

"Just as I have loved you,
you should also love one another." [Jn 13:34]

Message of Hope



We all get moments when we wonder whether God cares about us.

Where was God in the melee in the Garden, in the kiss of death and the desertion that followed? Where was God amongst the conspiracy of the priests and the feeding frenzy of the crowds? Where was God in the kangaroo court that found the Innocent One guilty and that ordered the Lord of Life to be killed? Where was God as Jesus hung upon the cross, tortured, humiliated, dying?

Where is God when children die? Or loved ones? Where was God at Auschwitz? Was the death of hundreds of thousands of people from a tsunami on the day after Christmas 2004 not the final proof that God just doesn't care and maybe doesn't exist?

In every generation people have pondered the problem of evil, whether natural or human. Even if we have our answers or our half-answers, we often feel as the Mother of Jesus and the other women and the teenaged John no doubt felt at the foot of the cross: we gape with mute incomprehension and stunned impotence before the mystery of suffering.

During Lent and especially in Holy Week many churches celebrate the Way of the Cross. At World Youth Day in Sydney in July 2008 a moving version of this devotion will take place through the streets of Sydney, as the cross is carried past Sydney's 'iconic' places: the Cathedral, the Parliament, the art-gallery, the gardens, the Opera House, the bridge, the harbour... It will undoubtedly make a powerful impact not just upon the young pilgrims but also upon the city and the world looking on.

Part of the reason the Way of the Cross has such an effect is, I think, that in the face of the mystery of suffering no words, no answers suffice; as in married love, so too in suffering, sometimes body language speaks louder and better than words. Our walking and standing can speak of faith and hope and love in midst of infidelity and grief and despair, as did the silent women standing by the dying Christ. But after grief our gaping mouths and our haunted minds and our sickened hearts and our paralysed bodies can move on!

We try in our little way to make some sense and to find some comfort. We conclude, as Christians must conclude, that evil is no act of God; that no innocent person suffers by God's active will; that even what God permits so as to allow us freedom costs God greatly; that suffering and death are NOT the last word. The Way of the Cross demonstrates the depth of God's saving love, for there he enters fully into all that human beings suffer. Where was God on Good Friday when Jesus needed him? He was there, hanging on the cross. He went down into the tomb. And in doing so he joins with every suffering person on their cross. He goes to the grave with all those we've loved and lost to death and he pledges the compassion of God even to the dead. God walks the Way of the Cross with each of us through our loneliness and pain, right to the end.

As we walk the Way of the Cross this Lent, let's bring to Christ all that mystifies and horrifies and grieves us, confident that he understands human need from the inside and that he has the power to console, to transform, to save. How much does he love us? "No greater love has anyone that this: that he lay down his life for his friend." (Jn 15: 13; see also Jn 10: 11-18). How should we respond? "Just as I have loved you, you should love one another." (Jn 13: 34)

+Anthony Fisher OP
Coordinator of World Youth Day 2008



Faith Foundations

The Mystery of Suffering

There is one powerful experience which can shatter all the wonders and beauty of life for us. There are questions which can shake our faith in the existence of an all-loving, all-wise and all-powerful God: "If God is so good and powerful why does he allow pain, sickness, death, evil and suffering?" "Why do innocent little babies die in pain and starvation?" "Why did someone I love die in a car accident?" "Why are human beings allowed to maim, torture and torment each other?"

We know that this problem- the problem of suffering and of evil – haunted the faith of the people in the Old Testament too. The **Book of Job** is entirely devoted to the good man Job confronting God Himself with this question. God's answer to Job and to all of us is His only Son, Jesus Christ.

We know that during his ministry here on earth, Jesus was appalled and moved to tears by human suffering. Through his miracles, Jesus demonstrates that **The Kingdom of God** is the opposite of evil and suffering. Jesus confirms that God does not ever make or actively will suffering. The shocking thing is that Jesus does not provide a simple slogan or a magic formula which makes suffering disappear in a puff of smoke.

Instead, Jesus Christ provides the most radical response to human suffering that is possible. Jesus, as the Incarnation of God, willingly enters into the core of human pain, anguish, humiliation, and death through **His Passion and Crucifixion**.

Jesus, who is absolute goodness and love, makes Himself one with every victim of crime, every innocent sufferer, every tortured and rejected outcast. More than that, Jesus takes onto Himself the full force of spite, violence, resentment and injustice He confronts the core of sin and defeats its absurdity and emptiness with Love and Goodness.

This "victory", as St Paul describes the Cross, is a victory - a **New Passover** - for each and every human being (1 Corinthians chapter 15). In Christ's **Paschal Mystery** (His **Passion, Death and Resurrection** from the dead) – God shows us that that suffering is transformed into joy, that life is stronger than death, that love can overcome evil. Jesus Christ is **our Saviour** because he fills the puzzling darkness and loneliness of suffering and bursts its banks with the reconciling and healing fire of God's love.

Until the ultimate fulfillment of time "when Christ will come again", Christians will still experience the mystery of suffering. But they believe that by following the **Resurrected Christ**, they too can give their suffering "redemptive meaning" by uniting their suffering in love with His. **The Beatitudes** (Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-26) commission Christians, relying on God's direct help (**Grace**), to stand in real solidarity and compassion with those who suffer. The vocation of Christians is to work tirelessly to overcome sickness, injustice, strife and ignorance in the world and to overcome sin in them until God's kingdom comes, "on earth as it is in heaven".

Pilgrim Prayer

Stations of the Cross

by Fr Peter Williams, Director of Liturgy for WYD08

"I wish I could have been there..." All of us have at some time used that phrase when something happened and we missed the experience. Perhaps it was a concert, a party, or a meeting of friends. The Christians of the early centuries heard the stories of those who were able to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land and visit the sites associated with the earthly ministry of Jesus. It became the custom in the middle ages for many pilgrims to walk the way of the Cross in Jerusalem and there were several versions beginning at the house of Pilate and ending at Mt Calvary. A more defined route for the *Via Sacra* was introduced by the Franciscans in the 14th century as they had custody of the Holy Places in Jerusalem.

From that time in other places in Europe representations in painting and sculpture of the *Via Crucis* were introduced. In order that those who could not make the pilgrimage to the Holy Land could at least participate spiritually in the Way of the Cross in their own locality. We are not sure how the number 14 came to be the accepted form of the Stations of the Cross as they are expressed in almost every Catholic Church and Chapel. But by the 18th century the traditional 14 Stations had come to be accepted as the general norm:



1. Christ is condemned to death
2. The Cross is laid upon him
3. His first fall
4. He meets His Blessed Mother
5. Simon of Cyrene is made to bear the cross
6. Christ's face is wiped by Veronica
7. His second fall
8. He meets the women of Jerusalem
9. His third fall
10. He is stripped of His garments
11. His crucifixion
12. His death on the cross
13. His body is taken down from the cross
14. He is laid in the tomb.

Other versions – some more scriptural, some starting earlier with Holy Thursday night, some ending with the Resurrection – have been used in some places in recent times. Each Station provides an opportunity for us to reflect on our own part in the suffering of Christ, whilst also marvelling at His extraordinary love and the power of forgiveness which He demonstrates to those who contributed to His suffering and death.

**We adore you O Christ and we bless you,
for by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Inspired writings

Salvifici Doloris

Apostolic Letter by **Pope John Paul II** on the Christian meaning of human suffering

11 February 1984

#9 Within each form of suffering endured by man, and at the same time at the basis of the whole world of suffering, there inevitably arises *the question: why?* It is a question about the cause, the reason, and equally, about the purpose of suffering, and, in brief, a question about its meaning. Not only does it accompany human suffering, but it seems even to determine its human content, what makes suffering precisely human suffering.

It is obvious that pain, especially physical pain, is widespread in the animal world. But only the suffering human being knows that he is suffering and wonders why; and he suffers in a humanly speaking still deeper way if he does not find a satisfactory answer. This is a *difficult question*, just as is a question closely akin to it, the question of evil. Why does evil exist? Why is there evil in the world? When we put the question in this way, we are always, at least to a certain extent, asking a question about suffering too.

Both questions are difficult, when an individual puts them to another individual, when people put them to other people, as also when man *puts them to God*. For man does not put this question to the world, even though it is from the world that suffering often comes to him, but he puts it to God as the Creator and Lord of the world. And it is well known that concerning this question there not only arise many frustrations and conflicts in the relations of man with God, but it also happens that people reach the point of actually *denying God*. For, whereas the existence of the world opens as it were the eyes of the human soul to the existence of God, to his wisdom, power and greatness, evil and suffering seem to obscure this image, sometimes in a radical way, especially in the daily drama of so many cases of undeserved suffering and of so many faults without proper punishment. So this circumstance shows—perhaps more than any other—the importance of *the question of the meaning of suffering*; it also shows how much care must be taken both in dealing with the question itself and with all possible answers to it.

Please follow this link for the full document

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris_en.html



Testimony of Faith

Anna, Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn

Prior to WYD in Cologne Germany in 2005, my Catholic faith was a very unimportant part of my life.

I was a regular church goer, more out of habit than anything and I felt little connection to the Catholic Church. I felt very much like an outsider and a spectator most of the time. I would go to Mass and each time the Priest welcomed visitors to the parish I always felt as though he was speaking to me, although I had attended that parish for over two years!

I believed Christianity was a beautiful ideal in some ways, but I didn't see how living a life centred on Christ could be possible or desirable for any young person.



The pilgrimage leading up to WYD week was the time I discovered that yes, it was possible to live this way and I knew this because I saw it with my own eyes. I met extraordinary people my own age, not so different from myself, who were so committed to their faith, that I found it hard to believe! Much to my shock they were also happy! That may sound strange to some, but I had always viewed the Catholic Church as restrictive and burdensome, so I couldn't understand why anyone would choose to hand their life over to God. This challenged and enticed me into taking a second glance at the God that I had put so far away from myself for most of my life.

Gradually throughout my time away, with the support and guidance of the community around me, I encountered the God that is very much alive. I encountered Jesus Christ. It is impossible to describe the joy that I experienced as I discovered this important and crucial truth in my life. The God who for so long I had thought was dead and gone and just a memory, was alive in my life and the lives of those around me. I could no longer ignore his voice in my heart. I came back from WYD a new person filled with the Holy Spirit and with one burning question in my heart. How could I have had 19 years of life as a Catholic and never have truly met my creator, Jesus Christ? What had I missed along the way? I had a lingering feeling of wishing that I had met the people I met earlier and heard about their lives when I was younger and had fewer scars.

This inspired me to join the Catholic Youth Ministry Team in this archdiocese and devote a year of my life to just that - meeting young people and sharing with them the Good News of Jesus Christ. I have enjoyed it so much that I have decided to give another year of my life to CYM by doing a second year on team. Mine is only one of many stories in this archdiocese and throughout the whole of Australia. Two of my team members this year are also here primarily because of the impact of WYD.

Many people wonder what WYD08 will "do" for the archdiocese. Just as World Youth Days abroad have brought many young people from our archdiocese back to the church and into a deeper relationship with Christ, so too will WYD08 in Sydney. It has the potential to do this on an even greater scale than has previously been seen. World Youth Day is much more than just a week long event in Sydney. Yes people arrive, celebrate, and eventually leave. No emotional high can last forever, even the most extraordinary of religious experiences. But "*if the soil is good, so will be the harvest.*" If we work together before, during and after WYD we will see a dramatically different Church in Australia and this archdiocese, a Catholic Church on fire with the Holy Spirit.

Saints and Witnesses

St Pio of Pietrelcina – Padre Pio

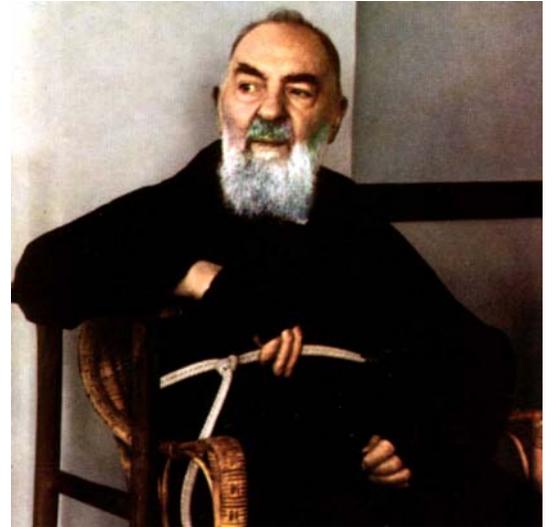
Born: 25 May 1887 in Pietrelcina, Italy.

Died: 23 September 1968.

Patron Saint of: Confessors and those seeking conversion.

Feast Day: 23 September.

Represented in Religious Art: as a bearded Capuchin friar his wounded hand extended in blessing.



Baptised as Francesco, St Pio at the age of five dedicated his life to Jesus Christ and declared to his family a little later, that he wanted to become a particular type of friar in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi- **a Capuchin**. His humble farming parents were so delighted by their son's vocation that his father went to America in order to earn enough money for his education.

Francesco joined the Franciscans at the age of 15 taking the name "**Pius**" or "**Pio**" (after the local patron saint **Pope Saint Pius V**) and was ordained a priest at the age of 22 in 1910. It was clear that very early in his religious life, along with the burden of painful ill health and life threatening fevers, Padre Pio was given remarkable mystical experiences in the way of visions and powerful "out-of-body" spiritual states called **ecstasies** (see **2 Corinthians 12: 2-4** for St Paul's reference to this.)

Like many of the great saints, Padre Pio developed a burning desire to share with Jesus his **Passion on the Cross**. It was while he was praying before a crucifix in 1918 that Padre Pio began to experience the pain of the Crucifixion in his own body. Like some other mystics in the Church, Padre Pio - to his own embarrassment - bore the physical wounds of Christ visibly, including painful wounds in his hands and feet, for the rest of his life. These wounds of the Passion are called **the Stigmata**. Padre Pio had a particularly powerful ability to "see into" the lives of those who came to him for the **sacrament of Confession**. It was reported he would tell the person kneeling before him their sins before they had spoken or warn them of situations he could not naturally have known about.

Padre Pio was scarcely permitted to travel outside the Friary at **San Giovanni Rotondo** but was sometimes seen in two places at once - many kilometres or even countries apart in order to console the sick or to protect others from harm. (This phenomenon is known as **bi-location**).

After the Second World War seeing so many people in torment of one kind or another, the Padre planned and succeeded in founding a large hospital near the Friary called the "**Home for the Relief of Suffering**". Many Allied troops and refugees carried the cause of this hospital and the news of "Pierced Friar" to their own lands. Visitors at this time included Fr Karol Wojtyła, later **Pope John Paul II** who would later officiate at the beatification (1999) and canonisation (2002) of the amazing Padre Pio.

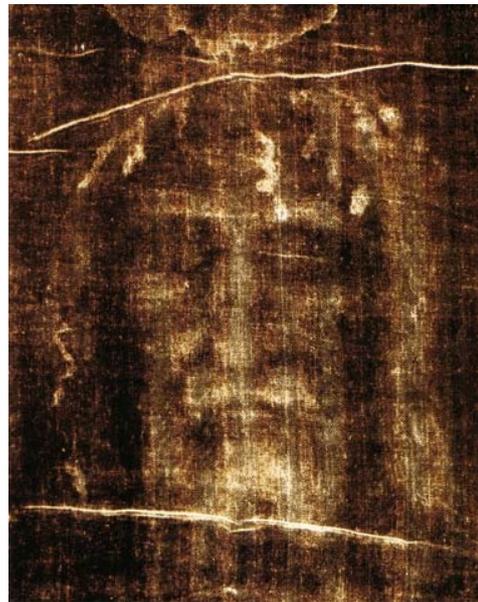
Place of Pilgrimage

Turin, Italy

The Holy Shroud

“Something so frightening
and yet so beautiful
lies in it
that a man
can only escape
by worship”

Paul Claudel - French poet



The wealthy and industrial city of Turin in northern Italy has become a pilgrimage site because it is now the home of a revered and remarkable **relic**, which even to this day generates lively debate amongst scientists, historians and theologians.

The relic is a large strip of a very ancient linen cloth, believed by many to be the burial cloth which briefly covered the crucified Jesus Christ after his execution- it is therefore called **The Holy Shroud**.

Besides the survival of such an ancient textile itself, the most amazing aspect of the Shroud is the detail provided by the imprint on the cloth, appearing like scorch marks on the front and back of a tall crucified man. It was only with the invention of the camera that the truly mysterious nature of this imprint became even more evident.

At the turn of the 1900s, the Shroud was photographed and to the shock of the photographers, their glass negatives revealed a very detailed positive image of the dead man including his lash wounds, pierced hands, life-like facial features and other details. It seems therefore to be a miracle for modern times!

All the details seem to be a “photographic” record of the forms of torture and violence that Jesus Christ underwent during the **Way of the Cross** and the **Crucifixion** which are described in the Gospels including: the beatings, scourging, the crown of thorns, the nailing to the Cross and the lance piercing Christ’s side. (See Matthew 27:26-30; Mark 15:15-20; Luke 22:23-26; John 19 and 20). The Shroud is therefore a means of becoming awed and intimate with the suffering and reality of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament Gospels refer to the body of Jesus being wrapped “hastily” in a burial cloth/or cloths (see Matthew 27:59; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53, see John 20:7). But there are many questions about how the sacred cloth could have travelled to Turin from Jerusalem- especially since there is only a continuous history of the Holy Shroud from the 1300s in France. Many contemporary scholars now suggest that earlier accounts of presence and veneration of the Shroud may be found in earlier writings of the Eastern Church.

The Holy Shroud is only displayed on special feasts of the Church, but can be visited in the Royal Chapel of Turin’s **Cathedral of St John the Baptist**. There is also an interesting **Museum of the Holy Shroud** in Via San Domenico which displays elements of the research upon the Holy Shroud.

Towards WYD08

GROUP REGISTRATION OPEN – NOW!

The Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell, and our World Youth Day Bishop Coordinator, Bishop Anthony Fisher OP officially opened Group registration on 2 March 2007.

Group registration will allow group leaders to provide WYD08 with their contact details, together with estimates of the size of their group, the preferred catechesis language, travel details if they are known, and whether the group intends to participate in the Days in the Dioceses programme. These details may be changed by the group leaders at any time.

This early opening was decided after discussions with the Pontifical Council for the Laity to allow group leaders a little more time than in previous WYDs for three main reasons.

Firstly, for many pilgrims Australia is further away, that makes it a great adventure and is part of its appeal. But it also requires advance planning, to save enough to get here and book a flight. The earlier would-be pilgrims start their spiritual and **practical** preparations the better!

Secondly, we are aware that many groups especially from Europe and the Americas are planning a more extensive pilgrimage than a straightforward trip to WYD and home. That means more detailed planning for the groups and an earlier start may be to everyone's benefit. Planning for many has already started and we are delighted to have been visited by quite a few representatives from Dioceses and Communities from around the world. We are encouraged by both the amount and quality of preparation to date – but a little more time wouldn't hurt.

And thirdly, you help us by registering your interest and allowing us to be more accurate in the numbers we are expecting.

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 Pilgrimage to Sydney.

Just a reminder to international Pilgrims that visas are free of Australian government charges and will be available through the registrations section on the website www.wyd2008.org More details will be released in upcoming months.

Full registration is expected to open in July 2007.

Groups: It's Time to Register - NOW!

See you in Sydney in 16 Months



Sydney opens World Youth Day registration with 500 days to go

2 March 2007: With 500 days to go until the start of World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia 2008 (WYD08), organisers today announced a package of measures for international pilgrims.

The measures include:

- A three-month standard visa, free of Government charges, for all registered pilgrims visiting Australia
- A new DVD to be issued worldwide as an invitation to Sydney, and
- The opening of online registration for pilgrim groups travelling to Sydney

Australia's Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile today announced that all registered pilgrims would automatically receive a three-month visa - free of Government charges - to enable them to see more of Australia while in the country for the XXIII World Youth Day.

"A three month visa will allow those visitors to explore more of Australia while they're here, and allows other parts of the country to share in the hosting of World Youth Day," Mr Vaile said.

"I invite pilgrims to make the most of their three-month visas and visit the Australia that stretches beyond the fringes of Sydney.

"Regional Australia – from the splendour of Uluru to the country hospitality of our wine regions to the rugged beauty of western NSW – has so much to offer our tourists," Mr Vaile said.

The new DVD - *Sydney: Witness the Spirit* - features testimonies from young Australians and stunning imagery from New South Wales and Australian tourism campaigns.

The DVD also includes personal invitations from the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell, and WYD08 Coordinator Bishop Anthony Fisher OP to the young people of the world.

"We hope they will be drawn not only by the beauty of Sydney and Australia, but also by the testimonies from young Australians who speak of the life-changing impact that past World Youth Days have had on them," Cardinal Pell said.

"The DVD will be distributed internationally and be available online."

Bishop Fisher said most pilgrims come to World Youth Day as members of diocesan pilgrim groups, religious movements and youth groups to share the pilgrim experience.

"We are opening group registrations online now – earlier than is normal for World Youth Days – to capture information on expected numbers, language groups and special needs.

"This will enable us to plan early and match groups to accommodation and catechesis sites throughout Greater Sydney."

Bishop Fisher said registration by individuals will open mid-year.

Group registration will be via the website - www.wyd2008.org – and be available in English, Italian, Spanish and French.

A paper registration process will be available for group leaders who do not have internet access.

World Youth Day is the largest youth event in the world and will attract up to 500,000 pilgrims from 15-20 July next year.