the Philippines, pre-WYD programs are made available to dioceses so that it can be used for their local formation. Implementation, however, is left to the decision of the dioceses. In Shanghai, China, the diocese held its very first national youth day before the WYD in Sydney. Adopting the same theme of the WYD 2008, three hundred (300) youth, including some who are non-Catholics, gathered in Sacred Heart Parish for a whole day of prayer, teaching, and community building.

2. Celebration

Before the WYD 2008, some countries had the opportunity to have the WYD Cross and Icon of Our Lady go on pilgrimage in their dioceses. This became a spiritual experience not only for delegates but for the entire church. In Dili, where the WYD Cross and Icon stayed for four (4) days, about five thousand (5,000) people accompanied the Cross and Icon in the different parishes of Dili. This became a moment of solidarity for the church, as people prayed for forgiveness. Bishop da Silva said it is *time for young people to forgive each other, turn away from sin, in order to bring this country on the right path of development. According to the report, many young Catholics have admitted participation in crimes such as gang violence, theft and arson after a military mutiny was staged in April 2006.*

The same experience happened in Korea, the Philippines, and other Asian countries where the Cross and Icon went on pilgrimage.

3. Community Life

There are countries that also offer teambuilding experiences for their delegations, to help them to

relate with each other better during the WYD and after. Asian countries are typically multi-lingual and multi-racial. Preparing the delegates coming from different ethnicities is a pastoral challenge, but it is also an opportunity for community building.

In Sri Lanka, Tamil and Sinhalese delegates learned to share cultural differences, and came to a common vision for peace-building in their war-torn country. It is a great gift to get a general idea of the condition of Lankan youths, said Philip Sanjeeva Ranasinghe, 21, a Sinhalese student from Galle diocese. He said the group discussed the common ideas to share with the world youths. In addition to uniting in prayer, meditation and Mass, the youths practiced the Sinhalese Kandyan dance, the Tamil *Bharathanatyam* dance, and a common dance for members of both communities.

c. Post-WYD Programs

1. A Call to Action

The experience of WYD has encouraged some youth delegations towards a common response to action. Indonesia, which has experienced major calamities in the last couple of years, has pledged for environmental campaign even before the WYD. When they attended the Green World Youth Day campaign in Sydney, Indonesian delegates united in a common plan of action for environment when they return. *We need to launch a common movement, such as peaceful action against companies whose operations may destroy the environment, asserted an Indonesian young lady. For her own part, she said, I will ask young friends to care for the environment by collecting garbage and planting trees.*

Likewise, members of some youth movements (i.e. IYCS, IYCW, IMCS, and MIJARC) rooted in Asia responded to the call of the Spirit to become witnesses. They have committed themselves to six goals:

1. Be active in the struggle against hunger, poverty, discrimination and exclusion, and work toward a world of justice and peace.
2. Think and act responsibly in personal life and in community in support of the U.N. Millennium Goals.
3. Call upon young people to share experiences and energies in social, political and economic issues.
4. Call Church and civil society leaders to support and encourage young people in action to eradicate poverty, hunger.
5. Call Church leaders to witness to young people, of faith lived in actions of justice and equality.
6. Call civil society to hold governments accountable to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Vietnam and some other countries organized a collective response, such as going to rural places to share their lives with other young people, and also providing experiences for them.

Few however have reported having a comprehensive plan of action not only involving the delegates but the local church as well. Though as earlier reported, many youths commit themselves to work for

the Church, the WYD does not provide a scheme for the mission to be actualized. With the various challenges each region and country is facing, there is a need to enable the young to become aware of global and local issues, reflect on them in the light of the teachings of the Church, and respond together. This will enable them to dialogue with life and live their faith in the context of everyday realities.

2. WYD Reunions

After the WYD, delegates normally experience a special bond among co-pilgrims. Most countries reported that because of this, even without a structure, delegates create opportunities to continue the link and grow in relationship with their companions. Some have set up their own websites so that photos can be downloaded and personal reflections can be continually shared. Some have prayer gatherings and fellowships together.

However, these reunions seem short lived, since there is no structure and clear goal to achieve for the group. Besides, the group that is created cannot really survive, as young people come from different parts of the country.

If a parish community, however, has a structure where the youth delegate can be absorbed and where s/he can feel a sense of belonging, her/his experience of community will continue. While this happens in some instances, a youth ministry plan that is rooted in the realities of young people and the vision of the local church will make this possible.

In this regard, youth commissions, with all the youth ministers present in the WYD, should also be provided a means to reflect on the theme of the WYD in the level of ministry. Furthermore, some directives can be given so that what is taken up during these events will be helpful in the overall accompaniment the local church has for the young.

3. WYD Follow-up Sessions

After the WYD, many young pilgrims desire for a continuous experience, especially in the area of formation or catechesis.

Catechesis in the WYD ideally provides foundation in Scriptures and Church teachings, for young people to imbibe the chosen theme in their daily lives. Some bishop-catechists chosen for this purpose have helped many of our pilgrims to grow in their faith and thirst more for the truth. However, some pilgrims did not have the same experience with their bishop-catechists.

There is a need for catechesis to be more relevant to issues of the young, to be more youth-friendly and participatory. Likewise, issues like inter-religious dialogue, should find a space in catechesis.

Further, the team approach, employed by some catechesis animation teams from Asian countries with their bishop-catechists, proved helpful. Lay leaders animate the program with songs, games, sharing and creative prayer linked with the theme of the day, while the bishops provide the sound teaching.

Aside from producing the desired results, the medium, which is teamwork, becomes the message. An example for youth ministers to exemplify—youth ministry with, for and by the youth.

c. Summary

On the whole, the entire WYD journey provides the Asian church a framework by which the Church can minister to the young: journeying with the young through formation, community building, and mission, among many others.

However, if youth ministry is seen as a developmental ministry and not just as a one-shot event, it should be able to help in developing structures and strategies for youth commissions to take up the theme for on-going ministry in the local level.

If it is seen as a ministry of the church, it ought to touch base with reality, allowing the young to dialogue with global and local issues around them.

If youth ministry is pro-active and result-oriented, the WYD should enable delegations to move towards change, transforming their societies by their presence and contribution.

We hope for deeper dialogue and collaboration between the country host, the PCL and youth commissions so that the youth ministers themselves can be considered as the crucial link in making the vision of WYD operative not only in the days of the celebration but beyond.

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Points for reflection on WYD and youth ministry

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INTRODUCTION

What can we say about WYD?

What is the vocation of WYD?

Why do we organise such gatherings?

Where does WYD fit in the Church's youth ministry?

How does WYD reveal the Church's pastoral ministry with young people?

John Paul II and Benedict XVI provide us with elements that respond to these questions, and we draw them from their addresses given over the past 25 years. What do they tell us?

A. WHAT IS WYD?

1. John Paul II's prophetic insight

Benedict XVI regards WYD as a prophetic insight that came to John Paul II.

"... the establishment of World Youth Day, desired with prophetic insight by my unforgettable Predecessor (Benedict XVI, general audience after his return from Cologne, 24 August 2005).

2. Far more than solely an event!

WYD is often accused of being just an event that consumes lots of energy and means without contributing to renewal in the ordinary lives of young people in the Church. To this accusation Benedict XVI responds: *World Youth Day is much more than an event. It is a time of deep spiritual renewal, the fruits of which benefit the whole of society. Young pilgrims are filled with the desire to pray, to be nourished by Word and Sacrament, to be transformed by the Holy Spirit (Benedict XVI, general audience, 4 July 2007)*

3. The goal of WYD: to refocus young people's faith and life on the person of Jesus Christ

Ideas are regularly presented from all over to improve the content of WYD or to renew it. For example, people dream of WYD offering testimony of youth engagement on behalf of peace, or the defence of life, or for justice in the world, or for the fight against poverty and discrimination, or on behalf of ecology. It could also contribute in the area of ecumenism or interfaith dialogue. All of these objectives could be very useful, very important and very appropriate.

But is this the goal of WYD? What are the criteria for discernment in order to choose one pastoral aim or another?

In order to find criteria for discernment, we must look at the goal of WYD and its special charism.

John Paul II defined the goal of WYD thus:

The principal objective of World Youth Day is to focus the faith and life of every young person on the person of Jesus Christ so that Jesus may be their constant point of reference as well as the inspiration of every initiative and commitment for the education of the new generations. This is the 'maxim' of every Youth Day. Taken altogether throughout this decade, they have been an ongoing compelling call to build life and faith upon a rock, and that rock is Jesus Christ (John Paul II, letter on the occasion of a seminar on WYD, 8 May 1996).

4. Going forth together to meet Christ

Like his predecessor, Benedict XVI identifies WYD as a meeting with Christ:

The solemn World Youth Days are nothing if not the culmination of a long process in which the young people turn to one another and then, together, turn to Christ. In Australia it was not by chance that the Way of the Cross, winding through the city, became the high point of those days. Once again, it summed up everything that had occurred in previous years, while pointing to the One who gathers us together: to that God who loves us all the way to the Cross. Thus, the Pope himself is not the star around which everything revolves.

He is completely and solely a Vicar. He points beyond himself to the Other who is in our midst. In the end, the solemn liturgy is the centre of the whole event, because in it there takes place something that we ourselves cannot bring about, yet something for which we are always awaiting. Christ is present. He comes into our midst. The heavens are rent and the earth filled with light (Benedict XVI, address to the Roman Curia, 22 December 2008).

5. Sending young people forth on pilgrimage along the roads of the world

This meeting with Christ takes place during a pilgrimage, we are told by John Paul II:

Young people are therefore called periodically to set out on pilgrimage along the roads of the world. The Church can see itself and its mission to humankind in these young people.

With young people the Church faces the challenges of the future, at the same time being aware that all humanity needs to be rejuvenated in spirit. This pilgrimage of youth builds bridges of fellowship and hope between continents, peoples and cultures. This journey is in constant movement, just like life, and just like youth (John Paul II, letter on the occasion of a seminar on WYD, 8 May 1996).

6. To experience the joy of faith

John Paul II and Benedict XVI emphasised that the joy of faith is one of the characteristics of WYD that they had observed:

World Youth Days have proved to be "occasions for young people to profess and proclaim their faith in Christ with ever greater joy" (John Paul II, letter on the occasion of a seminar on WYD, 8 May 1996).

I have always felt a very special joy at these encounters (Meeting with the youth at the Municipal Stadium in Pacaembu, São Paulo, Brazil, 10 May 2007).

According to Scripture, joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22). This fruit was abundantly visible during these days in Sydney. [...] An integral part of any celebration is joy. A celebration can be organized, joy cannot. It can only be offered as a gift; and in fact it has been given to us in abundance. For this we are grateful. Just as Paul describes joy as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, so John in his Gospel closely links the Spirit to joy. The Holy Spirit gives us joy. And he is joy. Joy is the gift that sums up all the other gifts. It is the expression of happiness, of being in harmony with ourselves, which can only come from being in harmony with God and with his creation. It is part of the nature of joy to spread, to be shared. The Church's missionary spirit is nothing other than the drive to share the joy that has been given to us (Benedict XVI, address to the Roman Curia, 22 December 2008).

7. A manifestation of God's action in the hearts of young people

John Paul II spoke with emotion of the joy of faith that is a sign of God's action in the hearts of young people:

Throughout these memorable World Youth Gatherings, I have often been deeply touched by young peoples' joyous, spontaneous love for God and for the Church. They tell of suffering borne for the Gospel, of apparently unmountable obstacles that were overcome with God's help: they speak of their anguish before a world tormented by despair, cynicism and conflict. Each Meeting leaves me with an ever greater desire to praise God for revealing to young people the secrets of his Kingdom (Mt 11,25) (John Paul II, letter on the occasion of a seminar on WYD, 8 May 1996).

8. The Emmaus experience (Lk 24)

Our first conclusion is that young people at WYD have the same experience as that spoken of by the disciples in Emmaus (Mgr Renato Boccardo):

- like the disciples who were walking along the road, young people leave their homes and come to WYD as pilgrims
- as Jesus taught the pilgrims with the Word of God, the various events in WYD form one great catechesis where the Word of God is at the centre and is communicated, witnessed, meditated and prayed.

World Youth Day is composed of various activities that all together form one great catechesis, a proclamation of the path of conversion to Christ that starts out from the experiences and queries arising from the daily lives of the young people. The Word of God is the central point, catechetical reflection is the method, prayer is the sustenance, and communication and dialogue are the distinguishing style (John Paul II, letter on the occasion of a seminar on WYD, 8 May 1996).

- as the disciples recognised Jesus in the breaking of bread, young people can meet Christ at the various celebrations (liturgies, Masses, way of the cross, Eucharistic adoration)

as the disciples returned to Jerusalem to witness to the living Christ to the Church that was gathered together and that confirmed them in their faith, WYD is a Church event in which young people are both confirmed in their faith and are witnesses to others.

9. Everything directed towards meeting Christ in the Church

Our second conclusion allows us to answer the question that was asked before: can we make place in WYD for signs of service to peace and justice, to the drive against social inequalities and world hunger, of service to ecology and interfaith dialogue? All of these domains are important missionary territory for the Church. They follow on from the mission of service to humankind that the Church has received, the service of unity and communion. In a word, these missions of the Church arise from God's love for humanity (cf. Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*). This love has been given to us and we have received the divine command to live it out: "that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).

In order for the younger generations to enter into this framework of charity and to be engaged with the world, WYD guides young people towards the source of charity, God, whose Mercy is made manifest in Christ in the heart of the Church. At WYD we must also avoid being dispersed in following several objectives, no matter how legitimate they may be. The basic objective is to lead young people towards a meeting with Christ. We are certain that this meeting will then guide them towards service for their brothers and sisters.

In this spirit, we must be careful to keep on course with the proposals for activities made during WYD and during the preparatory days in the dioceses. In recent WYDs, care was taken to allow only whatever would prepare for a meeting with Christ and to refuse anything that might not be helpful for this purpose. In practice this referred to choices made regarding music, exhibitions, concerts, shows and animation during waiting periods.

During WYD and the preparatory days in the dioceses, there is a need to "take a breath". Young people cannot be enclosed in a church praying all day! Can entertainment be offered with secular dancing and rock music? Can they go sight-seeing during the preparatory days in the dioceses? The decision was made - and it has been regarded as justified and fruitful -, not to encourage entertainment and amusement that come from a secularised culture unless they embody, in one way or another, the search for Jesus Christ. This does not rule out rock concerts and traditional dances when they are explicitly directed towards Christ in the Church. In choosing activities, the question to ask regarding each one is: will this foster a relationship with the Saviour? Will it contribute to a discovery of the Church?

The criterion is therefore to think of things in a way coherent with Christian spiritual experience. In this way we have a great amount of freedom with this process.

B. THE FRUITS OF WYD

10. Countless benefits : fellowship and vitality in the worldwide Church

We know that the experience of meeting Jesus Christ at WYD produces much fruit. Benedict XVI tells us:

I have always felt a very special joy at these encounters. I remember especially the Twentieth World Youth Day at which I was able to preside two years ago in Germany.

Some of you gathered here today were also present! It is an emotional memory for me on account of the abundant fruits of the Lord's grace poured out upon those who were there.

Among the many fruits which I could point to, there is little doubt that the first was the exemplary sense of fellowship that stood as a clear witness to the Church's perennial vitality throughout the world... (Meeting with the youth at the Municipal Stadium in Pacaembu, São Paulo, Brazil, 10 May 2007).

11. WYD gives youth the opportunity to feel responsible for the Church

Another benefit of WYD is that the Church allows youth to take responsibility - Responsibility is given in the organisation of WYD, e.g. there were 25,000 volunteers for Rome 2000 - At WYD, the Church sends the young people out on mission. John Paul II emphasised this aspect:

With their enthusiasm and their exuberant energy, young people ask to be encouraged to become 'active in evangelization and participants in the renewal of society' (Cristifideles laici, 46). Young people - who represent the youthfulness of the Church that is the ever-young Bride of Christ (cf. Eph 5,22-33) -, are not only evangelized in this way, but they also become evangelizers as they take the Gospel to their peers, even to those who are distant from the Church and have not yet heard the Good News (John Paul II, letter on the occasion of a seminar on WYD, 8 May 1996).

12. A place with a special call for vocations

One of the important aspects of this conferring of responsibility and sending forth on mission is the call to vocation. In this regard, Benedict XVI had this to say:

However, I would like here to recall a special Meeting, my encounter with the seminarians, young men called to a more radical and personal following of Christ, Teacher and Pastor. I wanted a specific moment to be devoted to them, also to highlight the vocational dimension typical of World Youth Days. In the past 20 years, many vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life have been born precisely during World Youth Days, privileged occasions when the Holy Spirit makes his call forcefully heard (Benedict XVI on his return from Cologne, General Audience 24 August 2005).

13. A new beginning for youth pastoral ministry in the host country

Another beneficial result of WYD is the depth of renewal of youth ministry in the host country. At WYD in Cologne, Benedict XVI spoke of this when addressing the bishops:

The experience of these past 20 years has taught us that every World Youth Day is in a certain sense a new beginning for the pastoral care of young people in the country that hosts it. Preparing for the event mobilizes people and resources. We have seen it right here in Germany: how a true "mobilization" has pervaded the Country, prompting a surge of energy. Lastly, the celebration itself brings a gust of enthusiasm that must be sustained and, so to speak, rendered definitive. This enormous potential energy can further increase, spreading across the territory. I am thinking of the parishes, associations and movements. I am thinking of the priests, Religious, catechists and animators involved with young people (Benedict XVI, WYD in Cologne, meeting with the German bishops, 21 August 2005).

C. THE IMPACT OF WYD ON THE PASTORAL WORK OF THE CHURCH WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

14. A support for regular pastoral ministry with young people in the Church

We see WYD as being a huge support for the Church's regular pastoral ministry with young people. I quote from John Paul II:

World Youth Day is the Church's Day for youth and with youth. It does not claim to be an alternative to regular youth ministry which often requires great sacrifice and dedication. It is intended more to consolidate this work by offering new possibilities for engagement, objectives that can foster ever greater involvement and participation. While aiming to awaken more sustained enthusiasm in apostolic action among young people, the Church certainly does not wish to isolate them from the rest of the community, but rather to empower them to be responsible for an apostolate that will reach out to other age groups and social spheres in the context of the 'new evangelisation' (John Paul II, letter on the occasion of a seminar on WYD, 8 May 1996).

15. WYD renews youth ministry

Our final conclusion is that we observe how WYD gives a multifaceted response to the current needs of young people, and that it has characteristic elements that have been present since the earliest WYDs or that have been fashioned by the Holy Spirit over the years. Some of the elements of WYD can illuminate regular youth ministry. Here we list some of them:

A. the dimension of fellowship and communion through:

- gatherings
- the artistic dimension: music, theatre

B. the ecclesial dimension through: closeness to the bishops:

- contact between young people and the ministry of the bishop
- the bishop has to be involved in youth ministry
- active involvement of priests
- youth ministry requires priests who are trained and committed; the fact of being a young priest is

an advantage because of a closer cultural connection with youth, but this in itself does not confer competence. Training is necessary.

- the diversity of young people, the universality of the Church

C. proclaiming Christ as the core of our pastoral work is the proclamation of the kerygma

This proclamation is increasingly necessary because younger generations have not heard about the plan of salvation revealed by Christ. They know little about the vocation of the human person, of the Covenant, of the divine presence within us (grace), the words of the Covenant contained in the Commandments, sin and salvation in Christ. When Benedict XVI spoke to the young people on his arrival in Sydney (Thursday 17 August, welcome ceremony at Barangaroo) he outlined for them the plan of salvation, very simply, beginning with his observations from the window of his plane.

Do we do this often enough? The proclamation of the kerygma is a catechesis centred on Christ

The experience of Youth Days is an invitation to all of us, Bishops and pastoral workers, to constant reflection on our ministry among young people and our responsibility to present to them the whole truth about Christ and his Church. How can we not interpret their massive, willing and enthusiastic participation, as a constant demand to be accompanied on the pilgrimage of faith, on the journey which they undertake in response to God's grace working in their hearts? They ask us to lead them to Christ, the only One who has words of eternal life (cf Jn 6,68) (John Paul II, letter on the occasion of a seminar on WYD, 8 May 1996).

- testimonies
- the centrality of the Word of God

D. steps in faith

The proclamation of the kerygma, the core of our pastoral work, should be carried forward with activities centred on faith and sacraments where the grace of God is given in abundance

- Eucharistic and non-eucharistic celebrations, the sacrament of Reconciliation
- Way of the Cross
- Silent prayer and Eucharistic adoration

We know that young people long for these when they are right, that is, when they emanate from a true and suitable proclamation, and when they offer a true experience of God in Christ.

E. responsibility given to young people

F. diversity in approach and in the aspects mentioned above, and pastoral coherence regarding an encounter with Christ, are the strengths of WYD. This should be said also for everyday youth ministry.



Pilgrimes in Holy Land - January 2008



Youth Coordination meeting - October 2009