

“And the Word became flesh.”

(Jn 1:14)

## Message Of Hope



What a marvelous example we have in the life of Blessed **Pier Giorgio Frassati**, a young modern saint whom Pope John Paul II called “The Man of the Beatitudes”. The extent of his selfless service of the poor only became known even by his family at the time of his funeral, when thousands turned out at the Cathedral of Turin, including about 100 families who were being sustained by his own personal wealth. As a 24 year old heir to his father’s media fortune, an avid sportsman, an adherent of Catholic social action, this dynamic man of prayer and friendship provides the youth of today with an ideal model.

Pier Giorgio Frassati is our feature saint in this eDITION which focuses upon God becoming man, with His joining Himself to the creation so he could raise the likes of Pier Giorgio to himself. The phrase “**And the Word became flesh**” (Jn 1:14) coined by St John, strangely expresses the reality that shows how God touches us. Our Pilgrim Prayer for this month, **The Angelus**, focuses our minds and hearts upon the event of the Incarnation – when the Word became flesh – the moment Jesus the Man-God was conceived in the womb of Mary, when the eternal Son of God entered into time and space. Let us pray this prayer each day.

We consider also the words of **Pope John Paul II** in his WYD 2000 Rome homily where he took this theme, and see the impact of that particular WYD in this month’s **Testimony** of Daniel. For our **Place of Pilgrimage**, we stay in Rome and reflect on how the Incarnation of the Son of God extends into history through the Church, and how its mission to announce salvation and God’s love is imprinted in cultures, architecture and in the lives of the saints.

Two years out from WYD08 become activated through various pastoral materials, events and preparatory activities now available from your local WYD08 representative or on [www.wyd2008.org](http://www.wyd2008.org). Check out the new **Activ8 Faith Discussions** also in Towards 2008.

+Anthony Fisher OP  
Coordinator of World Youth Day 2008



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## Faith Foundations

### The Humanity of God.

One of the most central, yet most shocking aspects of the Christian faith is the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth “born a Jew of a daughter of Israel in Bethlehem” at a particular time (around 2,006 years ago), and who died on the Cross, is also God the Almighty’s “only beloved” Eternal Son.



[www.theinstitute.org](http://www.theinstitute.org)

In believing in Jesus the Christ, Christians understand that the One undescrivable and mysterious Creator and sustainer of all existence, the Lord God, is also a God who is a loving communion of three totally knowing, giving and loving Persons- who wishes to communicate truth, goodness, love and beauty to us.

This understanding of God as **The Blessed Trinity** (i.e. three-in-one) is a mystery that seems to stretch the human mind and human heart beyond to its limits. How could God who is “pure spirit” also be a God “who became flesh”? How can the Lord of the Universe become a baby in a stable or a executed man? This seems like the meeting of opposite possibilities, a total paradox.

But as Pope Benedict XVI has said recently, this **paradox** is the secret of God’s identity. Only a God who is truly great and truly unbounded, can make himself enter smallness and human limitation out of love for his creation. (Homily at Christmas Midnight Mass 2005)

For the significance of this faith in the **Incarnation** (literally the “coming into flesh”) is that God is not remote, alienated or abstracted from all that it means to be a human being. Nor is God merely captured within our narrow and rather petty imaginations. For by our own efforts we cannot make “ourselves like gods” without making ourselves like monsters.

Rather in Jesus Christ, God’s love becomes the most explosive and important “event” in human history - because as a gift this love can be seen, touched and finally “tasted” even by us today.

Christians believe that this receiving of the Jesus’ life and love, is also a

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## Faith Foundations [cont]

meeting with the healing and merciful love of God for which all human beings hunger and thirst. Jesus Christ is the doorway, the goal and the Person who enables us to be able to touch the otherwise transcendent God.

Because Jesus is God’s love emptied into human “flesh” - the human body is given new dignity and meaning. In loving his brothers and sisters “unto death”, Jesus’ death on the cross and his Resurrection serve as the sign and means of our own re-creation and resurrection: body and soul.

Likewise, our serving and touching other people out of love and mercy, becomes a way of loving them with the love of God in Christ.

Christians realize that they need constantly to re-meet Jesus – in prayer, in the pages of Scripture and by lives of loving grace and virtue. They also need to be personally nourished by seeing, tasting and touching Him in the sacraments - particularly in the Eucharist.



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## Pilgrim Prayer

### The Angelus



[Click to listen](#)

The Angelus is a daily prayer of the Catholic Church, usually recited three times daily, as announced by a bell, traditionally at six in the morning, at noon, and at six in the evening. It is said in honour of the Incarnation and consists of three repetitions of the Hail Mary together with verses and a prayer.

It takes its name from the opening word of the Latin version: Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae [The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary].

V: The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary

R: And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

V: Hail Mary, full of grace: The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God: Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V: Behold, the handmaid of the Lord.

R: Be it done unto me according to your word.

V: Hail Mary ...

V: And the Word was made flesh (bow or genuflect to honour the moment of Incarnation)

R: And dwelt among us.

V: Hail Mary ...

V: Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,

R: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

V: Let us pray.

**All:** Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace unto our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, thy Son, was made known by the message of an Angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ, our Lord, Amen.

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## Inspired Writings

**Pope John Paul II**

**Sunday 20 August**

**Excerpts from the Homily from WYD 2000 Rome Mass**

This is the stupendous truth, dear friends: the Word, who took flesh two thousand years ago, is present today in the Eucharist. That is why the year of the Great Jubilee, in which we are celebrating the mystery of the Incarnation, had to be an “intensely Eucharistic” year as well (cf. Tertio Millennio Adveniente, 55).

The Eucharist is the sacrament of the presence of Christ, who gives himself to us because he loves us. He loves each one of us in a unique and personal way in our practical daily lives: in our families, among our friends, at study and work, in rest and relaxation. He loves us when he fills our days with freshness, and also when, in times of suffering, he allows trials to weigh upon us: even in the most severe trials, he lets us hear his voice.

Yes, dear friends, Christ loves us and he loves us for ever! He loves us even when we disappoint him, when we fail to meet his expectations for us. He never fails to embrace us in his mercy. How can we not be grateful to this God who has redeemed us, going so far as to accept the foolishness of the Cross? To God who has come to be at our side and has stayed with us to the end?

To celebrate the Eucharist, “to eat his flesh and drink his blood”, means to accept the wisdom of the Cross and the path of service. It means that we signal our willingness to sacrifice ourselves for others, as Christ has done.

Our society desperately needs this sign, and young people need it even more so, tempted as they often are by the illusion of an easy and comfortable life, by drugs and pleasure-seeking, only to find themselves in a spiral of despair, meaninglessness and violence. It is urgent to change direction and to turn to Christ. This is the way of justice, solidarity and commitment to building a society and a future worthy of the human person.

This is our Eucharist; this is the answer that Christ wants from us, from you young people at the closing of your Jubilee. Jesus is no lover of half measures, and he does not hesitate to pursue us with the question: “Will you also go away?” In the presence of Christ, the Bread of Life, we too want to say today with Peter:

“Lord, to whom shall we go?  
You have the words of eternal  
life” (Jn 6:68).



**Alice Priest with Pope John Paul II at WYD in Rome, 2000. Alice has recently been appointed the Pastoral Planner of the Journey of the WYD Cross and Icon in Australia.**



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## Testimony Of Faith

Daniel



World Youth Day in 2000 was a pivotal part of my journey as a young Christian. When I heard about it from the assistant priest in my parish in southern NSW, I was intrigued but didn't really know what it was. The idea of WYD was still only relatively new to Australians living outside major cities. After some inquiry and thought it was decided that I should go, and our small group of 15 from Wollongong joined up with the large group traveling from Melbourne. The lead up to WYD was an amazing demonstration of God's providence. I had no job, no money and my parents could not pay for the entire pilgrimage. Nevertheless, before time was out I had the entire trip paid for with spending money- what a blessing!

The Pilgrimage itself was an incredible series of events. Traveling with hundreds of youth around the Holy Land (Israel) and Rome during the Jubilee year could not but be fun, spiritual, uplifting and life changing. I cannot recount all the details of the deep journey of faith that was WYD 2000, but one incident was quite pivotal to my formation as a child of God.

In Nazareth I made the first good confession of my sins in years. For a long time I had attempted to hide some of my faults from God and did not confess them to the priest who was there representing Christ. In short, I was too embarrassed to admit to them, even anonymously behind a confessional grill. After visiting the large and awesome Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, it simply dawned upon me that I needed to go to the priest and confess my faults against God. I went up to a priest, without the anonymity of the confessional, and bared my soul to Christ. There was no clap of thunder, no sweet music from on high, but I felt a huge burden lifted from my soul. My guardian Angel must have been very happy! I did not receive any special grace to stop me from sinning again and I have had to return many many times to reconcile myself, but the grace of the WYD pilgrimage gave me the courage to “open wide the doors to Christ” through the sacrament of penance.

The WYD pilgrimage was an unfathomably life-changing experience. Youth, prayer, sacraments, churches, history, biblical sites, relics and the presence of the Holy Father among a crowd of two million people was something no words can describe and I don't think that anything can compare to it in this world. The pilgrimage wasn't easy for any of us- I had to walk barefoot for 30 km on an



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## Testimony Of Faith

asphalt road in 45-degree heat because I lost my shoes- but the spirit of sacrifice was strong.

In general WYD taught me that I needed to grow up as a Catholic. WYD was not a big ‘conversion experience’ for me (though many of these occurred). I was already a well-formed young boy from a good Catholic home (aka cradle Catholic). Nevertheless, there comes a point where one must make a personal commitment to take your faith seriously, not simply participate with your family’s guidance. I know WYD was where I made that subconscious commitment. The prayers and Masses with so many young people gave me a hope and courage that I could not have found anywhere else on this planet. I hope and pray that many people who come to Sydney in 2008 will have a similar experience of God’s Mercy and Grace- I’m sure they will!

Daniel represents the Australian Catholic Students Association



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## Saints And Witnesses

### Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati (Patron of the Young; Special patron of World Youth Day)

Pier Giorgio Frassati was born in the Northern Italian industrial town of Turin, on 6th April 1901, one of two children of a wealthy newspaper owner and his wife.



In many ways Pier Giorgio has the profile of a typical student leader and activist: he was lively, handsome, athletic, popular - someone who looked forward to becoming a professional engineer and to find and fall in love with someone he could marry.

But it was said of this young man, that he was lit from within by the glow of his faith in Christ and his love for the poor, the disabled and those in need.

As a young boy Pier impressed people with his love of Jesus Christ present in the Holy Eucharist, and by his commitment to personal prayer as well as his growing concern for those less fortunate than himself. Much of his good work only became obvious at his death.

As a university student his concern drew him to join the **St Vincent De Paul Society**, where he became an outstanding and happy leader. Without drawing attention to himself at all, he would tirelessly give away to the poor presents, food, advice, school fees, clothes and all but a few of his own pennies. On some weekends he would visit over 50 houses and developed a particular love of the



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## Saints And Witnesses [cont]

sick and children.

Despite being born into an influential and wealthy family he was deeply impressed by the Catholic Church’s **social teaching** and worked for social reform by joining the Italian People’s Party.

At University, Pier Giorgio became a leader within the Federation of Italian Catholic University Students, where he worked for justice and spiritual encouragement and support of the young. He and his fellow students faced armed resistance and violence from the anti-Catholic police during several public rallies for the faith.

He sought to deepen his public witness as an “apostle” to his Catholic faith by becoming a member of the **Order of St Dominic** as a lay member (a Dominican tertiary). He was deeply troubled by the growth of **fascism** and other warlike movements and threw himself into the cause for international peace through the solidarity of Catholic students and helped to organize a special conference in Ravenna in 1921 called the **Pax Romana**.

He said, “No human being should ever be abandoned whatever his race or religion: charity should surmount all barriers.”

Two huge surprises were to break into Pier Giorgio’s family. The first was that he became suddenly ill with polio while preparing for his final exams and died on July 4th, 1925. It is thought that he probably caught this disease from the poor he cared for so often. The second shock was the enormous crowd of people who poured into the family home to be near his coffin and the thousands of young, poor and unknown people who streamed around the funeral procession to pay tribute to Pier Giorgio through the streets of Turin.

Pier Giorgio was beatified on May 20, 1990 by Pope John Paul II who said: “Faith and charity, the true driving forces of his existence, made him active and diligent in the milieu in which he lived, in his family and school, in the university and society; they transformed him into a joyful, enthusiastic apostle of Christ, a passionate follower of his message and charity.”



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## Place Of Pilgrimage

### Rome- The Eternal City



Before Rome became the capital city of Western Catholicism, there was already a saying in Ancient Rome that “all roads lead to Rome.”

There are hundreds of pilgrimage routes, churches, tombs, memorials and sites crammed into every corner and level of the three thousand year old Rome. It would take more than a lifetime to visit them all.

The apostles Saints Peter and Paul came to pagan Rome after about 58 AD and it was their leadership of the Church and their missionary energy which established Rome at the heart of Christian faith.

The two great saints not only lived and worked with the Christians in Rome, they also suffered imprisonment, torture and cruel execution for their faith under the Roman emperor Nero (c. 65 AD). Their persecution and death were seen as glorious and powerful witness to Jesus Christ and the saints

were called **martyrs** (which means “witnesses”).

In fact the largest pilgrimage building in the world is the great Basilica of St Peter’s built over the bones of the saint to whom Jesus gave the “keys” of the Church. The first Pope, St Peter, in his life and death established Rome as the the mother diocese of the Catholic Church (now called the **Holy See**).

For the first three hundred years after the arrival of Christians in Rome, the faith was to thrive despite brutal persecutions and executions. Indeed the faith was said to be watered and made fruitful with the “blood of the martyrs”.

The burial sites of many Roman martyrs which included the first Popes and Bishops, widows, rich, poor and young Christian girls and boys almost immediately became spiritual treasures for Christians. Churches and altars were built over the bones of the saints.

A vast system of over 40 underground burial sites lie around the city of Rome which contain altars and wall paintings of the earliest Christian art. These are called the **catcombs** and many of these have been restored and remain



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## Place Of Pilgrimage



important and moving places of veneration for Christian pilgrims today.

The turbulent and sometimes catastrophic history of Rome saw the acceptance of Christianity, then endless power plays, raids, invasions and sieges of the City and exiles and imprisonment of the Popes. Somehow the City remained “eternal” in the hearts of Christian pilgrims, artists, writers and spiritual leaders who kept visiting Rome despite the disasters.

During the great revival (a period called the **Renaissance**) of the city during the 15th century many of the most well known and magnificent Churches and monuments were built over the ancient tombs and churches.

One important tradition, which began in the 7th century, is for a pilgrim to visit the **Seven Great Churches** of Rome by foot: the Basilicas of St Peter, St John Lateran, St Mary Major (Maria Maggiore), St Paul’s outside the Walls, St Laurence, Holy Cross and St Sebastian.

There are other important spaces and Churches celebrate the great spiritual renewals of the Church including those associated the saintly visitors and residents of Rome. These include: Saints Benedict, Dominic, Francis of Assisi, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, Frances of Rome, Ignatius, Pius V, Charles Borromeo, Philip Neri, Paul of the Cross, Benedict Joseph Labre and many more.

One of the most popular pilgrimage sites today is the tomb of the The Servant of God, Pope John Paul II, which can be reached through the Crypt of St Peter’s.



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## Towards WYD 2008

### Launch of Activ8



Less than two years to go!! That's exciting and a bit frightening. The time will just fly by and there is a lot to do – but what a month we have had!

The countdown clock was launched on the website by Bishop Anthony, the two year pre-anniversary celebrations were completed, the Activ8 programme and booklet was launched, the World Youth Day 2008 “get with the spirit” DVD was launched and we had time to catch our breath as well.

The two year pre-anniversary celebrations were a great success. The Dioceses across Australia really got behind the pre-anniversary with a wide variety of functions. In Brisbane, over 1,000 young people celebrated in a mini youth festival atmosphere, in Perth 800 youth joined Bishops Fisher and Sproxtton for Mass and celebrations, Melbourne held a very powerful and moving Holy Hour

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## Towards WYD 2008



at St Patrick's Cathedral and in Sydney hundreds of parishioners participated in Catechesis delivered by Bishops Fisher, Porteous and Cremin on the WYD08 theme subject of "Power". The Diocese of Wagga launched their Activ8 campaign in their Cathedral on the 19th July, two years till the Holy Father would gather for the WYD08 Vigil. Many of these diocesan events were supported by wonderful presentations of music and testimony from a number of young people that had been on previous WYD pilgrimages.

While the two year pre-anniversary celebrations are over – the spirit from those celebrations and the enthusiasm that they generated remain with us. World Youth Day has always energised the Church and now the whole Church in Australia is sharing and building that energy.

Last month also saw the launch of Activ8. This is the name of the pastoral programme of events, activities and materials developed by WYD08 to prepare our young people across the dioceses, in our parishes, youth groups, schools, universities and homes. The name Activ8 is drawn from "Acts 1 v 8", the scriptural reference of the WYD08 theme chosen by the Holy Father. As a phone text message in English it becomes Activ8 or "activate" which is what is happening all across the Church.

The "get with the spirit" DVD has also hit the streets. It introduces World Youth Day to those who have basic questions about its history, its elements and its impact on the lives of young people. It is full of interesting and inspiring information as well as testimonies of young people who have come back from WYDs inspired in faith and filled with much hope for the future. "get with the spirit" is full of colour, music and life. Have a look at it on the website [www.wyd2008.org](http://www.wyd2008.org). Copies have been sent to all Australia local Diocesan Committee members and schools in Australia. Why not meet with your friends, look at the DVD, "get with the spirit" and energise your involvement in the preparation, the events of 2008 and the next 20 years in the Church!!!!

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## Towards WYD 2008

### World Youth Day blast off

By Bishop Anthony Fisher op  
Catholic Weekly 23 July, 2006



TWO years to go to the biggest youth event in the history of our nation. More than 150,000 young people from around the world will join a similar number of young Aussies for a week of catechesis and prayer, celebration and liturgy, festival and fun. By the end of that week from July 15-20, 2008, numbers will have swollen to over half a million.

But in the end it is not the numbers that matter. It is what it will do for some of our young people and for those who are touched in turn by them. Some will have a great time and that's what they'll remember. But for many it will be really life-changing. It is a dangerous thing to have that much fun with God and his Church! Who knows what he will do with you? For as the theme states "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

WYD08 is a once in a life-time opportunity for us here in Australia to connect young people with every corner and apostolate of our Church and to renew our Church and society in the process. Young people need Christ and his Church in their searching, and the Church, in turn, needs young people for her renewal. In his letter to us here in Australia, *Ecclesia in Oceania* (2001), Pope John Paul II said: "Above all, the Fathers of the Synod wanted to touch the hearts of young people. Many young people are searching for truth and goodness, and their search can involve experimenting with the appeals and claims of the contemporary world, some of which are clearly destructive. This can create confusion in the young which leaves them at a loss to know what true values might be and where true happiness might be found. The great challenge and opportunity is to offer them the gifts of Jesus Christ in the Church, for these gifts alone will satisfy their yearning. But Christ must be presented in a way well adapted to the younger generation and the rapidly changing culture in which they live." (14)

The gift of World Youth Day is a new opportunity to give our young people these gifts of Jesus Christ in the Church and to build with and for and through them a new future.

Last weekend we marked the two-year pre-anniversary of WYD08 by launching *Activ8*, our program of evangelisation, catechesis and prayer with our young people to help prepare and *activ8* them for one of the greatest experiences of their lives. But the young are not just passive recipients of the Gospel of Adults. They are disciples and evangelists themselves. Think of Mary at the time of the Annunciation or John at the time of the Crucifixion. They were teenagers, but what a difference they made! Echoing the thoughts of our region's bishops, John Paul noted in *Ecclesia in Oceania* that he wanted to assure the youth of the Church in Oceania that they are... a vital part of the Church today, and that Church leaders are keen to find ways to involve young people more fully in the

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## Towards WYD 2008

### World Youth Day blast off

By Bishop Anthony Fisher op  
Catholic Weekly 23 July, 2006



Church's life and mission. Young Catholics are called to follow Jesus: not just in the future as adults, but now as maturing disciples...The Synod Fathers were convinced of the need for youth-to-youth ministry... (44)

Or as Pope Benedict XVI so beautifully said to the young people at Cologne:

“If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed ... Open wide your hearts to God! Let yourselves be surprised by Christ! Open the doors of your freedom to his merciful love!”

In the next few weeks all the parishes around Australia, the youth groups and movements and others will receive DVDs and booklets explaining what World Youth Day is, why we wanted one for Australia, what our plans are so far, how we see things panning out, and how you can be involved. A WYD curriculum will be in place for our schools. There will be events to mark the pre-anniversary.

To the young people of Australia we say: Get ready for the ride of your life!

Let the Holy Spirit of God fill you with his power to become Christ's witnesses to a new millennium.

Be all that you can be and more. Be the young apostles of a new millennium.

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## Activ8 Faith Discussions

This new element of the monthly ePILGRIMAGE provides some points of discussion that can be utilised in a school, parish and family communities. The following could be considered for this Activ8 in Faith section of the ePILGRIMAGE:

- In parish youth groups, ensure that each member receives the monthly ePILGRIMAGE and have a session where the points of discussion are presented and shared by the group
- In school communities, teachers could have a monthly staff gathering to unpack each of the elements of the ePILGRIMAGE as part of staff development
- In religious education classes once per month, students could form a small discussion group to contemplate and respond to the questions posed in each ePILGRIMAGE edition.
- Families could also reflect and discuss each week upon a different section of the ePILGRIMAGE to deepen their faith foundations together.



These are some of the reflections for the month of August 2006

### Faith Foundations

Our serving and touching other people out of love and mercy, becomes a way of loving them with the love of God in Christ

1. Can you locate in the New Testament, examples of Jesus Christ “healing” people?
2. Explain how he offers physical and spiritual healing in the story you find. What does this tell us about God’s plan for us today?

### Saints and Witness

Pier Giorgio Frassati continued to live “a spirit of poverty” by giving away his possessions and his time and energy to those who were needy. His father called him a “good for nothing”.

- How does the ‘spirit of poverty’ as lived by Pier Giorgio, Mother Teresa and St Francis differ? How can we live that spirit in our own time and situation?
- Why would Pier Giorgio’s father misunderstand him?



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## Activ8 Faith Discussions

### Places of Pilgrimage

The eternal city of Rome

- Catholic Churches continue the early Roman tradition of celebrating the liturgy over the bones of martyrs by placing the relics of the saints in their modern altars. Find out which saints are honoured in the altar of your parish or a nearby Catholic Church.
- St Paul was imprisoned several times by the Roman authorities. Can you find out about those persecuted for their faith in today's world? What do they show us about being a “witness” today? Make a scrapbook of “modern martyrs”.

### Towards 2008

It is now less than two years until the celebration of WYD08 takes place in Sydney.

- In what ways can I become ‘Activated’ so that I make the most of this amazing faith experience?
- What can I do within my school or parish or university to ensure that there is a group of young people from this faith community that will take the pilgrim journey both spiritually and physically to Sydney, July 15-20, 2008?
- How could I encourage as many friends to share the pilgrim road with me by registering them to receive the monthly ePILGRIMAGE too – so that we can meet and talk about the great messages of hope, inspiring words and prayers on a regular basis?

