

INTERNATIONAL GATHERING OF WYD ORGANISERS
FROM SYDNEY 2008 TO MADRID 2011
Rome, 3-5 April 2009

WYD 2011: the pastoral dynamics of the preparation process

Most Rev. César Franco
Auxiliary Bishop of Madrid

I have been asked to give some thoughts on the pastoral dynamics of the WYD preparation process. First of all, I would like to say that, as we are speaking about the Church, the term *pastoral dynamics* should, in my opinion, refer to the domain of all ecclesial action, and that is the Holy Spirit. One of the names given to the Spirit in the New Testament is *dynamis* which means strength or power which comes forth from the transcendent event of the Resurrection of Christ. The Church was actually born through “the power of the Holy Spirit” (*Acts 1:8*) and lives permanently under the guidance of the Spirit. The Greek word *dynamis* also refers to the strength and power of the Risen One and the Spirit that he sent from the Father to make possible a new creation that proceeds from the paschal mystery. Every action of the Church should spring from this overflowing source of life. If we lose sight of this course of direction we could find that we are making pastoral decisions that place more emphasis on our organisational skills than on the power of the Spirit. I would like to draw our attention to some words by the then-Cardinal Ratzinger when speaking to movements and apostolic associations: “an obsession with planning could render the churches impervious to the action of the Holy Spirit, to the power of God by which they live. Not everything should be fitted into the straightjacket of a single, uniform organization. What is needed is less organization and more spirit!”¹

The pastoral dynamics of ecclesial work, according to the guidelines given to the Church by the Servant of God John Paul II for this millennium which Pope Benedict XVI re-emphasises, should put the main stress on prayer and contemplation of Christ and on the gentle action of the Holy Spirit². Therefore, we should allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life, in order to be witnesses to Christ in the world as Pope Benedict XVI urged us to be when we were in Sydney.

Having said this, I must add that the power of the Risen One and of the Spirit, according to the economy of salvation, work through human mediation that shapes the very life of the Church. WYD is organised by people, and they, in the Church as mystery of communion, must ensure that WYD is an authentic ecclesial event that manifests the power of the Spirit in a special way among the youth. The Pope, as supreme pastor of the Church, chooses the theme and explains it in an authoritative way thus giving us the thread that will go through all the events of WYD. The theme directs the path of preparation and the WYD event itself. In addition, in the path of preparation for WYD 2011, we must include the themes for the years leading up to it as they mark out the full path and offer pastoral guidelines that are very helpful.

¹ Movements in the Church: proceedings of the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements, Rome 27-29 May 1998

² John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 16s, 32, 38.

1. Basic elements and pastoral objectives of WYD

In the memorandum that the PCL gives to WYD host organisers, the **basic elements** of WYD are listed thus:

- It is an expression of the universal Church
- It is an instrument of evangelisation for young people who should receive a clear proclamation about Christ and the Church
- It is an “epiphany” of a youthful Church that shows its dynamic energy to the world and bears witness to the freshness of the Christian message
- It is a sign of communion for young people coming from the dioceses, parishes and movements
- It is a pilgrimage of faith.

WYD also has **pastoral objectives** that shape the preparation dynamics. As I list them you will see the criteria for these dynamics:

- 1 A personal life-changing encounter with Christ
- 2 An experience of the universal Catholic Church as mystery and as communion
- 3 A rediscovery on the part of young people of their baptismal vocation in which they are called to be active members of the Church and to become evangelisers and missionaries in today’s world
- 4 A rediscovery of the sacrament of Reconciliation and of the centrality of the Eucharist
- 5 Specific youth ministry proposals based on:
 - a. the message of the Holy Father centred on the essence of faith
 - b. Christocentricism that leads to a personal encounter with Christ
 - c. the ecclesial and sacramental dimension
 - d. the vocational dimension (priesthood, consecrated life, marriage)
- 6 A new thrust in faith, hope and charity for the entire Church community in the host country
- 7 Commitment on the part of young people to Christian unity.

Attentive to the nature of WYD and its pastoral objectives, I would like to offer some criteria that Pope Benedict XVI puts forward in his magisterium on youth ministry which to a large extent point to the dynamics that should animate the preparation:

2. Pastoral guidelines for WYD in the magisterium of Benedict XVI

a) *Practical and spiritual preparation*

In his address to the Roman Curia on 22 December 2008, Benedict XVI said with regard to WYD:

“it has to be realized that World Youth Days do not consist only of the one week when they are brought to the attention of the world. They are preceded by a long process of preparation both practical and spiritual. The Cross, accompanied by the icon of the Mother of the Lord, goes on pilgrimage to many countries... We also see the woman he

gave to us as our Mother. 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 Christ³.

The first guideline takes us to the long process of practical and spiritual preparation for WYD, and this should be undertaken with pastoral wisdom. Fortunately for us in Madrid, Cardinal Rouco had already initiated a Youth Mission which has put the theological and pastoral bases in place, and well as the organisational, in order to take on the task of involving young people in WYD preparation. The pilgrimage of the Cross through the parishes and communities of Madrid and the suffragan dioceses and all the dioceses of Spain, will undoubtedly contribute to the pastoral preparation with catechesis based on the mystery of redemption. Moreover, the year 2010 is a holy year in Santiago de Compostela. There will be youth pilgrimages to the tomb of the apostle that will serve as fitting preparation for 2011. I would like to insist on the inner or spiritual preparation. Here it is important to emphasise the components of Christian experience: prayer, listening to the Word of God, the celebration of the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life. We should not forget, as we were told by Benedict XVI, that at WYD “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”⁴. To introduce young people to the mystery of the liturgy is essential if WYD is to be effective. An essential element in preparation should be the celebration of faith that introduces young people to the mystery of the liturgy and the Christian mysteries.

In order to achieve this, priests and all who work in catechesis with youth should guide them towards spiritual direction or accompaniment. They should spend time on this central task. This is well described in the exhortation *Christifideles Laici* when discussing the preparation of the laity⁵. I feel that the best efforts of youth ministry, and consequently its results, derive from this field of Christian life that consists in helping young people to listen to God’s voice in their hearts and to be docile to the Holy Spirit. On this interior path catechesis is essential to help deepen into the faith and adhere to the doctrine of the apostles. A great writer of the Spanish baroque period, Baltasar Gracián, said “person without news, world in darkness”. If this can be said about simple human knowledge, then we can most certainly say that knowledge together with faith is life for the world! All of us here are clear about the importance of catechesis, and they form an important part of WYD. Many young people, including practising Catholics, are in total doctrinal confusion. Faith instinctively tries to be firm in the doctrine received from apostolic tradition that dates back to Jesus Christ. This is why the dynamics of WYD preparation must insist on catechesis as an element of faith education.

In an address given by Benedict XVI in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran to the participants in the ecclesial assembly of the diocese of Rome, when he was speaking about the education of the younger generations, he mentioned the two basic lines of our present day secularised culture. These should be taken into account when proclaiming the Christian message. These are *agnosticism* which tends to stifle the religious sense that is engraved into our nature, and *relativism* which destroys the most sacred bonds

3

Benedict XVI, Address to the members of the Roman Curia, 22-12-2008.

⁴ Benedict XVI, *ibid*

⁵ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 58.

and most worthy attachments of humankind. In a climate that invades personal conscience and personal relations, the Pope urges young people to search for truth with determination and courage. “Dear young people”, he said, “press forward, therefore, with trust and courage on the way of the search for the truth. And you, dear priests and educators, do not hesitate to promote a true and proper ‘pastoral care of the mind’ - and more widely, of the person - that takes young peoples' questions seriously, both existential questions and those that arise from comparison with the forms of rationality widespread today, in order to help them find valid and pertinent Christian answers, and lastly, to make their own that decisive response which is Christ the Lord”⁶. The clear Christ-centeredness that is of the essence of WYD, according to the PCL guidelines, allows us to insist that in WYD preparation, “Jesus Christ ‘is the Personified Truth who attracts the world to himself... Every other truth is a fragment of the Truth that he is, and refers to him’... Thus, he fills our hearts, enlarging and overwhelming them with joy, extending our minds toward unexplored horizons, offering our freedom its crucial reference point, uplifting it from the narrowness of selfishness and making it capable of authentic love”⁷. To be educated in revealed truth thus has two inseparable aspects in Christian catechesis: the affective, cordial aspect that allows us to love Truth with our human hearts, that is, to love Christ; and the intellectual aspect that enables us to give the reason for our hope to those who ask. Without pastoral dynamics of this kind, Christian life would be a house built on sand.

b) *God working in our hearts and apostolate*

On his recent visit to Angola, when Benedict XVI was speaking to young people, he pointed out the relationship between the mystery of God and the mystery of the Church. “God makes all the difference”⁸, the Pope declared at a time in history when people tend to turn their backs on God. To say that *God makes all the difference* is to declare that what is truly new in this period of history is God. This is how it is in the history of salvation that the Pope summarised in his address. He listed the milestones leading up to its fulfilment in Christ who, through the Spirit “is no longer confined to a particular place and time”⁹, but who makes us one with Him. This naturally allows us to be a sign of the presence of Christ for others.

To say that God makes all the difference is to declare that *God makes us different and renews us*, as we are told in the Apocalypses: “See, I am making all things new” (21:5; cf. 2 Cor 5: 17-18). The Church is an anticipation of this new universe that began with the resurrection of Christ. This is why the Pope encourages us to read history carefully: “You will find that the Church does not grow old with the passing of the years. Rather, she grows younger, for she is journeying towards her Lord, day by day drawing nearer to the one true fountain overflowing with youthfulness, rebirth, the power of life”¹⁰. The future is full of hope as “the future is God”, and because of the power from on high which is the Spirit, “the power to shape the future is within you”¹¹.

This must be taken into account if we are to guide WYD preparation towards a conviction that should grow in young Christians: that they have within them the dynamic power of the future. As Saint Paul said, “the truth does not deceive us”. It is

⁶ Benedict XVI, To the participants of the Ecclesial Convention of the Diocese Rome 5-6-2006.

⁷ Benedict XVI, *ibid*

⁸ Benedict XVI, Meeting with youth in Angola, 21-3-2009.

⁹ Benedict XVI, *ibid*

¹⁰ Benedict XVI, *ibid*

¹¹ Benedict XVI, *ibid*

true, and the Pope recognises this, that this dynamic power is like a seed planted in our hearts that does not sprout overnight, but “deep within the seed, the future is already present, since the seed contains tomorrow's bread, tomorrow's life. The seed seems almost nothing. But it is the presence of the future, the promise already present”¹². This dynamic action is working in the lives of young people: “you are a seed which God has sown in the world, a seed that contains power from on high, the power of the Holy Spirit”¹³. The dynamics of pastoral preparation for WYD should make it possible for young Christians to hold on to this conviction. As key players in the life of the Church and in WYD in particular, the truth they hold in their hearts will radiate out to their friends and contemporaries. It is to show others the gift that we have received from Christ so that we may be authorised witnesses to Jesus and his gospel (Sydney). Here we remember the words of Benedict XVI in his homily at the Mass at the 20th World Youth Day that was held in Cologne: “God no longer simply stands before us as the One who is totally Other. He is within us, and we are in him. His *dynamic* enters into us and then seeks to spread outwards to others until it fills the world, so that his love can truly become the dominant measure of the world”¹⁴. We should emphasise that this speaks of God’s “dynamic”, and it seeks to reach out to the whole world starting with us.

c) *The joy of faith*

In his evaluation of WYD in Sydney, Benedict XVI said that “Those days were festive for everyone. Indeed, it was only then that people came to realize what a celebration really is”¹⁵. In speaking about what is new about this celebration, one that cannot be compared to a rock festival, the Pope stated that: “Friedrich Nietzsche once said: ‘The important thing is not to be able to organize a party but to find people who can enjoy it’. According to Scripture, joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gal 5:22*). This fruit was abundantly visible during those days in Sydney. Just as a long journey precedes the celebration of World Youth Day, a continuing journey follows it. Friendships are formed which encourage a different way of life and which give it deep support. The purpose of these great Days is, not least, to inspire such friendships and so to create places of living faith in the world, places which are, at the same time, settings of hope and practical charity”¹⁶.

WYD brings about new friendships and new places of life and hope, and this is also true of the period of preparation if it is well used. It can build up the Church through relations with youth, movements, associations, parishes, etc. In fact, it is the Church being experienced as a communion of relationships in Jesus Christ that allows us to give the best of ourselves and put ourselves at the service of others, and therefore of Christ. The dynamics of voluntary service, an important dimension of WYD, families

¹² Benedict XVI, *ibid*

¹³ Benedict XVI, *ibid*

¹⁴ Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Mass in Marienfeld (Cologne)*, 21-8-2005.

¹⁵ Benedict XVI, Benedict XVI, Address to the members of the Roman Curia, 22-12-2008.

¹⁶ Benedict XVI, *ibid*. It is essential that we help young people to experience a real celebration in the Christian faith that can avoid the alienation that many youth suffer as they are trapped in festivities and partying that totally lack authenticity. Regarding this, there is an interesting metaphor by the poet Rilke in the tenth Duino elegy in which he presents a world merrymaking where those who take part become estranged as they drink beer called “Deathless”. They live in a false world and turn their backs to the mortal condition. Christian faith, on the contrary, shows us how to face death with realism for it has been overcome by the Resurrection. That is why true joy comes from the certainty of this victory.

and apostolic groups opening their homes to welcome pilgrims, show that there are relationships in the Church that are not born of flesh and blood, but in faith in Jesus Christ. He joins us to himself to be part of his family, we are told in the gospel. For this reason, it is important that, in the preparation as well as in the WYD event and the follow up, we should animate everything from this life experience that Jesus Christ created among his members and that young people in particular, once they discover it, want to be part of it. The facility with which young people accept ties of friendship is helped further by the attraction of the Church itself where all peoples are united (ecumenism), etc. WYD is a wonderful opportunity to experience ecclesial communion where catholicity is emphasised. This appears very expressively in the ministry of Pentecost (Sydney and the sacrament of Confirmation).

The connection of the Church-communion experience with the joy of faith is lived in the *festivities* of each WYD. This true joy arises because one feels loved and cherished for being oneself, something that is specific to the Creator. God created us in a remarkable act of love. Moreover, God's love renews us with forgiveness and mercy. The experience of this love is essential for us to feel we are Christians, John Paul II tells us in his first encyclical which reached its thirtieth anniversary on 4 March, *Redemptor hominis*¹⁷. The specific vocation of the Church is to show God's love to humankind and hence to allow people to experience this love that will fill their hearts with joy. Benedict XVI stated that "this certitude and this joy of being loved by God must be conveyed in some palpable and practical way to each one of us, and especially to the young generations who are entering the world of faith [...] It is therefore indispensable that the new generations experience the Church as a company of friends who are truly dependable and close in all life's moments and circumstances, whether joyful and gratifying or arduous and obscure; as a company that will never fail us, not even in death, for it carries within it the promise of eternity"¹⁸.

If we educate young people in this way, and if we guide them on the path of learning about the love that is found in the Church, then the dynamic of love will become the style of life of those young people. "Anyone who knows he is loved is in turn prompted to love. It is the Lord himself, who loved us first, who asks us to place at the centre of our lives love for him and for the people he has loved"¹⁹. For this reason, it is essential to introduce young people "to the integral dimension of Christian love, where love for God and love for humankind are indissolubly united, and where love of neighbour is a particularly concrete commitment. Christians cannot be satisfied with words or deceptive ideologies but must go to meet the needs of their brethren, truly offering themselves without being content with some sporadic good deed"²⁰. The Pope suggests that young people be offered opportunities for service to those in need as part of a genuine education in the faith. In WYD preparation these experiences should not be lacking in Church communities as signs of a pilgrimage that makes us go beyond ourselves and out to those most in need. It must not fail to have a spirit of solidarity with those young people who lack financial resources but that should not be excluded from taking part in WYD where they can experience the joy of celebration. It is a celebration that expresses and celebrates the love of Christ, the love that is the strength of the Church, the only dynamic capable of conducting the human person towards self fulfilment.

¹⁷ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, 10.

¹⁸ Benedict XVI, To the participants of the Ecclesial Convention of the Diocese Rome 5-6-2006.

¹⁹ Benedict XVI, *ibid*

²⁰ Benedict XVI, *ibid*

In conclusion, I would like to refer to Saint Augustine's conversion as narrated by Bianchi and Corti, because here we clearly see the impact on this great pastor of the Church through his encounter with the Christian community in Milan. He experienced the festive joy of a community where the power of the Holy Spirit could be felt, that is, the dynamic that moves the Church:

“He ‘saw’ the Church there and recognised the primary traits of its face. Several people, surely very important to him, contributed in a significant way to making it visible. But the whole Christian community also took part. It was this encounter that, by the grace of God, moved him to ‘enter’ the Church. He wrote: ‘I saw the church filled with the faithful: one went one way, another went another way’. They were people from every social class, from the most simple to the scholarly. That community allowed Augustine to comprehend what was at the centre. Thus, together with their bishop, they all gathered around the Lord Jesus Christ. Ambrose said: ‘In Christ we have everything and Christ is everything for us’. Nor did Augustine find it difficult to grasp the element that inspired the way of that community. Ambrose meditated on the Sacred Scriptures and preached them constantly and abundantly: ‘it is necessary to grind and convert to flour the words of the heavenly Scriptures, to try with all our mind and all our heart for the lymph of spiritual food to spread throughout all the veins of the soul’. Those people were encouraged to live according to the sober beauty of the Spirit:

Christ be our food
May faith be our drink
Joyfully let us drink the sober
Intoxication of the Spirit.

Augustine was moved as he listened to these people sing. He admired them most of all because they did so even on difficult days. The intoxication of the Spirit created an atmosphere of joy and courage in the community. It also led to the hope of people who consecrated themselves fully to the Lord. This environment converted the Christian community of Milan into a fascinating garden for those who were still hesitant in their faith. It was not only song that made that Church fascinating and beautiful. The martyrs made it even more so. The bishop paid them the highest honour and wanted the people to interpret their own experience of faith by securing it with those who had sacrificed their lives for love of Christ. Neither was there any lack of dialogue in Milan with the society and culture of his time. People who were particularly equipped for this service were highly respected²¹.

²¹ E. Bianchi- R. Corti, *La Parroquia*, 88-89 [Our translation]