

“Let it be done according to thy Word”

[Lk 1:38]

## Message Of Hope

During last year's WYD celebrations in Cologne, I walked down to the Koln Messe, a big exhibition pavilion on the banks of the Rhine River. Aussie pilgrims were gathering in this building on the Tuesday to meet and be witnesses to their faith and country. As the Aussies streamed to the exhibition hall in the foyer area, 100 confessional 'booths' were being set up. I remember thinking what a sight it would be over the subsequent days to see young pilgrims line up in their hundreds to receive this sacrament of the Lord's mercy - from priests that had also made their spiritual and physical pilgrimage to Cologne from all over the world.

I had heard many times of the massive confessional area that is a feature of international WYD gatherings - Circus Maximus in Rome that had hundreds of priests hearing confessions 24/7 of millions of gathered pilgrims, and in Toronto's Duc in Altum Park during WYD 2002 where over 200 priests from early until late heard pilgrim confessions.



'Beneath the Southern Cross'  
by Aline de Leandro

Many young pilgrims have rediscovered this beautiful Sacrament through their WYD experiences. Many testify that during their WYD pilgrimage they were inspired to make a confession again after many years. Pilgrimages like WYD are often a time to examine where we are going with our lives, what we have done, who we have become in the process and to begin a new chapter with God. It is hoped that there will be a similar impact upon the hundreds of thousands of young pilgrims attending WYD08 in Sydney.

The Lord's gift of forgiveness, his Divine Mercy, is there for all who are suffering with the weight of sin - not just at WYD, but at every parish, through every priest, every day. To seek God's forgiveness through confession is a form of spiritual healing and an efficacious sign that Christ loves each of us unconditionally. Make time this month to visit your local parish priest to reconnect with this wonderful element of the Sacramental life of the Church.

+Anthony Fisher OP

Coordinator of World Youth Day 2008



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## Faith Foundations

### Immaculate Conception

Some of the great leaders and prophets of Israel are called by the Lord before they are born, while “being knit together” in the “secret” of their mothers’ wombs. The prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5), Jacob (Gen 25:24) and later St John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-25) begin their important missions as unborn babies.



The Immaculate Conception  
(1767-69) by Giovanni Battista  
TIEPOLO

The Lord God seemed to the Jewish people to reveal the promise of his love, his amazing bounty and his continuing presence, through these special and surprising babies.

For Christians, there was one human person through whom the healing and saving “word” and call of God was most completely and faithfully heard and followed.

As Christians reflected upon both the Jewish scriptures and their Gospels, they saw that God had “anointed” **the Blessed Virgin Mary** to be the fresh-flowering fulfilment of all the faithful responses and holy lives of her people before her.

Her total “yes” to God’s grace-filled invitation that she become the Mother of the Messiah by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit (called Christ’s **Virgin Birth**), enabled Jesus Christ to enter human history as both the saviour God and as our brother “like us in all things but sin.”

The early theologians called Mary, the Mother of God “the **All-Holy**” (**Panagia**). Mary’s co-operation was gifted by God to be untouched by the general blindness and moral weakness of humankind (we call **original sin**). Nor at any time did she turn away from God herself in **personal sin**.

From the beginning Christians realised that the angel Gabriel arrived to invite Mary to have first-place in God’s saving plan for the world, and found her already “full of grace” and living completely in God’s presence (Luke 1:28).

In 1854 Pope Pius IX drew together these insights, teaching definitively that Mary’s was the **Immaculate Conception** – that from her human conception she was also made by God a “new creation” from her first moments of existence through the saving power that her Son would bring into the world.



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## Pilgrim Prayer

Through the Blessed Virgin Mary’s instructions given to St Catherine Labouré in 1830 to have a medal struck in her honour, we have received a very simple yet powerful prayer to ask the help of Mary, The Immaculate Conception.

**O Mary, conceived without sin  
Pray for us who have recourse to you**

Let us find in her a source of encouragement in our difficulties and light in our moments of darkness and fear. She reminds us that the victory of Christ can be alive in us.



‘Miraculous Mary Medal’ inspired by the vision of Our Lady to St Catherine Labouré

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## Inspired Writings

### LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO WOMEN

29 June 1995.

This word of thanks to the Lord for his mysterious plan regarding the vocation and mission of women in the world is at the same time a concrete and direct word of thanks to women, to every woman, for all that they represent in the life of humanity.

Thank you, **women who are mothers!** You have sheltered human beings within yourselves in a unique experience of joy and travail. This experience makes you become God’s own smile upon the newborn child, the one who guides your child’s first steps, who helps it to grow, and who is the anchor as the child makes its way along the journey of life.

Thank you, **women who are wives!** You irrevocably join your future to that of your husbands, in a relationship of mutual giving, at the service of love and life.

Thank you, **women who are daughters** and **women who are sisters!** Into the heart of the family, and then of all society, you bring the richness of your sensitivity, your intuitiveness, your generosity and fidelity.

Thank you, **women who work!** You are present and active in every area of life - social, economic, cultural, artistic and political. In this way you make an indispensable contribution to the growth of a culture which unites reason and feeling, to a model of life ever open to the sense of “mystery”, to the establishment of economic and political structures ever more worthy of humanity.

Thank you, **consecrated women!** Following the example of the greatest of women, the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, you open yourselves with obedience and fidelity to the gift of God’s love. You help the Church and all mankind to experience a “spousal” relationship to God, one which magnificently expresses the fellowship which God wishes to establish with his creatures.

Thank you, **every woman,** for the simple fact of being a **woman!** Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world’s understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic.



Pope John Paul II kisses the forehead of 20-day old Louise carried by her mother Anne Carnapete from France outside Paris’s St Etienne-du-Mont church where the Pope celebrated a Mass for World Youth Day, 23 August 1997.

Click here for full letter

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_29061995\\_women\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women_en.html)

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## Testimony Of Faith

Naomi, Archdiocese of Hobart



I think that I was expecting to gain from WYD a stronger and clearer picture of my faith, and a better understanding of who I was as an individual. Now, over a year since I have returned from the pilgrimage, I find that what I actually experienced was vastly different from what I expected.

Before going on pilgrimage I had struggled a lot with my faith, and questioned many times whether I wanted to remain a Catholic at all.

Though I loved being an active member of my parish and going to Mass every Sunday to altar serve and worship, I often felt uncomfortable with some of the Church’s teachings and therefore wondered whether the Church was really for me.

After going on pilgrimage and being surrounded by so many hopeful young Catholics, I began to regain faith in God. However, it was not the same picture-book version I had once believed in, but a God that could be found in people: in their kindness, compassion and determination to make the world a better and more joyful place.

This realisation also strengthened my conviction in the work I do to promote social justice (i.e. through my involvement in organisations like St Vincent de Paul, The Red Cross and Amnesty International). I realised that I mustn’t become caught up with hopelessness when faced with suffering in the world, but move forward in the knowledge that I not only have the support of the countless others who also strive to better the world, but that this is something that I am called to do. I now firmly believe that I can no longer stand idle when I see suffering, but am compelled by the teachings of Jesus to make change, and that our faith cannot only be words and reflections, but must be action also.

After returning from Cologne I also realised that whilst I still have many questions about my faith, this is okay because the Church is so broad and so diverse that I still can fit in regardless.

World Youth Day was such an amazing and inspiring experience, and even now it is hard to explain the effect it had on me! All I can say is that for everyone the experience is different – so to fully understand the impact it can have, you’ll just have to go yourself!

Naomi is from the Archdiocese of Hobart



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## Saints and Witnesses

### St Gianna Beretta Molla

Gianna Beretta was born into a lively and prayerful Catholic family of 13 children. From an early age she and her brothers became very active in the care of the sick and the poor. Gianna was a popular and sporty leader within the St Vincent De Paul Society and Catholic Action even while she was busy studying at university in the demanding degrees of medicine and surgery.



St Gianna Beretta Molla

In 1950 she and her physician brother established a medical clinic for disadvantaged mothers and children. Gianna specialised in pediatrics and called the care of the very youngest members of the human family a special “mission field.”

Gianna believed that God’s will and call were central to her life, and after completing a retreat at Lourdes to discern her vocation, met and fell in love with Pietro Molla. They began a very happy married life together in 1955.

While continuing her “mission” as a doctor, she also embraced her vocation to be a mother and from 1956 to 1959 had three children: Pierluigi, Mariolini and Laura.

In 1961 she was happily pregnant with her fourth baby, when her doctor informed her that she had a tumour of the uterus. He advised her to have the tumour removed and to undergo a surgical abortion. She refused to agree to an abortion and she demanded that her doctor commit himself to caring for the life of her baby.

On Easter Saturday, her baby, Gianna Emanuela was born safely by Caesarean delivery. One week later the courageous mother died at home from the painful side effects of her choice, proclaiming her love of Jesus.

Gianna Beretta Molla’s cause was recognised quickly and several women testified to cures through prayers to her during their pregnancies. Gianna was canonised a saint on 16th May, 2004 by Pope John Paul II.

**Feast Day:** 28th April.

**Patron Saint of:** mothers & unborn babies, married couples, the Culture of Life.

**Born:** Milan, Italy. October 4th, 1922.

**Died:** Magenta, Italy. 28th April, 1962.

**Represented in Art as:** Smiling & dark-haired, dressed in typical 1950s full skirt, usually depicted holding one or two of her children.



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## Place of Pilgrimage

### Ephesus (Turkey)

Ephesus is associated with the missionary activities of the Apostles **Paul and John**, with the **Virgin Mary and St Luke** and with saints who brought Christianity to Asia Minor such as Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila.

The Evangelist Luke describes Paul’s second missionary journey to Ephesus in the **Acts of the Apostles** (Chapter 18-20) and it is mentioned in St Paul’s Letters: **1 Corinthians 1:12**; in the Letters to Timothy and the Ephesians; and also in the **Book of Revelation 1:11; 2:1**.

Ephesus was an important seaport and a cultural and political centre. Built there was the massive “wonder”, the Temple of Artemis, which was the heart of the cult of the popular pagan fertility goddess, **Artemis** or Diana.

It was here in about 52 AD, that St Paul settled for over three years to teach “the word of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:10) and to heal and baptise. He met a riotous opposition from those whose business was the sale of magical “Diana” souvenirs to the tourists. St Paul wrote the epistles to the Church in Ephesus.

**St John** the youngest Apostle is believed to have settled in Ephesus after leaving the island of **Patmos** and may have taken the **Blessed Virgin Mary** into his personal care. Mary is also associated with St Luke, who according to some traditions is buried in a cemetery at Ephesus.

Ephesus remained an important town in the early centuries of the Church. The third **ecumenical council** (a meeting of the apostolic leaders of the Christian Church) is named the **Council of Ephesus** (431AD) because the bishops gathered here.

Today, Ephesus is almost deserted, its great pagan and Christian buildings and shrines lie in ruins along what remains of the magnificent marble road that curved through the city.

Christian pilgrims can visit the sites of the **Church of St John**, the **tomb of St Luke** and a important shrine called the **House of the Virgin**. A ruined monastery is also associated with **Mary’s Assumption into Heaven**, both **body and soul**.

On Wednesday 29th November 2006 Pope Benedict XVI visited the Aegean town of Ephesus on his historic visit to Turkey.



House of Mary and Pilgrimage wall, Ephesus

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## Towards WYD 2008

G'day!... and Merry Christmas!

### The WYD08 song competition.

Since early October, the WYD08 song competition has generated much interest throughout Australia. There have been entries from nearly every state and territory in Australia with the age groups being the young, and the young at heart (with one talented songwriter being 84 years of age!). These applications are currently being processed by a team comprised of recording studio executives, marketing directors, WYD08 Team members and past WYD pilgrims. The WYD08 song will be an exciting element of the journey towards WYD08 – stay tuned for the tune!



### Look out for upcoming announcements:

- A site for the Opening Mass
- Pilgrim Packages
- A way to help pilgrims from lower income countries to get to Sydney for WYD08.

**See you in Sydney in 19 months!!**