

**“For the word of God is living and active.
Sharper than any double-edged sword.”** [Hebrews 4:12]

Message Of Hope

During last years' 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 the 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.



Many young pilgrims have rediscovered this beautiful Sacrament through their WYD experiences. Many youth 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

Sacrament of Penance

Baptism transforms the Christian into a “new creation” by the saving love of Jesus. Christian life is about allowing the gifts of baptism to flower and bear fruit in the baptised. It also involves **converting back** to our baptismal “newness” when we have damaged our life in Jesus through choosing to sin.



Jesus, who in the Gospel calls himself “the Physician” - the universal healer (see for example Mark 2:1-12), continually offers forgiveness, healing and new life to us and to the world. So **conversion and penance** are essential life-long attitudes of the true Christian.

The **Sacrament of Penance** (also known as **Reconciliation or Confession**) has been called a “second baptism” and is an important means by which God’s grace (**his help and love and healing**) will be encountered by a repentant Christian. The priest hearing a person’s confession, uniquely and personally represents Jesus Christ who alone has the power to say “Your sins are forgiven” in the Father’s Name.

During the Sacrament we confess our sins and unload our conscience in absolute privacy to the priest. We express how sorry we are for what wrong we have done or what good we have not done and promise to re-commit ourselves to God’s love and to avoid sin in the future.

We are then given the concrete assurance of the forgiveness, peace and reconciliation of God through the Church. The sins we have admitted are “absolved” - the guilt is wiped away through Christ’s power. We may also be given helpful advice, spiritual support and some prayer or work of charity to do as a sign of our true conversion.

Those who receive the Sacrament - especially those who have found it difficult to begin - describe their experience of overwhelming peace, relief, calm, and encouragement afterwards.

Catholics believe the Sacrament of Penance is so important that we know we must seek it when we have committed serious or **mortal** sins. We are also encouraged to participate in the sacrament regularly so that we get into good habits and with such self examination, we regularly receive this special grace of inner healing and strength.



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Pilgrim Prayer

Psalm 51 - Miserere

Have mercy on me, O God, in your faithful love,
in your great tenderness wipe away my offences;
wash me thoroughly from my guilt,
purify me from my sin.

For I am well aware of my offences,
my sin is constantly in mind.

Against you, you alone, I have sinned,
I have done what you see to be wrong,
that you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence,
and your victory may appear when you give judgement,
remember, I was born guilty,
a sinner from the moment of conception.

You delight in sincerity of heart,
and in secret you teach me wisdom.
Purify me till I am clean,
wash me till I am whiter than snow.

Let me hear the sound of joy and gladness,
and the bones you have crushed will dance.
Turn away your face from my sins,
and wipe away all my guilt.

God, create in me a clean heart,
renew within me a resolute spirit,
do not thrust me away from your presence,
do not take away from me your spirit of holiness.

Give me back the joy of your salvation,
sustain in me a generous spirit.
I shall teach the wicked your paths,
and sinners will return to you.



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Inspired Writings

From the moment I woke up in the morning, my spirit was totally submerged in God, in that ocean of love. I felt that I had been completely immersed in Him. During Holy Mass, my love for Him reached a peak of intensity. After the renewal of vows and Holy Communion, I suddenly saw the Lord Jesus, who said to me with great kindness, “My daughter, look at My merciful Heart.” As I fixed my gaze upon the Most Sacred Heart, the same rays of light as are represented in the image as blood and water, came forth from it, and I understood how great is the Lord’s mercy. And again Jesus said to me with kindness, My daughter, speak to priests about this inconceivable mercy of Mine. The flames of mercy are burning Me - clamouring to be spent; I want to keep pouring them out upon souls; souls just don’t want to believe in My goodness.

(St Faustina’s diary entry #177)



Divine Mercy



St Faustina

Jesus to St Faustina...

My daughter, do you think you have written enough about My mercy? What you have written is but a drop compared to the ocean. I am Love and Mercy itself. There is no misery that could be a match for My mercy, neither will misery exhaust it, because as it is being granted - it increases. The soul that trusts in My mercy is most fortunate, because I myself take care of it.

(St Faustina’s diary entry #1273)

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Testimony Of Faith

Fr Paul, Diocese of Port Pirie



Fr Paul with Pilgrims

WYD 2005 in Cologne was a pilgrimage in faith. At various times I was challenged by the faith of the young people. As a priest, I was impressed by the candid honesty and searching questions from the pilgrims. There were many moments of grace – waiting in a queue for food, travelling on a bus or a train, walking the streets, prayer sessions – when the pilgrims wanted to know the how’s and why’s of their faith. Things they wanted to know and for which they had a thirst. This

experience revealed their goodness, generosity and openness to Jesus Christ and His Church.

There were great opportunities for growing spiritually – in Masses, Rosaries, reflections, adoration, talks. Spiritually there is a high, which takes some adjusting from on arriving home.

Our pilgrimage to the Cologne Cathedral was very special not only because of the presence of the relics of the Magi but the spiritual awakening for many in our group. The closeness of Jesus in that holy place was tangible; in the Eucharistic Presence of Jesus, in the relics of those who were at His birth, in the thousands of reverent young pilgrims pouring through the doors and in the awe inspiring sacred place of the Dom (cathedral).

What was also inspiring was to witness how the pilgrims looked after one another. Travelling with 90 people gives you a wide experience of human strengths and weaknesses, of gifts and needs. Nonetheless, we journeyed together with, through and in Christ!

As part of WYD 2005 we had the Days of Encounter in our sister Diocese, the Diocese of Paderborn. The exchange of friendship and culture was an enriching experience. I have formed many friendships from this.

In his letter for the year of the Jubilee, Pope John Paul II wrote, ‘The Future of the world and the Church belongs to the younger generation...Christ expects great things from young people, as he did from the young man who asked him: “What good deed must I do, to have eternal life?” Young people, in every situation, in every region of the world, do not cease to put questions to Christ: they meet him and they keep searching for him in order to question him further. If they succeed in following the road which he points out to them, they will have the joy of making their own contribution to his presence in the next century and in the centuries to come, until the end of time: “Jesus is the same yesterday, today and for ever”.

World Youth Day and the events associated with it – the Journey of the Cross and Icon, the Days in the Diocese – offer a unique, rich meeting place for the youth of the world and Christ and His Church. I look forward to contributing to and participating in WYD08 – see you there!



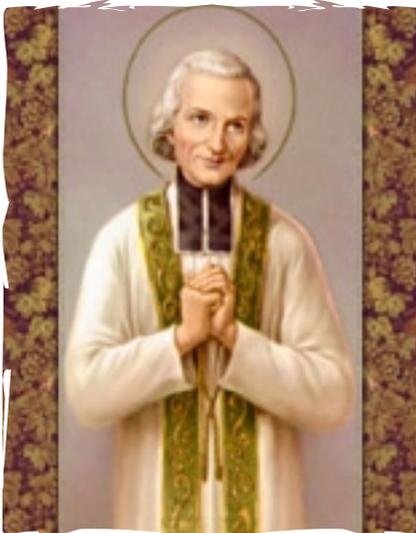
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Saints and Witnesses

St John Vianney – the Cure of Ars



Jean Marie Vianney grew up in a shepherding family while the French Revolution overturned his country. At that time, the practice of the Catholic faith was banned in many places; priests and religious were hunted down, executed or exiled.



St John Vianney - the Cure of Ars

When the faith became public again, the already prayerful Jean Marie dreamed of becoming a priest. But there were problems. Jean Marie was enlisted into Napoleon's army and was also a failure at all academic study. After a potentially fatal mix-up, where Jean Marie found himself with deserters from the army, a compassionate mayor and his old teacher, Abbé Balley, organised that the 20 year old enter a seminary.

Relying purely on his love for God, Jean Marie struggled with all his priestly studies, but was ordained a priest in 1814. He was sent as Curé (parish priest) to a completely run-down and neglected parish called Ars.

There, the Curé mounted his astonishing campaign to convert the village back to God. He prayed, fasted and practiced severe penance for all his parishioners. He was famous for his blunt, homely and fiery sermons; he knocked on doors, taught catechism, condemned some styles of dancing and he spoke against mistreatment of the local workers. He reported that he fought evil spirits who infested his house and his work.

Far from driving people away, the Curé began to see the numbers increasing at his Masses and people listening to his words. In 1827 he established La Providence- a shelter for abandoned children, babies and young girls. By now the exhausted man was spending up to 15 hours at a time hearing thousands of people's confessions and giving them spiritual advice. His fame and his special "discernment of spirits" spread through all the villages and eventually throughout France; in fact so many wanted to consult him that a ticket office opened in Ars. A few times he tried to escape to become a Cistercian monk! But he was brought back home to dispense God's mercy in the confessional and offer people the cure of souls.

Given his penances, lack of sleep and food and his labours, it is amazing that he lived until his peaceful death in Ars at 75. By then he was the most famous and loved priest in the world.

Also Known As: Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney, Cure d'Ars.

Feast Day: 4th August.

Patron Saint of: confessors and parish priests.

Born: near Dardilly in Lyons, France 8th May, 1786.

Died: Ars also in Lyons, 4th August, 1859.

Represented in Art as: Dressed as an austere 19th century French parish priest, wearing bobbed grey hair, and the stole of the confessor



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Place of Pilgrimage

Town of Ars - Northwest Lyons, France.



Shrine of St John Vianney
– the Curé of Ars

It was probably because he had failed to shine at all as a clerical student, that the parish priest and saint, Jean Marie Vianney, was sent to a town that was originally a remote and forgotten outpost.

However due to his holy life, reforming energy, and extraordinary gifts of evangelising and discerning the inner lives of his people, the Curé transformed the town of Ars into a popular pilgrimage site.



The Home of the Curé has been preserved as he left it in the 19th century. There the pilgrim can imagine the Curé's all night vigils, his austere diet (milk and potatoes) and the torments of his spiritual warfare. He said that devils would hurl inkbottles, gravel, nails and other objects to prevent him from writing his sermons and once tried to set fire to his bed!

The 12th century parish church, the **Eglise**, was where the saint preached his fiery homilies against indecency, blasphemy and luke-warmness in faith.

Next to the Church is the newer **Basilica**, which houses the **incorrupt body** of the Saint and where Masses and other sacraments are offered. Many pilgrims travel here as they did a hundred years ago to find forgiveness and spiritual healing by receiving the Sacrament of Penance/ Reconciliation- remembering that the Saint Jean Marie had such powers to discern the troubles in people's hearts.

Pilgrims can also venerate the relic of the Saint's heart, kept in a special chapel – “**the vault of the heart**”. They can also visit **La Providence** – the refuge St Jean Marie established for the many abandoned and orphaned babies and girls.

Ars has become a special pilgrimage site for priests, who in our secular societies are working to bring people back to the practice of their faith and the conversion of their lives. It has also become a



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Towards WYD 2008



It's Time to Think Registration (in Aussie English 'Rego' pronounced "rej-o")

G'day! November already!!! So much to do and a lot of exciting WYD08 developments and announcements.

PCL in Sydney

As foreshadowed last month, senior members of the Pontifical Council for the Laity (PCL) spent 10 very busy days in Sydney meeting with the WYD08 organisers and representatives from the State and Commonwealth Governments. Archbishop Rylko, President of the Council was kind enough to congratulate all the people involved in the organisation of WYD08 and stated how pleased that he and the other members of the Council were with the preparatory work being undertaken. He committed himself and Council members to continue to pray for success and the blessings that will come from WYD08. The next update to the PCL will be around Palm Sunday 2007 in Rome.

Registration System – OPENING SOON

Following agreement with the PCL, registrations for Groups and Group Leaders will open in the next few weeks.

This early registration will allow group leaders to provide WYD08 with their contact details, estimates of the number of Pilgrims who may come to Sydney and the type of accommodation they would like. These estimates are only that – a view of how many are likely to join you in Sydney in 2008. The full registration system is still scheduled to open early/mid 2007.

But perhaps more importantly, opening of registrations makes it more real – Sydney is no longer 'just a good idea' but you can start the practical things to get here and enjoy the wonderful experience of World Youth Day Down Under.

So – nominate your group leader, talk in the Parishes, Dioceses, Communities and Movements throughout the Church and get ready to take the next step to Sydney.

For international Pilgrims, details on the simplified systems to get a WYD08 visa will be on the website before Christmas. Remember, the Australian Government has agreed to make WYD08 visas free of charge and there will be no limit to the number issued. To register as pilgrims, keep watch on www.wyd2008.org

The WYD08 Song – Make it Tough for the Judges – Enter Now!

The WYD08 Song Contest, which was launched by Archbishop Rylko, President of the PCL, is well under way and quite a few entries have already been received. Entries close on 30th November 2006, so for any creative Aussie songwriters amongst us – Why not write one of the most significant pastoral legacy elements for any WYD? Details are available on the website www.wyd2008.org

See you in Sydney in 20 months!!

