

“Jesus, looking upon him, loved him.” [Mk 10,21]

Message Of Hope



In 1985, John Pope Paul II wrote a letter to youth titled *Dilecti Amici*, which means ‘Dear Friends’. What was most significant about this letter from the Pope was not only its inspiring message, but it became the pastoral foundation for the creation and development of the World Youth Day experience.

In explaining the phenomenon of WYD in his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul stated

*‘No one invented the World Youth Days.
It was the young people themselves who created them.’*

A key passage of the letter has been chosen as the theme for this month’s ePILGRIMAGE; *‘Jesus, looking upon the young man, loved him’* (Mk10:21). In a world where many youth are searching for love in empty places, the Holy Father highlighted to this generation that authentic love is not only there to be found in fostering a relationship with Christ, but is also a key to happiness in this life and the next.

The Holy Father highlights that no matter what experiences of life youth have, Christ will always gaze upon them with love. This is important pastorally for ‘Generation X’ and ‘Generation Y’ many of whom are ‘soul searchers’ on the round-about of life. It is not uncommon for young people to express that they feel as if Christ does not love them because of their life choices. Similarly, in the many broken relationships that youth have experienced – in their family, with their peers and romantic encounters - ‘love’ is sometimes seen as empty, conditional and painful. The Holy Father wants to assure youth that the type of love that is offered to them by Christ is not of this nature, but is very real, life giving and eternal.

In his first address to the world on 24 April 2005, Pope Benedict XVI had a special message for the youth:

And so, today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life. Amen.

In 2008, Sydney will be the host city of an event inspired by the vision and commitment of Pope John Paul II and continued by Pope Benedict XVI. I will pray that you will encounter the loving gaze of Christ on your pilgrim road towards WYD08.

+Anthony Fisher OP
Coordinator of World Youth Day 2008

Faith Foundations

The Christian vocation – service and love

At certain times we know the experience of becoming “lost” in an encounter with great music or before something awe-inspiring like a wonderful sunset. In this experience we forget about ourselves and our anxieties and get caught up in something bigger than we are.

We also realise that far from destroying us, this experience of “being lost” or of “being taken out of ourselves”, makes us somehow bigger inside - it enriches our lives and imaginations. We hunger for such moments of happiness, fulfillment and a sense that we belong to something more wonderful.

Jesus Christ, in his Sermon on the Mount and throughout his ministry, confirmed that human beings are made for the experience of happiness and love. But His own life was an illustration and the path to a fulfillment which comes only after a “losing of ourselves” which is even more dramatic and life-changing than the other “peak” moments that human beings know. To really understand what we are made for, He shows us, we need to allow ourselves to be emptied of all selfish, mean, resentful and grasping ambitions, so that God’s own fiery love will burn us into a new and greater person. *‘Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit,’* Jesus tells his followers in John 12: 24.

Each one of us has a vocation, therefore to be “remade” in God’s love, to become in our own unique way an **alter Christus**, another Jesus Christ. Christians believe this process of being made anew by love, begins at **Baptism** - where we have clothed ourselves with Christ (Gal 3: 27).

On May 6th 2001 Pope John Paul II said that *“love is the DNA of the Children of God.”* All the great saints shone with this “charity” of self-less love and service.

One of the signs that we are alive with the grace and life of this “DNA”, that we are growing in **holiness**, is that we become more and more loving and concerned for the genuine good of other people. This is not merely sentimental or “feel-good” emotion: it is love that sometimes costs a great deal. Love like this can cost our lives... as it did Jesus Christ Himself. But it is the **only** answer to our God-given craving for love and happiness.

Last year on the World Day of Prayer for Vocations (May 7th), Pope Benedict XVI reflected on the great mystery that each and every one of us is called by God “before the beginning” of creation, to respond freely to this call to service. Each one of us is given the chance to light up the lives of others with the breathtaking love of God - in what may seem to be ordinary interventions, words, prayers and deeds.

It’s a revolutionary message!

Pope Benedict reminds us in his 2006 message for Vocation Sunday that this revolution is brought about by our constant contact with the love of Jesus Himself *“This is a gift that overturns every purely human idea and plan... What should be said therefore of the temptation, which is very strong nowadays, to feel that we are self-sufficient to the point that we become closed to God’s mysterious plan for each of us? The love of the Father, which is revealed in the person of Christ, puts this question to us.”*



Social services activities during WYD 2005

Pilgrim Prayer



Prayer of self dedication by St Ignatius of Loyola

Take, Lord,
and receive all my liberty,
my memory,
my understanding,
my whole will,
all I have and all I possess.
You gave it all to me;
to you, Lord, I return it all.
It is yours:
Do with me entirely as you will.
Give me your love and your grace:
This is enough for me.
Amen

Follow this link to read more about St Ignatius of Loyola
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/IGNAITU2.HTM>

Inspired writings

Dilecti amici – Dear friends

Pope John Paul II to the youth of the world on the occasion of international youth year

31 March 1985, Palm Sunday



#7 *It is also my hope that, after you have made the discernment of the essential and important questions for you youth, for the plan of the whole life that lies before you, you will experience what the Gospel means when it says: "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him". May you experience a look like that! May you experience the truth that he, Christ, looks upon you with love!*

... Man needs this loving look. He needs to know that he is loved, loved eternally and chosen from eternity. (47) At the same time, this eternal love of divine election accompanies man during life as Christ's look of love. And perhaps most powerfully at the moment of trial, humiliation, persecution, defeat, when our humanity is as it were blotted out in the eyes of other people, insulted and trampled upon. At that moment the awareness that the Father has always loved us in his Son, that Christ always loves each of us, becomes a solid support for our whole human existence. When everything would make us doubt ourselves and the meaning of our life, then this look of Christ, the awareness of the love that in him has shown itself more powerful than any evil and destruction, this awareness enables us to survive.

My wish for you then is that you may experience what the young man in the Gospel experienced: "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him".

Dilecti Amici written by Pope John Paul II is the foundation document and inspiration for the subsequent WYD celebrations.

Please follow this link for the full document

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_31031985_dilecti-amici_en.html

Testimony of Faith

Michael, Archdiocese of Adelaide

World Youth Day in Cologne 2005 was an awesome experience to say the least!

I'm not sure what I went there looking for... an experience of the Church at a global level, a personal deepening of faith, an experience of German culture... I think it was a bit of all of these actually.



So what did I get out of World Youth Day personally? Well, I certainly had my share of misfortune! I caught the flu twice, cut my toe which had to get x-rayed and got bitten by a wasp. Maybe God was trying to purify me! For me the most touching moment of the pilgrimage was at a Melbourne group Mass in Cologne celebrating Bishop Prowse's 25 years as a priest. He called up anyone who thought they had a religious vocation for a blessing and about 25-30 people out of 350 went to the altar! I was blown away. I almost felt like crying the way the Holy Spirit works sometimes. God surely does and will provide for his flock! I was also deeply moved by the many conversions that took place during these days, people who were cold or indifferent to the faith at the beginning (and had been sponsored to go by schools/parishes/parents) full of fervor by the time we left. People who in the ordinary course I thought would never change. God proved me wrong.

Sometimes when we are pulled away from our familiar surroundings, God can work in our hearts – this I realised is the whole point of pilgrimage. In my heart during the experience at first and for most of the trip I must admit I felt nothing. I was dry and almost parched. I had expected something more to be honest, some incredible manifestation of God that I had not experienced before. Towards the end I even began to wonder what was the point of coming on this World Youth Day – yes I must admit I made a lot of new friends and saw Germany, but even these were not my primary reasons for going. It was to deepen my faith. How could I do that if God had disappeared from me and was refusing to show me His face? It is like when I most expected Him to be there, he just wasn't.

Now that was the case until the Vigil at Marienfeld. When we had Adoration at Marienfeld I felt a tremendous peace, so much that despite the cold and damp, I had the best night's sleep of the whole trip. At Mass the next day I longed to receive Communion and the dryness I had experienced to that point and for the last two weeks had disappeared only to make my love for God stronger and purer than before, deepening my faith. Maybe this is the way God works when He wants us to draw near to Him? I got to Melbourne a few days later, only to realise I was suffering what is commonly known as WYD blues! I so wanted to be back around all my newfound friends, living the Catholic faith without shame instead of stuck back in secular Australia. In the days that followed I realised that if I do want to be in a society where Jesus Christ is exalted as Lord and Saviour, I have to begin making this reality happen myself! We are His hands and feet on this earth!

I hope and pray for the transformation of our Australian society to one based on love of God will continue to take place in an even stronger way. Hope to see you in Sydney!



Michael with some friends from the John Paul II Institute of Melbourne

Saints and Witnesses

St Philip Neri

Born: 22 July, 1515 in Florence, Italy.

Died: 27 May 1595 in Rome.

Patron Saint of: The City of Rome; Confessors.

Founder: of the Congregation of the Oratorians,
(called in Italy the Filippini)

Represented in Religious Art:

as a bearded man in habit of his order- the Oratorians
(white collar and pointed hat - a berretta).



Philip was born into a cultured but rather poor Italian family. His parents had high hopes that Philip at 18 would be introduced to the business world and receive an inheritance from one of his wealthy uncles. Philip had already developed a rich prayer life and felt called to follow Jesus Christ directly in poverty and service. This intuition took him to Rome, where a noble family gave him lodgings, encouraged him to pursue further studies and gave him a position as the family tutor.

Philip was an excellent student and teacher, but he found himself drawn to longer and deeper time in mystical prayer. This joyful love drew him to help the many disadvantaged people living in Rome. The young Philip sold all his books and gave the money to the needy and began a life of prayer and visiting hospitals and public squares in the hope of serving the sick and the poor.

In 1548 Philip founded with his companions drawn from all levels of society, the **Confraternity of the Blessed Trinity** which was dedicated to needy residents and pilgrims in Rome. Eventually the Confraternity founded one of the most famous hospitals in Rome.

At the age of 36, Philip decided to become a priest. Fr Philip became a imaginative spiritual reformer and confessor of outstanding insight and compassion. It was said that he could often discern the sin or trouble of the rich or the poor before they spoke to him. He was also noted for his remarkable cheerfulness and joy, and this in the face of fierce criticism often melted the hearts of the resentful and jealous.

In 1551, Philip founded a community called **The Congregation of the Oratorians** in Rome. The community was dedicated to liturgical prayer and preaching and meditation - and it proved to be an effective means of bringing unity and spiritual revival to priests, religious and laypeople.

By the time of Saint Philip's death there were many houses of the Oratory throughout Italy. Saint Philip was greatly revered by a succession of Popes and leaders, and was a close ally of the other great saintly reformers of that time (the period called the **Counter-Reformation**) including **St Charles Borromeo and St Ignatius of Loyola**.

Place of Pilgrimage

Montecassino, Italy

Founded: Saint Benedict in 529 AD.

Where: Mountain range south of Rome.

Significance: Sanctuary of Christian culture during the Dark Ages, Centre of St Benedict's monastic movement, tomb of St Benedict and his sister St. Scholastica



The Abbey founded by St Benedict on the site of a pagan temple to the god Apollo, stands on a mountain overlooking the town of Cassino as a monastic phoenix which has been re-formed after many destructions and disasters over its 1500 years.

St Benedict made the Abbey, which he dedicated to **St John the Baptist**, his final home and it was here that he wrote one of the most important documents of the Christian world - **The Rule of St Benedict**. His rule was to become the blueprint for the formation of Christian Benedictine communities which grew up and flourished throughout Europe when all other towns and institutions had been overrun by invading tribes in a period called "**The Dark Ages**".

The Abbey itself was destroyed in 577 by the Lombards, in 883 by the Saracens and later by the Normans. It was rebuilt in 1058 and once again became a centre of learning and spiritual life for the rest of Europe under its abbot who became Pope Victor III. The great Dominican scholar, **St Thomas Aquinas**, prepared for his study at the Abbey.

In 1349 the Abbey was destroyed by an earthquake, and once again the monks and people raised funds to rebuild using the finest artists and designers of the period. In the centuries after these rebuilding, crises both external and internal continued to trouble the existence of the central House of the Benedictine Order.

In 1799, the Abbey was attacked by Napoleon's troops and in the 19th century the Abbey was seized by the anti-Catholic government of Italy, to be restored to some limited monastic use by the beginning of the 20th century.

During the Second World War the huge fortress like wall made the Abbey a place of refuge and sanctuary for displaced people fleeing the violence of the War. Tragically it became the target of one of the fiercest battles at the end of the Second World War- the **Battle of Montecassino** (February 15th, 1944) and most of its art works were totally annihilated by 500 tons of Allied bombs. Over 1,000 Polish troops died near the Abbey. An important war grave, therefore, dedicated by Pope Paul VI, stands in a reconstructed cloister.

Image courtesy by Corrado Viettone

Towards WYD08

WYD08 at the National Conference on Catholic Youth Ministry - USA

The World Youth Day team had the opportunity to attend the National Conference on Catholic Youth Ministry in the US during December. An estimated 3000 people attended the conference and reports from the WYD team were that it felt like every one of them attended our booth!

The enthusiasm was quite exhilarating with over 350 group leaders registering their interest to come to WYD in Sydney. Most enquiries were on travelling to Sydney and information about the opportunities to meet with pilgrims in Australia and New Zealand. There will clearly be a big contingent from the US - how is your local planning going?

The US group leaders were very aware of the need to plan early and many are well advanced in both their pastoral and logistical planning. They also reacted very positively to a draft of the *Group Leaders Guidebook* that had been prepared by WYD08 to help groups and group leaders in their planning and preparation. As a result of the feedback some other sections have been added. The *Guidebook* will be available when Group registrations open, currently planned for early 2007.

Group Registration is your advice to us that your group would like to come to WYD. You do not need to make a firm commitment until much later in 2007 but it does mean that you are taking another step on your WYD Pilgrimage to Sydney. In addition, you help us to predict accurately the numbers expected for 2008, resulting in the ability to provide better services to you. Full WYD08 registration is planned to open in mid 2007.

Just a reminder that for international Pilgrims, WYD08 visas are free and will be available through the registrations section on the website. www.wyd2008.org

See you in Sydney in 17 months!!

