

“Speak Lord, your servant is listening.”

[1 Sam 3:9]

Message Of Hope



Bishop Anthony with Days in the Diocese host family, WYD 2005 Cologne, Germany.

the final day for WYD at Marienfeld, 1.2 million youth prayed, encountered Christ in the Eucharist and celebrated their faith. And unlike the football crowds there was not single police incident!

Not so many cardinals attended the World Cup, though a few blessed their national teams and many more probably watched it on TV (the Pope didn't go!). But at WYD in 2005 there was one pope, 750 cardinals and bishops, and hundreds of civic leaders accompanying the young people of the world.

All of these fun facts aside, what is obvious is the enormity of the celebration that is World Youth Day. The joy, hope, and faith that inspire these international WYD celebrations are unique. Christ is the centre of all thought, action and witness in a massive international youth forum that the secular world can hardly understand.

This ePILGRIMAGE edition focuses how to encounter Christ through the Scriptures - in prayer, in study and the spoken word. This element of our faith was a special focus of the message from Pope Benedict on Palm Sunday 2006. I would like to encourage you to consider reading a passage of the Scripture each day towards WYD08 in order to become familiar with the inspired Word. Let the Lord speak to your heart, preparing you in faith and spirit to be a part of the largest gathering of people in the history of Australia and all of Oceania. There are no worldly trophies to win, no fleeting team glory - but take your Pilgrim steps on the journey of faith towards WYD08, and be rewarded through the Lord's many graces and blessings. As St Paul said: "All the runners at the stadium are trying to win, but only one of them gets the prize. You must run in the same way, meaning to win. All the fighters at the games go into strict training; they do this just to win a wreath that will wither away, but we do it for a wreath that will never wither. That is how I run, intent on winning; that is how I fight, not beating the air. I treat my body hard and make it obey me, for, having been an announcer myself, I should not want to be disqualified."

[1 Cor 9: 24-27]

+Anthony Fisher OP
Coordinator of World Youth Day 2008

As you read this message, the FIFA World Cup has been run and won in Germany. How fantastic was it that the Aussie Socceroos made it to the final 16 to contest the greatest team sports spectacular in the world!

The eyes of the world fixed itself towards Berlin on July 9th for the final of the World Cup. Only twelve months ago, Cologne was getting ready to host the 2005 World Youth Day. Germany certainly knows how to stage the big events!

Let me share some interesting statistics with you about these two major events.

The number of countries that participated in the World Cup was 32 - for WYD in 2005 it was 197. There were 23,000 volunteers at WYD 2005, and 15,000 for the FIFA World Cup. At the final match in Berlin, the stadium seated 75,000 spectators and saw a battle of gladiator proportions. The



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Faith Foundations

Listening to the Word of God

“In the beginning was the Word...” – (John 1:1)

“All Scripture is inspired by God and can profitably be used for teaching, for refuting error, for guiding people’s lives and teaching them to be holy.” (2 Tim 3:16)

“Love the Holy Scriptures, and wisdom will love you. Love, wisdom and she will keep you safe.” — St Jerome

Christians, Jews and other believers say that the Lord God is “pure spirit”. God is too great and mysterious to be adequately captured by the human eye, or human language, imagination or science. And yet they also believe that God wants to be known by us and he reveals himself to us. Is this just wishful thinking? Why would God bother talking to us? How would we know?

If God loves us enough to create us and everything around us and to keep us in being, then he is already revealing to us something of his power and care, and something of the meaning of our lives.

The shape, design, goodness, beauty and direction of every aspect of creation therefore mysteriously conveys something of God’s own “words” or “signs”- of who God is and what God wants to say about himself and about us in a type of “conversation” to which he invites every human being to “listen” using our minds and imaginations.

The people of “the Book” - Christians, Jews and Muslims - believe God communicates in human history in a more particular and personal way through the Holy Scriptures or “The Bible” which are the Word of God in capital letters. They are inspired writings because God “breathes” his Holy Spirit into the words of the Bible giving them life and meaning so that we can “listen” and with faith hear God speaking to us.

Through the faith, skill and imaginations of the scripture writers, God wishes not only to communicate eternal truths about himself and us and the unfolding of his plan through the events and personalities of the Old and New Testaments, but also to “speak heart-to-heart” with each of us personally.

This year in his address to World Youth Day delegates, Pope Benedict said “The secret of acquiring an understanding heart is to train your heart to listen. This is obtained by persistently meditating on the Word of God and by remaining firmly rooted in it through the commitment to persevere in getting to know it better.”

God communicates his love to us most fully not just in his creation and his Scriptures, but in the person of Jesus Christ. He is **The Word** (Logos) of God,



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Faith Foundations [cont]

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God revealing himself completely and definitively and personally to us. He speaks to us with special power in the Sacraments, in the living teaching Church, and in prayer.

So when we are urged to “listen to the Word of God”, Christians are called to study and meditate on Creation, on the Sacred Scripture and on the person of Christ Jesus. Listening involves allowing ourselves to be formed and converted by God’s Word and thus obeying it in our hearts and minds, our decisions and actions.

Christians acknowledge that human limitation and sin has to some extent deafened us, and so we pray for Jesus our Divine Physician to “open our ears” and minds. So we can see and hear him in the world around us, in the Holy Bible and in the Church.



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Pilgrim Prayer

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a Latin term meaning the practice of “sacred reading”. It is a very different method of reading to the skimming of the newspapers and the internet that we tend to do on a daily basis. It is a more personal and spiritual encounter with a text than we experience when we are studying literature or are caught up in an exciting novel.

Lectio Divina is also a very ancient form of reading that combines meditation, prayer and personal reflection and is only possible if we accept that certain writings, especially those of Sacred Scripture are “inspired” writings. It is not about scientifically analysing the text nor is it only about “privatized revelation”.

Lectio Divina is an intimate reading that is done “with the Church”.

Reading the Scriptures using the way of **lectio divina** takes us beyond the surface of the page, it helps to make scripture and faith come alive.

1. We begin **lectio** (reading) by selecting a scripture text and reading slowly, patiently and deliberately with a prayerful heart. A prayer to the Holy Spirit for guidance is helpful. Sometimes people read the text out loud or mouth the words carefully with their lips, treating each word as a treasure, like a message in a bottle from a long-lost friend. Usually a few lines or a short text is all that we need.

2. The next stage involves meditating carefully and quietly on particular aspects of the writing which strike a chord with our search for the true, good and beautiful we hope to find in God. Words or symbols might connect with

a tragedy or puzzle we have experienced or the voice of a prophet might urge us to explore our own mission from God to the poor or the voice of Christ may tell us what God is calling us to do in the here and now.

3. The next stage of **lectio divina** involves praying to understand what we have “heard” in our hearts. In prayer we can become aware of being caught up in the urgency, peace or mysterious



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Inspired Writings

Message of the Holy Father Benedict XVI
to the youth of the world on the occasion
of the 21st World Youth Day 9 April 2006



“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Ps 119:105)

My dear young friends, I urge you to become familiar with the Bible, and to have it at hand so that it can be your compass pointing out the road to follow. By reading it, you will learn to know Christ. Note what Saint Jerome said in this regard: **“Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ”** (PL 24,17; cf Dei Verbum, 25). A time-honoured way to study and savour the word of God is **lectio divina** which constitutes a real and veritable spiritual journey marked out in stages. After the **lectio**, which consists of reading and rereading a passage from Sacred Scripture and taking in the main elements, we proceed to **meditatio**. This is a moment of interior reflection in which the soul turns to God and tries to understand what his word is saying to us today. Then comes **oratio** in which we linger to talk with God directly. Finally we come to **contemplatio**. This helps us to keep our hearts attentive to the presence of Christ whose word is “a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Pet 1:19). Reading, study and meditation of the Word should then flow into a life of consistent fidelity to Christ and his teachings.



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Testimony Of Faith

Jovina, aged 21, medical student



[Click here to watch the video](#)

It may sound silly, but I sometimes think about my life in terms of BWYD and PWYD – Before World Youth Day and Post World Youth Day. It comes out in simple statements that I might make: ‘Before WYD I’d never understood the power of a group of people praying the Rosary together.’ ‘Before WYD I’d never comprehended that pilgrimage is not just about travelling to a physical destination, but more importantly about the steps you take in your heart towards

Jesus.’ ‘BWYD I’d never cried while reading part of scripture...’

It happened on the last night of our pilgrimage, during the WYD 2005 Vigil, held on a dark and wet evening in a large field named ‘Marienfeld’ in Cologne, Germany. People around me as far as the eye could see were huddled with hoods on, sleeping on the ground. All of us were tired after seventeen days of non-stop walking, dozing on buses and jostling incessant crowds packed with Italians trying to steal our place in the food line. We’d been emotionally drained and spiritually revived. I’d had the time of my life and I’d already come so far from who I was. How much more could the Lord really demand from me? Surely now, all I had to do was relax as I neared the end of the road.

I was in this frame of mind when I came to the Vigil with the Pope. Yet I was to be quickly jolted out of my comfort zone by the reading of Psalm 139. It wasn’t even read in English – we read it from our companion books by the light of a slowly diminishing candle – yet never had a Bible passage cut through me so entirely.

From the very first line, this psalm spoke to me of our inescapable God – ‘You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away’. As each line progressed I became more and more enveloped in this amazing understanding of the Lord’s profound knowledge of each and every one of us. While this feeling filled me with awe, I was also terrified – I knew I loved God, but He couldn’t know all my ways – I had to hide my worst thoughts from Him. The psalm, however, continues by marvelling at how gently and lovingly each of us is knit together in our mother’s womb. Slowly, my terror of God’s knowing me turned into a deep and intimate veneration as I realised the Psalm wasn’t about an almighty punisher finding out my deepest darkest secrets, but about proclaiming His presence in me from the beginning.



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I was already weeping by the time we got to the end of the psalm. Then came the clincher: ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts’. What a wrenching feeling flooded my soul in that moment! Through my tears that night I realised that for seventeen days I had been trying my utmost to give everything to God, yet all He was really wanting was for me to let Him know me. Shivering there, in a mouse-populated field of around one million people, I felt closer to God than I ever had, because I realised that He was searching me, trying me, knowing me, loving me. And finally, yes I was ready to invite Him in.

Looking up finally at those standing around me, I saw them too, so visibly affected in the same way. On our faces was just a snapshot of the vastness of God’s power. In the bonds we share from the memory of those moments is built a unity that only magnifies His power.

I’d love to say I’ve never left that moment of deep communication with the Lord. But I can’t pretend that I don’t put up walls, that I don’t give in to temptation, that I don’t constantly distance myself from Him. Despite this, something has changed in the way I call on Him. No longer do I feel guilt in pleading for His help, because ‘Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord you know it completely’. How could I ever feel unsure of which path He wants me to follow, when Psalm 139 says ‘In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when one of them as yet existed.’ Most importantly, whenever I need to be reminded of His nearness and His longing to know me more and more, I simply invite Him: ‘Search me, and know my heart’. He asks me for nothing less.



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Saints And Witnesses

St Jerome

Born: 342 AD Stridon (modern Hungary)

Died: Bethlehem, Palestine 420 AD

Patron Saint of translators and scripture scholars

Feast Day: 30th September

Represented in Art: As an old man in his study, sometimes with a pet lion.

St Jerome is also depicted as a very thin hermit in the desert.



Jerome is a remarkable saint who combines a range of different and sometimes conflicting character traits. He was a brilliant linguist, a fiery and forceful debater, a sometimes impatient and sarcastic preacher, a humble monk with a passion for God’s Word and a great friend and mentor to Christian women and men seeking the road to holiness. Jerome was a major player at a time when the greatest minds and personalities of the day were actively and loudly debating matters of Christian doctrine and faith.

St Jerome was educated in the Ancient Latin classics. He was Baptised as a young man and drawn to both the learning and writings of Christians. He was more deeply converted after a voice in a dream, which he took to be that of Jesus, accused Jerome of loving his intellectual work more than his faith. Jerome was filled with shame and he took to the desert for a life of severe poverty and penance.

However Jerome did not remain in isolation for long. He was ordained a priest and taken as a commentator to a church council in Rome. His learning attracted the attention of Pope St Damasus who invited Jerome to become his secretary in 382.



St Jerome
Monastery, Montserrat
Web Gallery of Art

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Saints And Witnesses [cont]

St Jerome

When the Pope died, Jerome who had preached vigorously against the pagans, heretics and lax Christians, found himself strongly disliked by many in Rome and he, St Paula and a number of other holy women under his care, returned to Antioch and then to Bethlehem where they established a number of monasteries.

Among the caves for which Bethlehem is known, St Jerome began his great work of translating the books of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Latin. During this time (404) the wild tribes from Eastern Europe destroyed Rome, and many refugees made their way into St Jerome's monastic settlements. As well as caring for the displaced people, trying to complete his massive translation work, Jerome also had to resist the intellectual and often physical dangers of heretics threatening his community in Bethlehem.

St Jerome died peacefully as a very old and worn monastic leader, who left behind a whole library of biblical commentaries, translations, theological debates and over 120 letters which convey his powerful personality. St Jerome has been declared a Doctor of the Church- which means that the Church considers that his teaching has a particular clarity, force and importance for all times.



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Place Of Pilgrimage

The “Little town of Bethlehem”

Bethlehem is familiar to Christians from the many well loved Christmas carols. Bethlehem is indeed a sacred Christian site, since we learn from the second chapters Sts Matthew and Luke’s Gospels that this was the birthplace of Jesus Christ the Saviour.

Most of us do not realise that even before the birth of Jesus, Bethlehem was already an important landmark and place of pilgrimage.

Bethlehem is a walled town, located about five kilometres south of Jerusalem in Israel. It is set in rocky but once very fertile high altitude plain overlooking the ancient land of Moab.

One of the ancient Fathers of the Old Testament, Jacob, lost his wife Rachel in childbirth and her grave is just outside the town of Bethlehem where it is still honoured by Christian, Jewish and Islamic pilgrims.

Bethlehem is also a town associated with King David of Israel, since it is believed that his father Jesse was born there and that it was around this town that David first tendered his flocks while he was a shepherd. Later Samuel would anoint David king of Israel in that town, hence the Christmas carol’s words “once in royal David’s city.”



Micah the prophet declared that the new King of Israel would also come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:1-3).

Many of the early Christian writers noted that the stable in which Jesus was born, was actually one of the many caves that are cut into the rocky walls of the town of Bethlehem.

Today, one of the oldest remaining churches in the world is built over the site that is believed to be where Jesus Christ was born. It is called the Church of the Nativity – and it is guarded by prayers and the presence of Christians of different rites and traditions.

Bethlehem has been a very important place of pilgrimage since very ancient times, beginning with the monasteries of St Jerome.

Pope John Paul II connected the ancient Hebrew name of Bethlehem which means “town of bread” with fact that Jesus is the Bread of Life.



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Towards WYD 2008

Planning Becoming Action

Last month we introduced you to the Diocesan and Youth Ministry Committee which is one of the committees helping prepare the Church in Australia for World Youth Day. Since that meeting, two other committees have commenced their work.

The first is the Education Committee, which includes representatives from teachers, school Principals, Parents and the wider educational community. Their role is to create teaching material to be used in Australian Catholic and State schools which inform students, teachers and parents about the spiritual meaning of World Youth Day, to liaise between the schools world and then WYD08 team, and to encourage personal preparation through prayer, learning and discussion. The Committee recently considered the first of 5 curriculum units aimed at high schools and enthusiastically agreed with the approach of working with the school communities.

The committee also supported the role of the ePILGRIMAGE and set themselves a target of having 200,000 school-based ePILGRIMS over the next few months. Wow – just imagine the power of that amount of prayer and focus!

The second committee is the Communities Advisory Committee. This committee provides direct links to many of the ethnic Communities, ecclesial Movements and Religious orders that are active in Australia. This committee has over 40 representatives linking us to people all through the Catholic community in Australia and overseas. These representatives will be working closely with the groups organized in each of the Australian Dioceses on a range of issues including preparing Australian Pilgrims, preparing to receive international Pilgrims who participate in the Days in the Diocese and the Journey of the World Youth Day Cross and Icon, and advising the WYD08 team on the ideas and hopes of various communities.

They too welcomed being part of the planning for World Youth Day 2008 and especially Phase 3 which will reap the benefit of the events of 2008 for the next 20 years – renewing, invigorating and inspiring every corner of the Church in Australia and beyond.

Details of the members and the role of the committees are available on the website in the section The WYD08 Team.

Most Dioceses in Australia have now established their own World Youth Day committees and their planning is also well under way.

So it's all starting to happen – how are you going with your spiritual preparation and your plans to come to Sydney? We are looking forward to welcoming you.

SEE YOU IN SYDNEY! TWO YEARS – 24 MONTHS... AND COUNTING!

