



WORLD YOUTH DAY USA

INTERNATIONAL PILGRIMAGE

Leaders Guide

In preparation for World Youth Day 2023

World Youth Day USA

**International
Pilgrimage
Leaders Guide**

Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



World Youth Day USA – International Pilgrimage Leaders Guide

Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C.

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World Youth Day USA International Pilgrimage Leaders Guide

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Introduction to the Guide

Congratulations! You have decided to lead a pilgrimage to World Youth Day in Lisbon. You have embarked on an adventure of visioning, planning, organizing, budgeting, negotiating, and packing. You have also embarked on a process of helping young Catholics encounter Christ and walk in solidarity with fellow disciples around the world. The goal of this *International Pilgrim Leaders Guide* is to assist in making the planning less daunting and the experience more fruitful.

When Pope John Paul II came to Denver, Colorado, for World Youth Day (WYD) in August 1993, it was a watershed moment for youth, campus, and young adult ministries across the United States. As each year passes, the international WYD experience continues to be a significant moment in the life of those who participate in the host nation and, in ever-increasing numbers, those who take part digitally and through at-home, “stateside” WYD experiences in their home country.

The World Youth Day pilgrimage is designed to provoke a transformative or conversion experience in the lives of pilgrims, but what is often unexpected is the change that occurs in the hearts and minds of ministry leaders.

The men and women who guide various pilgrimages to the international WYD may continue to witness a transformation in and conversion of their own hearts and ministry efforts.

The *Leader’s Guide* seeks to share perspectives, information, and resources that can be helpful to internationally-bound WYD pilgrim leaders.

First, the *Leaders Guide* explores the role you play as an international pilgrim leader. In this section, you are encouraged to go beyond being an organizer to being a witness.

The second section of the guide outlines seven principles to guide you and suggestions on ways to make World Youth Day a true pilgrimage of faith. This section examines how WYD stands apart from other ministry initiatives for youth and young adults by its emphasis on solidarity and encounter with the Holy Father and the Universal Church. It also features ways to connect youth and young adults to generations of pilgrim saints and spiritual guides that can inspire them to live out the call to holiness.

The third section of this *Leader’s Guide* offers some practical tools for navigating the size and

scope of the WYD event, and how – as leaders – an important part of your role is logistical.

Finally, the fourth section of the *Leaders Guide* will explore ways that you can assist pilgrims after World Youth Day. Often, the follow-up to a big event like WYD is overlooked, but it is important to harness the energy and enthusiasm that an event like this generates for the good of the Church and society. Reunions and faith-sharing immediately following the trip is helpful, but this guidebook will go a little deeper. It is meant to help you to encourage your pilgrims to pray, reflect, and discern in the time after WYD. It is also meant to assist you in preparing your parish, diocese/eparchy, and/or community, including the friends and families of pilgrims, to welcome back the international travelers. Within this section, there are some suggestions on how to connect international participants with stateside and digital pilgrims who celebrated the events of WYD in the United States. Most importantly, there are some ideas on helping your pilgrims take concrete and attainable action steps

towards missionary discipleship – that is, being both a follower of Christ (a “disciple”) and sent by him into the world (a “missionary”).

The *Leaders Guide*, then, is not just a manual for best practices in international travel, but a guide for forming missionary disciples from among those who embark on the WYD pilgrimage.

You have an important role as a WYD leader. You and others who have accepted this challenge follow in the footsteps of great Catholic leaders before you. You join the father and patron of this event, St. John Paul II, who as a priest and bishop in Communist-controlled Kraków, accompanied youth and young adults on their journeys of faith. His example reminds us that this role – the role of a leader who accompanies and journeys with others on the road of discipleship – can be equally demanding and rewarding. Leaders have a unique opportunity to invite World Youth Day pilgrims to follow Christ and to nurture that encounter so that they can take on the task of transforming the world.

The Pilgrims

Your role as an international WYD organizer is not as an activities coordinator or a travel agent.

Rather, you have been called to be a pilgrim leader, accompanying young people on a journey towards an encounter with Christ.

The hectic or mundane tasks of preparing youth and/or young adults for international travel can sometimes cloud the vision of what a pilgrimage leader has been called to do. It is critical, then, for you, as a WYD leader, to prayerfully reflect on what you are undertaking, and for the pilgrims you will be with.

Who are the young people who are going to WYD in Lisbon? They are sons and daughters of God. Each one has his or her own story. They come with struggles and pain, as well as joys and anticipation. Some have great expectations and excitement about WYD, while others may be uncertain or skeptical about the trip. Some are seeking direction; others for affirmation of a path they are already on. Still others are indifferent, going to WYD because of external motives (i.e. friendship, overseas travel opportunities, or adventure) or due to the expectations of others (i.e. parents). But they are all heading to Lisbon, looking to the pilgrimage leader, to you, for help and

direction. The leader has a responsibility to see each pilgrim as they are, with their own story and with their own expectations. The leader looks with compassion and mercy on the people God has placed before him or her.

Take time to get to know your pilgrims. Pray for each one, by name, every day. Listen attentively to their stories. Take an active interest in their lives and situations. As a pilgrim leader, you represent a supportive pastoral presence in the lives of your pilgrims.

Putting together a pilgrimage can be all consuming, but one of the most important responsibilities for the leader is to tend to the spiritual growth of the pilgrims entrusted to them. Without neglecting other essential logistical tasks, the leader must seek to remain focused on Jesus and his love for the pilgrims.

The Pilgrim's Community

The millions of pilgrims who travel to the international World Youth Day are not isolated individuals; they each have a family, parish, campus, diocese/eparchy, movement, and/or local community that forms them, supports them, and sends them forth.

Regarding each pilgrim, ask yourself:

- Where is he/she coming from?
- What are the blessings and burdens of the community from which he/she comes?

The question asked of WYD pilgrims is often: “Where are they [the pilgrims] going?” The stories so often told about a pilgrimage are the stories of the pilgrim's journey *to* someplace. But any good storyteller (and any good pilgrimage guide) will remind others, “That is not the *full* story.” Every story starts *from* some place, and that place matters.

In literature and film, Homer's *Odyssey*, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and C.S. Lewis' *Narnia* series are all examples of a journey. But notice that the stories are not over until the heroes return home (or arrive at a new home) to their community. In other words, what can tend to be overlooked is *the hero's community*. In the same way, a pilgrim does not exist in isolation but in relationships rooted in the community from which he or she comes.

Think also about the Olympics. The stories of the athletes and their relationships and

experiences back home form a big part of the media coverage of the Olympic games. There are stories of high school coaches who inspired athletes to do their best, of sweethearts back home who are watching every day, or parents who sacrificed countless things to make an Olympic moment possible for their child. In every city or village who sent an Olympian to compete, the community is often glued to the television, radio, or news reports, waiting to hear the name of their hometown hero.

It is impossible to understand the full story of the pilgrim without knowing his or her context. When pilgrims gather for World Youth Day, they often carry the flags of their countries—the communities from which they came.

Pilgrims come *from* a community, and journey *as* a community, to encounter the Lord, so that they can *return transformed* to the community from which they came and transform that community. At the same time, there exists a certain fluidity in communities today, which is not always welcoming or nurturing. Even in such cases, when pilgrims return and start sharing their stories, fluid communities can become more solidified. Our modern culture often focuses only on the individual; however, in the Judeo-Christian tradition there is also the sense of each individual being a part of a greater community, of a people.

The Jewish people held three annual pilgrimages or feasts: “Three times a year, then, all your males shall appear before the LORD, your God, in the place which he will choose: at the feast of Unleavened Bread, at the feast of Weeks, and at the feast of Booths.” (Dt 16:16). Although the men alone were instructed to go up to the place the Lord commanded, the pilgrimage was undertaken for the entire community – women and children included.

Certainly, practical considerations played a role. The Jews in Galilee would have a much harder time going to the feast or pilgrimage than those in Judea. It would be difficult to leave behind homes and cattle, both unprotected and unwatched. Because of the strong emphasis on communal identity of the Jewish people, when the men left on pilgrimage, everyone was deeply aware that it was for everyone. Every Jew participated in the feast through the men who went up to Jerusalem.

The Catholic Church, too, has a communal identity as a community of missionary disciples; a pilgrim people. “Through Baptism, we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission” (CCC 1213). St. Paul says: “For as in

one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually parts of one another” (Rom 12:4-5). Thus, the Christian pilgrimage (like the World Youth Day journey) is an expression of *being the Church*. Pilgrims go on this pilgrimage not only for themselves. The Christian pilgrimage is to heaven to join the communion of saints united with the Triune God.

In the Church, pilgrimage and community are inseparable. Not only is the community the starting point on the pilgrim’s journey, but it serves as a reason to go. Those who cannot go are drawn into it because they are part of the community of the Church. They are invited into a solidarity that is meaningful—because *the Church* gathers in Lisbon, they do too. The stateside gatherings, viewing parties, parish prayer services, school events, digital pilgrimages, etc. are ways that Catholics in the United States can experience WYD without getting on a plane. The journey is for all. Understanding the young people on this journey – and the community from which they come (and to where they will be going next) – is key to better appreciating the people that God has put into your care.

Encounter, Accompany, Send: The Role of the World Youth Day Pilgrimage Leader

Leading a group of people on an international trip can be daunting. With all the logistics to worry about and the responsibility of spiritually accompanying a cohort of disciples, WYD can fill you with anxiety. Yet, thousands of people continually step forward and take on the mantle of a pilgrimage leader, in communion with the bishops and the Holy Father.

Co-Workers in the Lord's Vineyard

“The Lord does not keep his distance, but is *near* and *real*. He is in our midst and he takes care of us...”¹

Pope Francis preached these words at the Shrine of Czestochowa at WYD 2016. He reminded the young people that Jesus Christ comes to encounter us in real and personal ways. He accompanies us, and sends us on mission to do the same in the lives of others. Jesus Christ is in our midst, encountering, accompanying, and sending. But the choice to *engage* in the encounter, to *be* accompanied, and to *be* sent is ours. It is never forced; it is a free choice in response to an invitation from Christ.

The invitation from Jesus Christ comes in many ways. The work of an international leader is invaluable for assisting that invitation.

Pilgrimage leaders serve WYD pilgrims in a unique and privileged way, by helping open the door to Jesus Christ through the experience. God has called many ministry leaders to the important service of being co-workers in his vineyard. The group leader, then, is engaged in the evangelizing work of the Church through the grace of the Holy Spirit who sends the baptized on mission to encounter, accompany, and send others. Facilitating a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ and his Church, and sending missionary disciples forth into the world, is the goal of any Catholic pastoral leader.

ENCOUNTER

There are a variety of encounters that take place at World Youth Day: with Jesus, the Church, other pilgrims, and others along the way. Each of these encounters is an opportunity to experience Christ. The international pilgrimage leader helps to make those encounters possible, memorable, and lasting.

¹ Pope Francis, Homily for Mass on the Occasion of XXXI World Youth Day, Kraków, July 28, 2016, 5.

An Encounter with Jesus Christ

Pope Francis invites “all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them.”²

What does it mean to have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ? It means experiencing him in the Sacraments, in the Scriptures, in prayer, in others, and in service to others. This encounter is at the core of who we are as Christians. As Pope Benedict XVI said: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”³

WYD is an opportunity offered by the Church to all young people to encounter Christ. Many people talk about their experience of WYD as “life-changing.” They experience Christ and his Church in a unique and special way. Leaders need to recognize this opportunity. As Pope Francis notes, the encounter is really the developing of a “friendship” with Jesus.⁴ The pilgrimage leader can assist the young people in developing their friendship with Jesus Christ; this is made possible by the leader’s own

continuous renewal of his or her friendship with Jesus. Pope Francis, in his 2015 World Youth Day Message, gave a few ways for pilgrims to renew this friendship every day: through participation in the Sacraments, particularly Eucharist and Reconciliation, reading Sacred Scripture, personal prayer, and serving those in need, particularly the poor.⁵ Ministry leaders are encouraged to encounter Christ on a constant basis. In this way, they will be credible witnesses when they invite their pilgrims to do the same.

An Encounter with the Church

The encounter with Jesus Christ is always in and through his Church. The Church is spread throughout the world and a WYD leader will need to be prepared for this encounter with the Church Universal and her chief shepherd, the Holy Father.

The Pope, who is Vicar of Christ, “is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.”⁶ WYD is a public opportunity for young people to witness the unity of the Church in the midst of its diversity.

² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 3.

³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 1; cited by Pope Francis in EG, no. 7.

⁴ See *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 266.

⁵ Pope Francis, Message for the 30th World Youth Day, 3.

⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, 32, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 882.

When millions of young people from around the world gather with the Holy Father in silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, or listen attentively to a bishop during daily catechesis, or experience a special grace during the Sacrament of Reconciliation at World Youth Day, it can be a truly transformative experience for both pilgrims and leaders. Leaders need to take time to prepare pilgrims and themselves for these encounters during the WYD pilgrimage.

An Encounter with Fellow Pilgrims

A World Youth Day leader should provide plenty of opportunities to prepare pilgrims prior to leaving for Portugal or wherever the journey takes them. Retreats, prayer services, catechesis and formation, charitable activities and social justice initiatives, fundraisers, and social events are wonderful opportunities for group bonding, learning, and reflection. Some of these elements could be part of pre-event communications. The pilgrim leader should also have a team of youth or young adults who are assisting him or her. Forming strong relationships in advance of the trip will not only benefit the pilgrims, but also the overall experience of all involved.

An Encounter with Others

The time of pilgrimage is also a time of encounter with others along the way. Some of the people (including friends, families, and active members of the Church community) will be open to encounter with the leader and with pilgrims, while others (including distant friends and acquaintances, vendors and secular partners, news media, and the general public) may be indifferent at best or hostile at worst. The important thing for a leader is to be constantly welcoming, loving, and hospitable – truly witnessing “the joy of the Gospel.” Pilgrim leaders can assist the young people to be aware of their encounters with others and supporting them through challenging interactions. Encounters – with Christ, the Church, other pilgrims, and the many others along way – will often lead to new friendships. On a practical level, social media, email, and reunions provide a means to continue relationships. On a deeper level, those encounters and a more mature understanding of encountering Christ and the Church help to support the growth of a person’s faith.

ACCOMPANIMENT

Pope Francis says: “The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this ‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches

us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other. The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.”⁷

A pilgrimage leader is not simply an organizer, but one who spiritually accompanies a community. Furthermore, the leader is not accompanying pilgrims by him or herself. Jesus Christ, the pope, the bishops, fellow pilgrims, and others encountered along the way are also accompanying them. Added to this, the leader is also on the journey; leaders themselves are pilgrims. As Pope Francis said, “Although it sounds obvious, spiritual accompaniment must lead others ever closer to God, in whom we attain true freedom.”⁸ Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, teaches that good spiritual accompaniment includes what might be called growth-inducing acceptance and evangelizing service.⁹

Acceptance and Challenge

None of us is fully mature in our relationship with Jesus Christ and our neighbor. We are all

capable of growth, but often we need others to show us what we should work on. The pilgrim leader offers acceptance of another person in a way that may sometimes challenge that person to a deeper relationship and alignment with Christ. Pope Francis warns that we cannot truly know the “person’s situation” before God from “without.”¹⁰ God alone knows the person’s heart. But a leader does know some things about choices and behaviors. Pope Francis says that the “The Gospel tells us to correct others and to help them grow on the basis of a recognition of the objective evil of their actions (cf. Mt 18:15), but without making judgments about their responsibility and culpability (cf. Mt 7:1; Lk 6:37).”¹¹

The international pilgrimage leader can keep this very careful balance through recognition of his or her own sinfulness and the need for mercy. Everyone needs God’s love and mercy; a profound awareness of this fact should be an important aspect of a pilgrimage.

Everyone who attends the international WYD will come with their own struggles, sinfulness, and personal frustrations. Sometimes these may

⁷ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 169.

⁸ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 170.

⁹ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 171-173.

¹⁰ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 172.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

be shared, and sometimes not. Good pastoral leaders recognize these moments and accompany their pilgrims through their presence, invitation, and encouragement.

Evangelizing Service

When a pilgrim experiences mercy and healing in Christ, he or she may desire to evangelize and serve. As the Holy Father said, “Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow.”¹² World Youth Day provides youth and young adults a chance to step into servant leadership.

From its start, WYD has offered participants an opportunity to be evangelized and to evangelize. Leaders and pilgrims embark on the journey with the hope that they will have a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ and others. Often, they experience personal transformation, reconciliation, and renewed life in Christ. This cannot be kept to oneself.

The leader and pilgrims accompanying one another are “missionary disciples”; as noted

earlier, they are both followers of Christ (disciples) and sent by him (missionaries).

The people participating in WYD have chosen to be there. Therefore, the opportunity is ripe for these young men and women to deepen their commitment to be disciples of Christ Jesus, making the choice to do so in response to their encounter with the Lord and others who are witnessing Christ to them.

Effective ministry leaders can witness to this discipleship in all that is said and done on the pilgrimage – from email communications and announcements prior to and during the event to answering the same question for the fiftieth time. The experience of pilgrimage and the encounters involved will also help the leader grow as a disciple.

SENDING

Pope Francis reminds us that Jesus extends an invitation to us: “We can say that World Youth Day *begins today and continues tomorrow, in your homes*, since that is where Jesus wants to meet you from now on. The Lord doesn’t want to remain in this beautiful city, or in cherished memories alone. He wants to enter your homes, to dwell in your daily lives: in your studies, your

¹² *Evangelii Gaudium*, 172.

first years of work, your friendships and affections, your hopes and dreams. How greatly he desires that you bring all this to him in prayer! How much he hopes that, in all the ‘contacts’ and ‘chats’ of each day, pride of place be given to the golden thread of prayer! How much he wants his word to be able to speak to you day after day, so that you can make his Gospel your own, so that it can serve as a compass for you on the highways of life!”¹³

The role of the leader continues after the events of WYD come to an end. All pilgrims are sent forth and called to live as missionary disciples. You assist, equip, and accompany your pilgrims so that they might come to a deeper understanding of their experiences. In so doing, they can more fully live out the WYD encounter with Jesus every day.

Continuing the Pilgrim Journey

At WYD, the Church puts its trust in the young. WYD pilgrims need to be trusted to “leave a mark on history,” as Pope Francis said at the final gathering in Kraków.¹⁴ He challenged young people to courageously “set out on new and uncharted paths. To blaze trails

that open up new horizons capable of spreading joy.”¹⁵ The theme of WYD 2023 is “Mary rose up and went with haste.”¹⁶ Leaders can prepare pilgrims to be more sensitive to the voice of the Lord in their lives by encouraging them to remain close to the Sacraments, providing them resources for vocational discernment, and creating communities from which they can draw strength and courage.

The pilgrim journey is a lifelong one that might include additional WYDs, possibly even leading a pilgrimage in the future. WYD leaders have been called by God for this service, often through the invitation of another.

The lifelong pilgrim lives the encounter with Jesus Christ in his or her daily life. Gathering those stateside pilgrims along with the international pilgrims after WYD can help the young people share and integrate their experiences and, ultimately, build upon them. For example, many WYD pilgrims are also discerning their vocation in life. The leader assists in this discernment process by witnessing to their own discernment process or current vocation and encouraging pilgrims to

¹³ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXXI World Youth Day, Kraków, July 31, 2016, 10.

¹⁴ Pope Francis, Prayer Vigil with the Young People, XXXI World Youth Day, July 30, 2016.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Lk 1:39.

consider God's calls. This may take place in conversations during the journey but also during the weeks or months following WYD.

Living the encounter with Jesus Christ also means being of service. Pope Francis teaches that "evangelizing means bearing personal witness to the love of God, it is overcoming our selfishness, it is serving by bending down to wash the feet of our brethren, as Jesus did."¹⁷ Most young people want to be of service to others, but often do not know how.

The pilgrim leader can assist youth and young adults in reflecting on how they can be of service to the Church and to those in need in the world. The leader can provide opportunities to serve the poor or point to opportunities in the local area. The leader can witness to the fact that "to love means to serve and service increases love."¹⁸

Sending Forth

The actual WYD gathering will quickly come to an end. Therefore, the leader needs to remind pilgrims that Christ *sends forth* those who gather, equipping them with a mission and a purpose.

¹⁷ Homily for the Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 3.

¹⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, "Meeting with Volunteers of the XXVI World Youth Day, August 21, 2011.

Like the dismissal at every Mass, pilgrims need to "go, glorifying the Lord" by their lives.¹⁹ As Pope Francis confidently told millions of pilgrims as they prepared to leave Kraków in 2016, "Don't be afraid to say 'yes' to him (the Lord) with all your heart, to respond generously and to follow him! Don't let your soul grow numb, but aim for the goal of a beautiful love which also demands sacrifice."²⁰ This is the life of the disciple, the one who is sent. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two, he had them take little on the journey, beyond trust in him (cf. Lk 10:1-12). They returned to him joyfully telling stories of all that was done in his name (cf. Lk 10:17-20). Jesus Christ continues to do the same today. The pilgrims are sent on mission – they are missionary disciples.

Living as Missionary Disciples

When he spoke to the crowd at the end of World Youth Day in Kraków, Pope Francis said, "The joy that you have freely received from God, freely give away (cf. Mt 10:8): so many people are waiting for it!"²¹ Just as the leader and the pilgrims have encountered Jesus Christ, so they have a mission to assist others in

¹⁹ *Roman Missal*, Dismissal.

²⁰ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXXI World Youth Day, Kraków, July 31, 2016, 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*

having such an encounter. St. John Paul II, the father and the key patron saint of the World Youth Day experience, explained this dynamic very well: “Our personal encounter with Christ bathes life in new light, sets us on the right path, and sends us out to be his witnesses.”²²

The response to the personal encounter as a witness sent by Jesus Christ into the world is called living as a missionary disciple. This term captures a reality which is central to the work of the New Evangelization as the Church moves more fully from maintenance to mission.²³ Pope Francis uses the term very often in his preaching and catechesis and explains it clearly in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. *Mt* 28:19). **All the baptized**, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, **are agents of evangelization**, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. **The new evangelization calls for personal**

involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. **Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, but rather that we are always “missionary disciples.”**²⁴

Bringing Christ to others (as a missionary disciple) compels one to know and live the faith. Being catechized is about *knowing* the faith and *witnessing* to the faith. Formation in the faith is meant to be ongoing. Additionally, one does not grow in faith alone; rather, it is the work of Christ within us and in a community. Leaders are called to be regularly engaged in these efforts (ongoing formation, community activities) if they are to model them for pilgrims. The parish is the regular place where leaders and pilgrims are nurtured by Christ through the community of faith. The parish is the source for the sacraments, faith formation,

²² St. John Paul II, Message of the Holy Father on the Occasion of the XVII World Youth Day, July 25, 2001.

²³ See XII Ordinary Synod of Bishops (2012), Proposition 22.

²⁴ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 120. Emphasis added.

and service to the poor and suffering, yet leaders and pilgrims cannot remain within the comfort of the parish. All Christians need to move outward and bring others to encounter Christ.²⁵ Leaders and pilgrims are encouraged to look beyond parish boundaries and buildings to find places where the call to missionary discipleship can be lived out.

Missionary disciples are sent to not only preach, but to *heal* (see Lk 9:2,10:9). The world needs so much healing. All the baptized can and must be bearers of love, which is the only thing that can heal the soul. Leaders may be able, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to identify and help heal the wounds that they see in the young people in their care. The pilgrims who experience this healing ministry from their leaders may, in turn, help to heal those around them in the future.

Conclusion: Be Not Afraid

Christ continually reminds us: “Do not be afraid...” (Mt 28:10). The WYD experience, with its massive size and participation of lay leaders, priests, deacons, and religious, bishops, and the Holy Father himself, reminds us that we are not alone on this journey as leaders. Pilgrimage leaders should know that they are united with leaders around the world and that those leaders can be a wealth of information and advice. As Pope Francis told the crowd in Rio de Janeiro as they were about to embark on a mission of service, and which can be applied to the work of the pilgrimage leader today:

Jesus did not say: “one of you go”, but “all of you go”: we are sent together...be aware of the companionship of the whole Church and also the communion of the saints on this mission. When we face challenges together, then we are strong, we discover resources we did not know we had.²⁶

²⁵ See *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 121.

²⁶ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 2.

Foundations: Pilgrimage and World Youth Day

In Kraków in the 1940s, a young Karol Wojtyła (who was studying in the underground seminary run by the Archbishop of Kraków) was inspired and mentored by Jan Tyranowski, a local tailor and ministry leader at the parish. Saint Stanislaus Kostka Church in Debnicki, run by the Salesians of Don Bosco, was a fitting setting for the seminarian's formation. After ordination, and despite Communist proscriptions against religious gatherings, Father Wojtyła would go on regular outings with young people that included prayer, catechesis, and acts of service. He also held in-home Masses, saint-day social events, and went on skiing and kayaking excursions. In fact, it was during one of these outings in 1958 that Father Wojtyła was summoned to Warsaw to accept his appointment as the Auxiliary Bishop of Kraków. After the formalities in the capital city were over, he returned to the young people and their canoes.

These moments undoubtedly shaped the future saint and likely influenced his desire to stay in contact with youth and young adults after becoming pope in 1978. During the Jubilee Year of Redemption (1983), commemorating 1,950 years since the death and resurrection of Christ, the Holy Father called for a special

gathering of young people. It would take place on Palm Sunday in 1984 and be one of the last celebrations of the jubilee. The event was positive, and the following Palm Sunday was then used to mark the United Nations' International Year of Youth. The pope instituted World Youth Day in December 1985. Ever since, the Catholic Church around the world has celebrated young people in local and global gatherings.

Those who lead pilgrimages to World Youth Day today follow in the footsteps of Karol Wojtyła – and take from him the mantle to teach, inspire, and accompany another generation of missionary disciples.

In the role of pilgrimage leader, there are several important principles to pass on to the pilgrims on their journey to Lisbon for WYD:

1. **Remember that World Youth Day is a *pilgrimage* (not a vacation).**
2. ***Encounter* the Universal Church at World Youth Day.**
3. ***Celebrate* World Youth Day in community and communion.**
4. **Be proud of your *heritage of mercy* as a pilgrim from the United States.**

5. Prepare *spiritually* for your journey.
6. Be open to the *Holy Spirit*, wherever he may be leading you.
7. Keep the fire burning... the end of World Youth Day is only the *beginning*.

These seven points provide an outline of the key aspects of the World Youth Day journey.

1. Remember that World Youth Day is a pilgrimage (not a vacation).

It is vital that participants understand that World Youth Day is a pilgrimage, not a vacation or field trip. Pilgrimages are joyful and challenging journeys. Your participants have probably been on several trips throughout their lives and it can be tempting to approach WYD as one among many. The pilgrim journey is – or should be – so much more.

On a vacation, the goal is rest.

On an excursion, the goal is adventure.

On a pilgrimage, the goal is conversion.

People in the United States are often introduced to pilgrimages in high school literature class when they read Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The idea of going on

a pilgrimage, then, might be seen as old, archaic, even outdate. A modern pilgrimage story is the 2010 film, *The Way*, about one man's journey on the Camino de Santiago. In this movie, the main character goes to Spain to identify the body of his son, who died making the pilgrimage. Initially skeptical of such a spiritual exercise, the father decides to continue the journey to honor his son. He finds his own faith illuminated along the path and is transformed in the company of new friends.

In Europe and the Middle East, pilgrimages have a very long tradition and are not limited to Christians (as the Jewish people and Muslims also have strong connections to the pilgrim experience). People go to the Holy Land to visit the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the Church on Mount Tabor in Galilee, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, among many other important sites. Pilgrims go to Italy to pray at the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul or to the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi. Pilgrims travel to France to visit the Grotto at Lourdes, to Panamá to pray with Our Lady of La Antigua, and to Portugal to visit the Chapel of the Apparitions in Fátima.

In the U.S., it may seem as if there are not as many pilgrimage sites since it is such a young country and its religious history is still being

written. Therefore, many Catholics in the U.S. have never gone on pilgrimage. WYD presents Catholic youth and young adults from the U.S. with a chance that few may ever experience.

A pilgrimage is not an escape from everyday life like a vacation or excursion might be. While there are certainly exciting and enjoyable moments to WYD, the primary purpose of a pilgrimage is to grow closer to God. World Youth Day involves a journey to a holy place, trusting that God is leading him or her. With such an opening, the Lord is able to draw the pilgrim into a deeper and more intimate relationship with him. The journey is meant to effect a transformation.

In the case of WYD, Lisbon (or any World Youth Day host city for that matter) may be the destination on an airline boarding pass, but the preparation and the return home are all part of the pilgrim journey. Consider the biblical passage of the Transfiguration (Lk 9:28-36): Jesus took Peter, James, and John up Mount Tabor – the journey included hiking up the mountain, experiencing a vision at the summit, and the journey down the mountain. As Saint Luke reveals to us, after the vision, Simon Peter

asks to remain at the top. The Gospel tells us through that: “But he did not know what he was saying” (Lk 9:33). Connecting this story to WYD, it would be foolish to think that the goal is simply the events in Lisbon. Rather, the entire process is part of the pilgrimage. The goal of WYD is for young people to encounter the universal Church; this should be occurring through every stage of the journey. The key for WYD leaders, then, is to help pilgrims see themselves as pilgrims, to remind them of this basic understanding of a pilgrimage, and to open their minds and hearts to the real reasons for undertaking such a journey.

2. Encounter the Universal Church at World Youth Day.

WYD is a pilgrimage that calls every single pilgrim to immerse themselves in Catholic faith and life. The protagonist of WYD is the *Church who is ever young*, gathered with the Holy Father. It is an experience of the communion of saints, encompassing both Heaven and earth. The Catholic Church includes over 1.229 billion people around the globe.²⁷ This is not something anyone can fully grasp or visualize, and people’s experience of the Church is often

²⁷ Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, 2017, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/>

limited to their local parish, campus, or diocese/eparchy. They may not have ever thought about the fact that fellow Catholics, who attend the same Mass, speak hundreds of languages and come from every background and culture. The international nature of WYD allows pilgrims to experience this universality in a unique way. At WYD, participants experience how the Mass, devotions, and service unite people from every corner of the globe.

The importance of understanding that the community of Christ is a worldwide fellowship, encompassing all cultures and ways of life, cannot be under-estimated. One of the outcomes is a better appreciation and acceptance of cultural expression through liturgy, prayer, and spirituality – so that these experiences will resonate within and impact the pilgrim’s own community of faith.

Encourage your pilgrims to meet other pilgrims from around the world – and to listen, smile, serve, and humbly share their experiences and love of the faith. Help them to understand the meaning of encounter – to not only meet

someone new, but to learn from them and walk alongside them.

Perhaps one of the most celebrated and visible aspects of WYD is the chance for young people to encounter the pope. The affection for the pontiff among pilgrims should be fostered so that it is not limited to his international “celebrity” status. Pilgrims should be helped to understand that the Holy Father is the vicar of Christ on earth. He is the successor of Peter; the visible sign of the unity of the Church.

When St. John Paul II inaugurated WYD, he wanted to spend time with and encounter young people himself. In John Paul II’s memoir, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (1994), he wrote: “Even though he is getting older, the young people urge the Pope to be young. They do not permit him to forget his experience, his discovery of youth, and its great importance for the life of every man.”²⁸ World Youth Day is as much a blessing to the pope as to the young men and women who make the journey. During the WYD events, the pope speaks to pilgrims about how the Gospel applies to them. He reflects on the paschal mystery during the

²⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. Ed. Vittorio Messori. Trans. Jenny McPhee and Martha McPhee. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1994), 125.

Via Crucis (Way of the Cross), Candlelight Vigil, and Closing Mass. Along with the pope, many bishops from throughout the world are also present at WYD, shepherding their dioceses or eparchies. This event is a wonderful opportunity for the bishops to encounter the young Church at catechetical sessions, national gatherings, and just walking along the streets. Participating bishops look forward to meeting the young people and spending time with them. Encourage your pilgrims to seek out the bishops, to listen to their words and catechesis, to thank them for their ministry, to engage them in conversation, and to pray alongside them on the journey. WYD stands out as an opportunity for young people to meet the shepherds who “smell like the sheep” as they walk along the pilgrim road.

Help your pilgrims understand and appreciate the universal dimension to the trip. It can give new meaning to the phrase they repeat each Sunday: “I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church...”

3. Celebrate World Youth Day in community and communion.

Being with millions of young people who love Jesus and are enthusiastic about their Catholic

faith is breathtaking and exciting. Throughout the week at WYD, as pilgrims walk about the streets of the host city, the contagious buzz of youth and young adults meeting each other, singing songs, praying, and experiencing new things is quite palpable. WYD is truly a celebration, and can be felt as such by not only the pilgrims, but by local and international observers, the media, and bystanders.

Massive events like WYD can sometimes seem like just a party, or, as some have put it, “Catholic Woodstock.” This misconception overlooks what is really going on: WYD is a celebration of faith, of being in communion with fellow believers, of seeking the Lord together. This expresses itself in a joyful energy that is hard to contain and can be misinterpreted. The pilgrimage leader, then, must help to direct this energy towards true celebration, so that pilgrims do not reduce WYD to simple fun. Spiritual preparation and accompaniment are critical so that the joyful aspects of WYD are contextualized as a foretaste of heaven and path towards truth.

Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, a patron of young adults, once remarked: “True happiness, oh young people, does not consist in the pleasures of the world, or in earthly things, but in peace of conscience which we only have if we are

pure of heart and mind.”²⁹ In a note to his sister, Frassati commented, “You ask me if I am happy. How could I not be? As long as faith gives me strength, I am happy. A Catholic could not be other than happy... The goal for which we were created involves a path which has its thorns, but it is not a sad path. It is joy, even when it involves pain.”³⁰ Happiness at WYD, then, is about naming and finding joy in all the graces that are being given to the pilgrims. Discovering these graces is best done in the company of good companions. One of the important aspects of WYD is that pilgrims journey in groups. When the journey gets difficult, having companions makes the challenges more bearable. In times of joy, companions share in each other’s happiness and augment it. Good companions also hold each other accountable and remind each other to seek God. Encourage Christian companionship and camaraderie throughout the preparation for WYD, and remind pilgrims to keep their circles open to new people.

WYD offers young men and women an opportunity to connect to the great saints of the past. Encourage pilgrims to follow the

example of the saints, especially those connected to Lisbon and to young people. Meeting those holy men and women, or visiting their sacred sites, can be done throughout the preparation process in the U.S. and at WYD itself. The saints give pilgrims a recipe for responding to the demands of holiness and Christ’s invitation to perfection. The spiritual writer Thomas Merton identified a path to “simple sainthood” – to abandon ourselves, to be reconciled, and to be loving. Becoming saints does not require performing miracles in this life or writing volumes of theological text; it does require living out the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and allowing ourselves to be open to God’s grace in our lives. Encourage pilgrims to look deeper at their own lives and consider how they are called to be saints.

WYD allows pilgrims a chance to walk with a mentor. Pilgrims need someone to talk to, to trust, to follow, and to help them understand how God is working in their lives. The WYD leader cannot be the only one filling this role; it is important to have a great team to help.

²⁹ Frassati, Pier Giorgio, “Letter to Members of the Catholic Youth of Pollone (July 29, 1923),” qtd. in *Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati: An Ordinary Christian* by Maria Di Lorenzo. Trans. Robert Ventresca (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2004), 123.

³⁰ Frassati, Pier Giorgio, “Letter to Luciana Frassati (February 14, 1925),” qtd. in “Message of the Holy Father on the Occasion of the Twenty-Seventh World Youth Day” by Pope Benedict XVI. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012), 6.

4. Be proud of your heritage of mercy as a pilgrim from the United States.

When participating in WYD, pilgrims will not only be representing their parish, campus, diocese/eparchy, or ecclesial movement; they will also be representing their country. There is a balance to be struck between national pride and international openness. On one extreme, some U.S. pilgrims can exhibit an excessive pride that risks alienating those from other nations. On the other extreme, some may try to avoid identifying as American altogether. Both extremes should be avoided and this can be discussed in advance of the pilgrimage.

It is key for pilgrims from the United States to understand is that theirs is a rich heritage that is worth identifying with, celebrating, and humbly sharing at WYD.

Explorers, pioneers, revolutionaries, and trailblazers reside at the beginning of the American story and sustain it today. In the Church, we celebrate the pioneers of faith in North America like St. Kateri Tekakwitha, an Algonquin-Mohawk woman who boldly converted to Roman Catholicism despite tribal objections and persecution; St. John Neumann, C.Ss.R., founder of the Catholic school system

in the United States; Ven. Fr. Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus; and Ven. Fr. Augustus Tolton, a former slave who became the first recognized black Catholic priest in the United States.

Another ideal for the United States is unity amidst diversity. A nation of immigrants from the very beginning, the United States has had to wrestle with how to be one country while being made up of people from a plurality of backgrounds and cultures. While the history of intercultural and interracial relationships in the U.S. is imperfect and the sins of racism and prejudice still exist, the goal of peaceful unity is written into the nation's foundational documents and the national motto "*E pluribus unum*," that is "out of many, one". This desire for national unity and peace fueled the work of the suffragette Susan B. Anthony and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. These core principles were used for civil and workers' rights as championed by Rosa Parks, the Selma marchers and freedom riders of the 1960s, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cesar Chavez.

Many hope that the United States can be a land of mercy, compassion, and refuge for the oppressed. Engraved on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty is a gentle invitation to those who emigrate to the U.S.: "Give me your tired,

your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”³¹ The statue represents the “Mother of Exiles” who mercifully accepts “the homeless” and the “tempest-tost.”

Many of the men and women who have modeled this ideal of mercy, compassion, and refuge have been prominent U.S. Catholics: St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, R.S.C.J., who came to America from France to minister to Native Americans; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, S.C., who started the first Catholic school and founded the first American religious community; St. Damien de Veuster, SS.CC. and St. Marianne Cope, O.S.F., who ministered to the lepers on Molokai in the Hawaiian Islands; St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, M.S.C., who emigrated to the U.S. to care for the poor Italian immigrants and orphans; St. Katharine Drexel, S.B.S., who ministered to Native Americans and African Americans in her native Philadelphia; and the Servants of God, the La Florida martyrs; Monsignor Edward Flanagan, founder of Boys Town, and Dorothy Day, Obl.S.B., founder of the Catholic Worker Movement. These examples are but a few that provide a blueprint for mercy that is central to our Catholic faith and embedded in the history of our nation.

As Abraham Lincoln said when he shared his own vision of reconciliation and mercy in a time of war and division:

With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

There are many great reasons to claim a national identity at World Youth Day. Pilgrimage leaders should help pilgrims understand the heritage of mercy they have received and enable them to share it. Understanding the history and struggles in the United States over the years can help give pilgrims a sense of perspective. Being an American Catholic at WYD means humbly sharing the highest ideals of the United States (pioneering, unity, and mercy), while learning from others’ traditions and cultures – and praying for an end to division, racism, hatred, and violence in the pilgrims’ homeland.

³¹ Emma Lazarus

5. Prepare spiritually for your journey.

WYD is an event like none other. There are so many components: visiting another country with its unique history, culture, and faith story; encountering people from around the world; daily catechesis and prayer experiences; continually walking and traveling to various activities, programs, and locations around the host city; listening to inspiring words from the bishops and the Holy Father; the jubilant Closing Mass, during which the pilgrims are sent out on mission.

For pilgrims to fully experience these moments and recognize Jesus in their midst, they must be spiritually prepared. Pastoral leaders must help their pilgrims not only with fundraising, safety tips, and travel itineraries, but more importantly with faith formation and spiritual development.

One of the first spiritual dimensions to reflect on with pilgrims is the sacredness of the physical destination. It is important to stress how important the Catholic faith is to the people of Portugal, the Iberian Peninsula, and Southwestern Europe in general, and how integrated it is into their history, culture, art, and music. Spend some time talking about the holy sites that pilgrims will visit.

This small country is home to almost 10 million people, and 53% of Portuguese youth identify as Catholic. Santuário de Fátima (Shrine of Fátima) is in Fátima, Portugal, just outside of Lisbon. While Portugal does have one of the most well-known Catholic traditions, it also has a particular history – and it is important to prepare to encounter that cultural experience. The spiritual preparation for WYD should also include equipping pilgrims to engage in the daily catechesis with an open mind and heart. Pilgrims should know that the catechetical sessions are opportunities to learn from great teachers of the Catholic faith from around the world and dialogue with them. Encourage pilgrims to consider questions they may have about various topics. Help your pilgrims see themselves as “apprentices” in the Catholic tradition, as the bishops and catechists of WYD nurture their faith and support them as missionary disciples. Leaders can assist the bishops by helping to unpack the lessons of World Youth Day for their particular group, especially if anything is unclear.

Another powerful moment of WYD that ought to be prepared for is the Friday evening *Via Crucis* (“Way of the Cross”) led by the Holy Father. At every WYD, the Stations of the Cross are brought to life in a way particular by the host country. For instance, in 2011 in

Madrid, carved scenes used in processions for Spanish feast days served as the images on the Way of the Cross, while in Kraków in 2016, each station was represented in a dramatic and visual art tableau. The *Via Crucis* is unique and powerful because of this interaction between Jesus' Passion and the host country's history. It is important to prepare pilgrims for this by praying and reflecting in advance on the Stations of the Cross, particularly as they are experienced in Portuguese cultures. This can help pilgrims appreciate and enter into the prayer. Pilgrimage leaders can point out that Jesus continues to suffer as his people endure crosses of injustice, violence, suffering, prejudice, persecution, and death around the world. Pilgrimage leaders can connect the *Via Crucis* to the pilgrims' lives, when suffering and loss has entered their experience.

Spiritual preparation is also important for the mundane aspects of WYD. One of those elements is the constant walking: walking to catechesis, meals, central events, churches and sanctuaries, bathrooms, etc. Americans are often unused to walking so much, and leaders can remind pilgrims to be in solidarity with those in impoverished areas who routinely have to walk to obtain work, food, drink, and shelter. Walking as a group reminds pilgrims that they are not alone, but in the company of fellow

travelers. Walking also gives pilgrims time to think, to pray, to sing, and to converse with others along the road. Leaders can help pilgrims to treasure the walking, as well as the frequent times of waiting that occur on the journey. These moments of walking and waiting can be seen as opportunities for pilgrims to open themselves up to the graces of anticipation, sacrifice, and expectation. This is more likely to happen if it is discussed in advance.

6. Be open to the Holy Spirit, wherever he may be leading you.

WYD is guaranteed to contain many unexpected moments – from life-changing ones to minor surprises or frustrations. Pilgrimage leaders should anticipate this and help pilgrims adapt to circumstances with joy rather than annoyance. For example, sudden changes may be made to the WYD itinerary without notice, or the process to pick up your meals may not be efficient. Some of the most memorable moments cited by past WYD pilgrims were surprises, that is, those things that were unplanned and unscripted.

This awareness does not mean abandoning careful or strategic planning; but it does mean that adaptability is a value to highlight in the

preparation process. Some personalities take to this more naturally than others. The surprises and sometimes downright “messiness” of the WYD experience can be used profitably as they remind us that we are not in control; God is. Leaders must ask the Holy Spirit to bring meaning and order amid the “chaos” while taking care of the pilgrims as best they can. At WYD 2013, the heavy rainstorms in Rio de Janeiro that week caused concerns about flooding and safety at the Final Vigil & Mass site. This prompted the organizers to move the concluding events to Copacabana Beach. Pilgrim groups had to change their walking routes on Saturday and Sunday and deal with an inadequate number of toilet facilities at the new site. But in the end, the event was incredibly memorable in part because of its beautiful setting. The pilgrims whose leaders fostered a culture of adaptation in that situation surely had a better time than those who grumbled about something they had no control over.

Unexpected moments can also include chance encounters with other pilgrims, catechists, priests, deacons, religious, residents of the host nation, and most importantly, Jesus Christ. In preparation, consider walking pilgrims through a parable like the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) or the account of the Final Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) where Jesus makes it clear that he is

present in those in need. God may put into the pilgrim’s path someone who is in great need, physically or spiritually. Encourage pilgrims to be open to those moments.

Other unexpected moments at WYD include finding joy in something that is objectively frustrating and/or negative. Certain aspects of the pilgrimage can be difficult (extended periods of walking and waiting around, prolonged exposure to sun, heat, or rain, long lines for the bathroom, etc.), and pilgrims can become aggravated.

If groups bond together to support one another and if the pilgrimage leader can model patience and humor, those moments can become opportunities. Pilgrims can find grace and joy following unexpected detours or resting with one another on the sidewalk.

Questions for pilgrims to reflect on, and for pilgrimage leaders to ask that could result from unanticipated moments on the trip include:

- Where is God now leading me (or us)?
- Why might God be pointing me (or us) in this new direction?
- What could God be calling me (or us) to do, to be, or to move towards by this sudden turn of events?

- Whom is God pointing me (or us) towards?
- What needs to change within me (or us) to better accept and understand this situation?
- How can I (or we) respond and react in a calm, patient, and mature manner?

At any unexpected hitches, it is important to remind pilgrims that the Holy Spirit can make use of such moments. It is at those moments when the true goal of pilgrimage reveals itself – transformation and conversion of heart to embrace God’s will.

Being open to the will of God and adaptable to wherever the Lord calls also means discovering new paths at the end of WYD. For a great number of pilgrims, WYD impacts their lives significantly, perhaps even giving them a new direction. For the past several years, WYD has played an increasing role in the discernment process of newly ordained priests, deacons, and professed religious sisters and brothers. Others meet their future spouses at WYD. Still others discern a call to become more active in their local parish community or diocese/eparchy, to pursue a degree or continuing education in Church ministry, or to embark on missionary work. WYD can become an integral part of the vocational discernment process, opening young

people up to the possibility that their lives might be headed in a new direction.

Pilgrimage leaders are encouraged to help youth and young adults in their discernment. Consider collaborating with local priests and consecrated men and women, as well as marriage ministry leaders and other lay ecclesial ministers, to help pilgrims consider God’s call at WYD. During WYD events in Lisbon, be aware of opportunities for young people to connect with priests, consecrated religious, lay ecclesial ministers, and married couples who are there.

After the return home, follow up with any pilgrims who had been discerning those particular pathways. Be positive and encouraging to pilgrims who express interest and excitement about any vocation, whether it be to a state in life or a special form of service or ministry. When it comes to discerning a call to the priesthood, the role of the youth ministry and/or young adult ministry leader is one of the most important factors. Encourage and help youth and young adult pilgrims walk through their next steps towards responding positively to God’s call for their lives.

7. Keep the fire burning... the end of World Youth Day is only the beginning.

WYD is but a stop on the journey to heaven that began at Baptism. For some pilgrims, the journey of faith has been a steady one; for others, it is newly awakened by WYD.

Consider again the story of the Transfiguration from the Gospel of Luke (9:28-36). “And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem” (9:30-31). Jesus is looking ahead. Likewise, World Youth Day should help the pilgrims to look ahead, too. After they descend from the mountain, Jesus and the three disciples turn towards Jerusalem (9:51). Jesus makes plans to send his followers ahead of him to prepare the way (9:52), empowering seventy-two of them to go “in pairs” to every town and village the Lord was intending to visit (10:1-12). “Go on your way,” Jesus commissions them, adding a cautionary note: “Behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves” (10:3).

For Jesus and the disciples, the glorious moment of the Transfiguration impels them forward on mission: to the world, the Cross,

and the salvation of the world. For World Youth Day pilgrims, the intense experience of the international gathering should direct them to mission as well.

Challenge pilgrims to see their journey to and from Portugal in light of the Transfiguration story. Encourage them to reflect on what their “exodus” might be, where their “Jerusalem” could be, and what mission God could be calling them to embark upon when they come down from the “mountaintop” of Lisbon. Help pilgrims know that they do not need to walk alone after WYD and that the mission they receive may take a whole lifetime to complete.

Before pilgrims embark on the trip to Lisbon, coordinate ways for them to serve and work for justice in the community; this will help prepare them for lives of mercy and compassion. Help them to commit to praying regularly, to active listening, and to grounding their decisions and discernment in God and his Church. Give them tools to help them to witness to their faith. Teach them the art of accompaniment, as defined by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

“...this ‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of another (cf. Ex. 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady

and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life” (EG, no. 169).

“Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God’s love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives.”

(EG, no. 171)

Unpacking *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Holy Father’s apostolic exhortation on evangelization, is a great step in teaching young people how to evangelize and share the Gospel with others, especially their peers. As Pope Francis notes, evangelization requires them to listen more than speak, and to act with reassurance, compassion, healing, and encouragement.

Before going to WYD, a pilgrim should have a solid understanding of the community from which they are being sent (and to which they

will return). Taking a serious look at the struggles that their peers and others in their area face every day will help them understand how to bring healing and love to those in pain. Pilgrims should be trained to see the needs of those in their families, their parish or diocese/eparchy, their school or workplace, and the civic life of their communities. They can consider how those areas could be addressed or responded to. Knowing the “mission field” before World Youth Day gives the pilgrims a frame of reference and knowledge of what people at home may need from them.

When pilgrims have the needs of their communities in mind, WYD can be even more enriching. It can equip them as missionary disciples. When pilgrims see that ultimate destination is the Kingdom of God, then WYD becomes an exciting stop on the way that helps them hear God’s voice.

The end of World Youth Day, then, is only the beginning.

World Youth Day Resource Logistics: Practical Tips for Leaders

WYD requires a great deal of logistical planning and coordination, especially on the part of international pilgrim leaders. Even though there will be unexpected surprises, it is essential for you to do plenty of research and planning so that your group has both primary and backup plans. Additionally, you should regularly check the official World Youth Day website (<https://www.lisboa2023.org/en/>), the United States' official WYD site (www.wydusa.org), and their associated social media accounts in order to stay informed. It is also important for you to be familiar with the country of Portugal and Portuguese culture, and to know a few basics of Portuguese. You can go to the library or bookstore to find the most up-to-date travel books and resources on the faith and history of the Portuguese people. You can also connect with travel websites, the online home of the Embassy of Portugal in the United States ([https://washingtondc.embaixadaportugal.mne.](https://washingtondc.embaixadaportugal.mne.gov.pt/en)

[gov.pt/en](https://washingtondc.embaixadaportugal.mne.gov.pt/en)), and the Tourism Authority of Portugal (ATP) website, (<https://www.visitportugal.com/en>). Regularly checking these will familiarize you with the culture and any developments in the country. The information found there could also be helpful in assisting your pilgrims with their own understanding. If time and finances allow, you are well advised to take a familiarization tour of Lisbon in advance of the WYD events. Gaining firsthand knowledge of the landscape, accommodations, transportation, food options, and people can potentially eliminate surprises and misconceptions. If this is not possible, pilgrimage leaders could consider arriving in Lisbon a few days prior to the official start of WYD to orient themselves to the city, find the USCCB / WYDUSA support office, and scout the venues of the central events, housing, festival events, and catechesis.

WORLD YOUTH DAY SCHEDULE

The general outline (subject to change) for WYD 2023 is below. This is similar to the general schedule of international WYD gatherings in the past. The most updated information about the World Youth Day schedule of events can be found at <https://www.lisboa2023.org/en/>.

Tuesday August 1	Wednesday August 2	Thursday August 3	Friday August 4	Saturday August 5	Sunday August 6
<i>Morning through Afternoon</i> Pilgrim Arrivals Arrivals to Lisbon; checking in at pilgrim housing sites	<i>Morning</i> Catechesis with Bishops Catechetical Venues/Sites around Lisbon	<i>Morning</i> Catechesis with Bishops Catechetical Venues/Sites around Lisbon	<i>Morning</i> Catechesis with Bishops Catechetical Venues/Sites around Lisbon	<i>Morning through Afternoon</i> Walking Pilgrimages to Evening Vigil	<i>Morning</i> WYD Final Mass and Closing Ceremony with Pope Francis Parque Tejo
	<i>Afternoon through Evening</i> Youth Festival around Lisbon	<i>Afternoon</i> Youth Festival around Lisbon	<i>Afternoon</i> Youth Festival around Lisbon		<i>Afternoon through Evening</i> Return Walking Pilgrimages from Final Mass
<i>Evening</i> Opening Mass Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon, Manuel Clemente Parque Eduardo VII	<i>Evening</i> Papal Welcome Ceremony with Pope Francis Parque Eduardo VII	<i>Evening</i> Via Crucis Prayer with Pope Francis Parque Eduardo VII	<i>Evening</i> Candlelight Prayer Vigil with Pope Francis Parque Tejo		

The official beginning of WYD is the Opening Mass; however, there may be activities taking place prior to the opening ceremonies. In addition, during the week prior to WYD, *Days in the Dioceses* are held around Portugal enabling

international pilgrims an opportunity to engage in missionary work or service. The *Days in the Dioceses*, while connected to WYD events, are separate from WYD, with registration handled by the individual host dioceses. More details

can be found at

<https://www.lisboa2023.org/en/preparation/days-in-the-dioceses>.

Catechetical sites will be assigned to each group that registers for WYD based on housing location and language preference. Bishops from around the world provide catechesis for the pilgrims, reflecting on the themes of WYD and concluding with a midday Mass.

The Youth Festival is a series of events that taking place across the Lisbon region including concerts, presentations, exhibits, performances, lectures, prayer and devotional opportunities, charitable activities, networking, and other programs. A printed or online directory of the various Youth Festival options will be made available immediately prior to or during the WYD week.

Pilgrim Packets

As part of the WYD registration, pilgrims should receive WYD credentials, meal tickets (or voucher book), a guidebook featuring times and events, a worship aid for liturgical celebrations, and a backpack (along with other items determined by local organizers). The credentials also serve as the pilgrim's ticket for Lisbon transportation (trains and buses)

throughout the week. Pilgrim packets will be available at accommodation sites (or another designated location). These items are essential; pilgrim credentials must be worn at all times for admission to WYD events.

Opening Mass

The first official event of WYD 2023 is the Opening Mass on Tuesday evening (August 1st) with Manuel Clemente, the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon. The Holy Father will not be present for this event. This liturgy sets the tone for the week and is the first experience of WYD.

Expect most of the Mass to be in Portuguese (although a simultaneous English translation should be available via radio).

The Mass will be held at Parque Eduardo VII. There will not be any chairs; pilgrim groups will gather on the grass. Groups can use tarps, blankets, or beach mats to mark their spot. Pilgrims may want to bring foam pads for seat cushions if they can easily fit in their backpacks. Massive television screens will be stationed throughout the venue, so groups do not need to sit close to the stage area. As at all gatherings throughout the week, be sure to locate the most accessible toilets, first aid stations, and food tents, as well as the best routes in and out of the area.

This event may be subject to transportation challenges, since the massive influx of pilgrims is entering the city for the first time. Therefore, pilgrims should be prepared for delays and long lines and allow plenty of time for travel. Usually the transit issues improve as the week goes on.

Catechesis

On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday morning (August 2-4), catechetical sessions are held throughout the city. Groups will be assigned to a location near their accommodation site so that they will not need to travel far to get there. Some sites will be small churches or schools, while others will be larger sports arenas. Each catechetical session will be based on the theme for that day and will begin with warm-up activities for the pilgrims (called “animation”). A bishop who speaks the pilgrims’ language will offer a presentation on the themes, and the session concludes with Mass. These sessions are great opportunities for pilgrims to meet others from around the world who speak their language, hear from a bishop who is passionate about the Gospel and young people, and experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which may be offered there. These are core formation experiences of WYD– not to be missed. It is also advisable that pilgrim groups

go to the catechetical sessions to which they are assigned rather than searching for sites with particular bishops or animating teams with whom they are familiar. Discovering new insights and meeting new people is part of the WYD experience – and a way to respond with humility and obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Cultural Festival & Activities

Throughout the week, dozens of expositions, concerts, dramas, and other faith-based events will be available at many different venues throughout Lisbon in multiple languages. Collectively, these events are referred to as the “Youth Festival” (Festival) and are free to all registered WYD pilgrims.

Pilgrimage leaders will want to look over the Festival schedule, in advance if possible, and plan on visiting some events throughout the week. This is a great way for pilgrims to take in more of the local culture, to go deeper in their formation or spiritual growth, and to meet other pilgrims from around the globe at less crowded venues. More information on the specific activities during the Festival will be available in the official World Youth Day guidebook upon arrival in Lisbon.

Afternoons are also a good time for groups to take a break, rest, and refocus their energies with some unstructured time. For example, some pilgrimage leaders find a quiet park for their pilgrims to pray, rest, or converse among themselves. Groups may also seek out a local restaurant or sidewalk café to taste some of the local food and drink.

These afternoons can also be used for small group discussions or theological reflection. Other group members may want to take in the Festival or use the time to meet international pilgrims. WYD leaders should do what they think best for their group.

Papal Welcome Ceremony

On Thursday afternoon (August 3), WYD pilgrims will joyfully welcome Pope Francis to Lisbon at the Papal Welcome Ceremony. There will be a prayer service with the Holy Father and he will give his first remarks to the young pilgrims. Since this will be held at Parque Eduardo VII, the same venue as the Opening Mass, pilgrimage guides will know how to get there, what to expect, and where to sit or stand. The pope will likely speak in Portuguese, so be sure to remind pilgrims to bring their radio and headphones so that they can listen to the simultaneous translation.

This event will be very crowded since it is the first encounter between the Holy Father and the young people. If your group arrives early, you may find space near a fence or roadway where the pope mobile will be passing by. Just know that, immediately prior to the pope's arrival, those areas will get even more crowded and people may start pushing. Encourage pilgrims to be calm and gracious, yet also protective of themselves, each other, and their belongings. You will also want to ensure that your group's pilgrims are not the ones shoving others around, and as a leader, you have the authority to inform pilgrims (yours or others) that they are acting inappropriately.

Via Crucis (The Way of the Cross)

All World Youth Day participants are invited to take part in praying the *Via Crucis* (The Way of the Cross) on Friday evening August 4. The exact location of this will be announced later. Pilgrims may be able to watch some of the prayer service live and some on a video screen, depending on how the local organizers present the stations. Previous experience has been that the crowds for this event, if held in a central location, are not as heavy as previous nights; still, caution should be exercised regarding space, belongings, etc. This event may also be in Portuguese, so once again, it is important to

bring a radio and headphones. The prayer service for the *Via Crucis* may be found in the official WYD pilgrim journal or on a mobile application; however, if it is not accessible at the time, pilgrims can use any Stations of the Cross service to follow along. Since this prayer centers on the Passion and Death of our Lord, it should be observed with due solemnity. Encourage your pilgrims to maintain a respectful, reverent spirit and to enter into contemplation of the Paschal Mystery.

Saturday Vigil Walk

On Saturday (August 5), the WYD pilgrims will make their way to Parque Eduardo VII for the evening vigil. Pilgrimage leaders should have a clear plan for getting to the vigil site. If the local organizers have designated a particular section for you and your group for this event, please respect those directions and go to your assigned area. There is a reason for these assignments; overcrowding is a risk to everyone and results in uncomfortable sleeping arrangements or potential conflicts with other groups.

Remember that pilgrims only need to take with them what they need for Saturday and Sunday (August 5 & 6). A packet of food, enough for 24 hours, will be provided to pilgrims either in route or as they enter the vigil site. It may all be

in one bag or package, so pilgrims should take stock of all items contained in the packet, and ration them accordingly. Remind pilgrims not to eat all their food on Saturday - this happens more than you might expect! Also remind pilgrims to pack their radio and headphones in their bags so that they can follow along at the Vigil and Mass.

The walk to the Vigil site may be long and take place over uneven, waterlogged, or dirty terrain, as well as residential areas. Help pilgrims be aware of their surroundings and respectful of local residents' property. Pilgrims should drink plenty of water, wear comfortable shoes, and, if any problems should arise, locate WYD volunteers for assistance.

Saturday Night Prayer Vigil

Although pilgrims may be tired and tempted to go to bed early on Saturday night (August 5), they should not miss the solemn and beautiful Candlelight Prayer Vigil with Pope Francis. The Vigil is one of the most memorable aspects of the pilgrimage. Encourage young people to embrace the silence and join in song at the vigil's various points. When the entire field of young people is silent as the Holy Father leads quiet adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, it is truly remarkable. Pilgrims should maintain a

respectful attitude so that they and others can encounter the Lord in prayer.

When the service is finished, most pilgrims remain in the field and sleep under the stars. Be prepared for rain or flooding by sleeping in and around (or under) protective covering. Pilgrims may only get a few hours of sleep that night, but they should try their best to rest. They will need energy for the final Mass and the walk back to the starting point.

Sunday Closing Mass with the Pope

On Sunday morning (August 6), Pope Francis will preside at the WYD Closing Mass along the Parque Tejo. Everyone in the host country, not only the WYD participants, is welcome to attend the Closing Mass, so do not be surprised if the little bit of open space near your group is filled on Sunday morning.

Encourage pilgrims to treat the new arrivals as guests and greet them with hospitality and graciousness. The pope is anticipated to arrive before the Mass so that he can tour the open field in the pope mobile. The roadways and fences will be especially crowded. Be aware of your group's equipment and belongings so that they are not trampled on by people seeking a better view of the Holy Father.

The Mass will take place in Portuguese, so pilgrims should use their radio and headphones again if they are not familiar with the Portuguese language.

Since this is the celebration of the Eucharist, it is essential that pilgrims maintain a respectful and reverent attitude throughout the liturgy. The encounter with Christ in this Final Mass concludes the experience at the mountaintop summit of World Youth Day; pilgrims should be open to hearing God's voice as the disciples did at the Transfiguration.

At the conclusion of Mass, the Holy Father traditionally announces the location of the next World Youth Day. Many groups depart immediately following the final song; however, pilgrims are welcome to stay and eat their provided lunch in a leisurely fashion. The crowds may thin out while they eat, and pilgrims may have an easier time getting back to the housing sites, whether by walking or using public transportation, if they wait.

PACKING ESSENTIALS

Clothing and Shoes

If your group will be staying the traditional length of WYD (Tuesday, August 1 through

Sunday, August 6), pilgrims should bring clothing for five or six days and plan on wearing some items twice. If your pilgrimage is longer (with *days in the diocese*, additional tours or travel days), advise pilgrims to bring only the clothing they need (rather than extra outfits) – or to bring travel soap so they can wear some things more than once.

There is no need for any formal clothing at WYD, so pilgrims should pack functional, casual apparel. Some religious shrines and churches enforce a modest dress code requiring that shoulders and knees be covered, so pilgrims should be prepared for that. In general, pilgrims should wear modest and appropriate clothing throughout the WYD pilgrimage, keeping in mind that they represent their parish, diocese/eparchy, movement, and country.

Pilgrims will walk a great deal WYD, so travelers should bring sturdy, well broken-in shoes along with foot care or a blister kit (available at local drug stores). Lisbon's weather in August has consistent warm temperatures (highs between 76 and 83 degrees; lows around 67 degrees), and most if not all days will be warm and sunny with low chance of rain. Pilgrimage guides and pilgrims are encouraged to check the forecast so that they can bring appropriate clothing for the weather conditions.

Pilgrims should wear layers because to prepare for the change in temperature in the morning and evening; this is especially important for the Saturday walking pilgrimage and overnight vigil. Those 24 hours may go from warm to cool and back to warm.

Some other tips:

- Pack extra thin socks (which can take almost no space and wash/dry quickly); wearing two at once can limit the formation of blisters.
- Bring a washcloth or small towel to rub off some of the dirt caked in your skin or clothes with something other than what you're wearing.
- Bring a roll of toilet paper with you in the event that the portable toilets do not have this, or if you need something to wipe up spills or sweat.

The WYD Backpack vs. Your Own

Pilgrims are encouraged to bring their own backpacks or one from the WYDUSA store rather than relying on the backpacks that Lisbon will provide. While the official WYD backpack is a great perk that comes with registration (and a wonderful memento), the quality, size, and design of the pack may not fit your pilgrims' needs. In addition, there will be

hundreds of thousands of identical Lisbon 2023 backpacks at WYD, so the likelihood of one person's bag being picked up by another person, or lost in a pile among identical backpacks, is very high. It is better for pilgrims to bring the official bag home as a souvenir and use another one for the week. The unique WYDUSA or local bags will also make it easier to identify the group in large crowds.

Some features that pilgrims ought to look for in a good backpack: sturdiness; pockets for water bottles that are accessible without taking the pack off; attachment points for tying things on or hooking in carabineers; a good size to carry all the supplies (food, blankets, devotional books, radio, etc.) for the week; and a sternum strap so the shoulder straps do not slip off. A belt strap can be helpful in transferring the weight of the full backpack from the shoulders to the hips. The backpack can also be the pilgrim's carry-on for the flight. Pilgrims may also purchase, in advance, one of the official WYDUSA sling back backpacks available at www.wydusa.org.

Packing for the Flights

Many airlines and travel companies limit passengers to one checked bag and one carry-on. Pilgrims should be aware of these

regulations when preparing for this trip. They should pack certain essentials in their carry-on (e.g., passport, medication, toothbrush and travel tube of toothpaste, and a change of clothing in case of delayed or lost baggage). They should also carry any cash they are bringing and any fragile items such as electronics. The airline may provide a small pillow and blanket, but pilgrims may want to bring earplugs and/or eye masks if they would like to sleep on the flight. Be sure to check the TSA website at <http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information> for a full list of what can be brought through airport security.

Packing for the Week

During the WYD, pilgrims should plan on taking whatever they will need for the entire day in their backpack when they leave in the morning. This may include: rosary, jacket or sweater, rain jacket or umbrella, flashlight, snacks, hand sanitizer, travel toilet paper, a pilgrim journal, a small radio (and headphones) for simultaneous language translation at major events, hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, camera, foot care kit, cell phone, and a cell phone pocket charger. They should bring a water bottle that they can refill throughout the day. If you or your group is using a tour bus, travelers can usually leave backpacks on the bus. Note that

some museums and WYD venues will require backpacks to go through a metal detector or be left outside of security.

Portugal works on the same electrical system as most other European countries. In Lisbon, the voltage is 230 volts, in other parts of the country it can be 220 volts. Pilgrims travelling to Portugal will need electrical adapters. Electric wall sockets will use the two-pin power plug adapters commonly found in European countries.

Packing for the Vigil Walk & Mass

For this two-day experience of “roughing it,” pilgrims will only want to bring what they need for Saturday and Sunday. In addition to the gear they normally carry during WYD week, pilgrims will need: a sleeping bag or blanket (or a lightweight sleeping bag liner), a ground cloth to prevent dew or rain from soaking the sleeping bag or blanket (a shower curtain from a dollar store works great), a sleeping pad (a cheap pool mattress can do the job), flashlight, change of clothes, toothbrush and toothpaste, and small bags of medicine. This is where having attachment points on your backpack can be valuable. Climbing carabineers are especially handy for attaching things to the backpack.

Language

Portuguese speak Portuguese, and most have a working knowledge of English. However, knowing a few phrases in Portuguese such as “Yes” (“*Sím*”), “No” (“*Não*”), “Where is the bathroom?” (“*Onde está a casa de banho?*”), and “Thank You” (“*Obrigado/a*”) will go a long way to help communicate. To ask for help or to get someone’s attention, say, “*Desculpe.*” If you bump into someone or cut somebody off while walking, say, “*Com licença.*” Pilgrims may consider packing a small Portuguese phrase book. If your group includes fluent Portuguese speakers (or your group meets others who speak both Portuguese and English), you might also consider inviting them to assist those pilgrims who only know English, which would also be helpful for pilgrim fellowship, camaraderie, and cross-cultural learning. In addition, it is good for pilgrims to know some basic phrases of the other central WYD languages (French, Spanish, and Italian) in order to converse with other pilgrims. Leaders can work with pilgrim groups to learn and practice basic phrases and words together. Ask the pilgrims what language they study in school and ask them to take the lead on teaching the others that language.

Getting Around

Transportation is a significant issue at WYD; the event always puts a major strain on the transportation infrastructure of the host country. Expect delays and even breakdowns in the system. It is anticipated that the WYD credentials will serve as the pilgrims' passes for unlimited travel on the buses, metro and trains in and near Lisbon. If your group has not experienced major public transportation before, and if circumstances allow, consider traveling with your pilgrims to a major metropolitan city in the U.S. (as part of their pilgrim preparation) to practice the art of riding public transit. Every pilgrim should be able to read the public transportation route map of Portugal, <https://www.visitportugal.com/en/sobre-portugal/info-util>, know how to plan a trip on a public system, and know how transfer between the two metro lines (one is elevated and the other is underground). Group leaders should check on these public transportation details (i.e. picking up a transit map, practice riding the system, etc.) soon after arriving in Lisbon.

Expect to walk between five to ten miles each day as part of the WYD experience. Distances will depend on the location of your accommodations and catechetical sessions in relation to the central events and center city.

Walking is a key component to WYD; there is no way around it. If your group has any pilgrims who are mobility-impaired, be sure to note this at registration, check in, or arrival at WYD events with the on-site volunteers.

Medical Issues

According to the Center for Disease Control <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/portugal>, pilgrims do not need any special vaccine to go to Portugal.

Pilgrims should check with their doctors to ensure that they are healthy enough to travel and with their health insurance companies to see what coverage, if any, they receive when traveling abroad. WYD may provide some limited health insurance as part of the pilgrim package (though this is not known at the time of writing, nor guaranteed). Travelers may consider supplemental health insurance.

Pilgrims should keep a copy of their current prescriptions with them, in case their medication gets lost or needs to be refilled unexpectedly. This also helps if there is an emergency, letting medical professionals know what medications are regularly taken by the patient. There will be medical personnel at all

the major World Youth Day event locations, with first aid tents clearly marked.

Money in Portugal

Portugal's currency is the Euro (just as in other European countries). One Euro equals roughly one U.S. dollar. Cash payments made in Portugal must be in the Euro. Pilgrims can make currency exchanges at their local bank before departing for Portugal and at the airport. Currency may also be obtained in Portugal through ATMs or a major bank. Credit cards and debit cards are handy, but not all are accepted and many street vendors or small shops only take cash. ATMs and banks may charge a transaction fee for each transaction. If taking a card, pilgrims should inform their bank of their travel plans so that the bank does not think the card has been stolen. This is usually easy to do online. Pilgrims should not use travelers' checks.

Food and Meals

The local water is safe to drink, and most Americans should have no trouble with traditional Portuguese food, which features Iberian influences. Portuguese food often revolves around bread, pork, fish, cheese, and wine. Seafood is especially present since Portugal is bordered by the ocean to the west

Gulf of Cadiz to the south). There are American restaurant chains in Lisbon should pilgrims seek foods more familiar, but encourage your group to be more adventurous. During WYD, registered pilgrims who choose the meal option will receive food vouchers as part of registration. If using a travel company, be sure to review what meals will be provided and which meals are on your own. Breakfast will be available near your housing or catechetical sites if your group uses the WYD-provided simple housing. Hotels may offer a breakfast option as part of their package.

For lunch and dinner, the WYD vouchers can be used at local restaurants or food tents near WYD activities such as catechetical sessions, central events, and cultural festival locations. The voucher system allows for this flexibility. Further instructions will be included with the pilgrim packet or on the official World Youth Day websites in advance of the trip.

Emergencies and Protection

If you or any members of your group are in an emergency in Portugal, you can dial 112 (the same as the U.S. 911). For specific issues, Fire is 117. Visit this web link for additional emergency and medical numbers:

<https://www.visitportugal.com/en/sobre->

[portugal/info-util](#). Many Portuguese speak English and may be able to assist you. There are also many WYD volunteers (who speak multiple languages) and they can help or point you in the right direction for more information. In addition, you can get non-emergency assistance from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the U.S. Consulate, both of which will have offices set up in Lisbon.

Be aware of safe environment procedures, in case pilgrims are inappropriately approached or touched. Know who to contact and what to do. Consult with the child and youth protection office of your diocese/eparchy for information, especially if you are traveling with minors or vulnerable adults. When the group is in a large crowd, it is essential to have an exit strategy and a pre-determined place for pilgrims to gather if they get separated. These precautions will be helpful not only for your pilgrims, but the safety and security of all WYD participants.

Please note that there may be cultural differences regarding personal space (space between one's body and another's). In the U.S., people generally prefer lots of personal space; however, people from other parts of the world may be used to being closer to one another. Help prepare pilgrims for these differences.

Remind them that, in large crowds, they may feel like their personal space is being invaded. As long as these encounters are not dangerous or leading to abuse of any kind, pilgrims should be prepared to accept some discomfort.

Cell Phones Overseas

Many Americans who travel to Europe come home to massive cell phone bills because they did not manage their data usage during the trip. If pilgrims are bringing a cell phone overseas, they should contact their mobile phone service provider to understand the fees associated with using their phones and data plans overseas. Not all cell phones work overseas but some carriers will loan travelers a phone for their trip. Some people bring an unlocked phone and purchase a local SIM card once they arrive; these are available in Lisbon.

Pilgrims may consider using digital services like Skype (if Wi-Fi capabilities are available at the housing site in Portugal), as this cuts down on the costs of communication overseas.

Pilgrims should remain aware that this trip is a pilgrimage, not a vacation, and should try not to use their mobile devices as if they had not left home. Mobile devices should be used only for the purposes of the pilgrimage (for instance,

using a WYD mobile application, reading Scripture or devotional prayers online, etc.) or for emergency contacts.

When walking around Lisbon, at major events and catechetical sessions, and on the journey to Lisbon, please encourage the group to use discretion when using cell phones. There are appropriate times for using them (i.e. the WYD mobile app, using maps, taking notes during catechesis, etc.) and there are times when it is not appropriate to use mobile devices (i.e. taking pictures during the elevation of the Eucharist, texting constantly, ignoring those around them while on the phone, etc.). You should pay attention to the trends of cell phone use of your group and help them to use technology in the best way possible.

Time Change

In August Portugal is on Western European Summer Time (WEST). In August 2023, during WYD, then, 6:00 P.M. in Lisbon is 1:00 P.M. in New York, 12:00 P.M. in Chicago, 11:00 A.M. in Denver, 10:00 A.M. in Los Angeles, 9:00 A.M. in Alaska, and 7:00 A.M. in Hawaii.

It is helpful for pilgrims to get enough rest to stay healthy throughout the pilgrimage. This can be challenging since pilgrims are excited to

be far from home, exploring a new country, bonding with their friends, and meeting new people. Leaders must get rest (and are typically more conscious of this need) and pilgrims should do the same. Everyone will enjoy the experience more if they are not sleep-deprived.

Passports and International Travel

Traveling internationally involves additional challenges for WYD pilgrims. The U.S. Department of State has a website (<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/americans-traveling-abroad.html>) to assist U.S. citizens traveling abroad and offers specific information for traveling to Portugal, including important travel warnings and alerts (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Portugal.html>).

United States citizens need a valid U.S. passport to travel to Portugal and it must have *at least six months of validity* left for international travel (i.e. passports used for the trip to Portugal should be valid through *January 1, 2024* or later).

International travelers are encouraged to register their trip with the United States State Department Smart Traveler Enrollment

Program (<https://step.state.gov/step/>). No visa is required for U.S. citizens traveling into Portugal. Leaders who have pilgrims who are in complex immigration situations (DREAM, DACA, etc.) should consult with the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (www.uscis.gov) prior to booking travel to World Youth Day.

Pilgrims should make 3 copies of their passport; one should be left at home, one left at the diocesan, parish, or pilgrim group leader's office in the U.S., and one given to the pilgrimage leader to take to Lisbon. This will make it easier to verify the pilgrim's identity and citizenship if anything were to happen to their passport while abroad.

Should pilgrims lose their passport, they must immediately seek out the United States Embassy in Lisbon:

Avenida das Forças Armadas

1600-081 Lisboa

Telephone: +351-21-727-3300

Emergency After-Hours Telephone:

+21-727-3300

Fax +351-21-726-9109

Before going to Lisbon, check out the embassy's website <https://pt.usembassy.gov/>. Officials from the United States Embassy will

also be available at various English-language WYD sites throughout the week.

Trading at World Youth Day

One way of celebrating the global faith community at WYD is by trading cultural items with other pilgrims. This exchange is especially fun if pilgrims bring or make items to trade such as prayer cards, crosses, buttons, stickers, decorated clothespins, bandanas, hats, shirts, and so forth. These items often represent the pilgrim's parish, diocese/eparchy, movement, local community, state, or country. Some people give away their items, but most try to "bargain" an exchange for items that other pilgrims have to trade. These trades are done informally throughout the week, en route to events, on the pilgrimage walk, or while waiting for events to begin. Trading is optional; pilgrims should not worry if they do not have anything to trade. If pilgrims would like to trade things that represent the Roman Catholic experience in the U.S., the WYDUSA office (www.wydusa.org) provides some items for purchase in advance of WYD. These include WYDUSA clothing, backpacks, blankets, water bottles, prayer cards, and posters. The USCCB Store has many other items that might be good trade items as well.

Three Opportunities to Never Pass Up

There are three practical opportunities that leaders and their pilgrim groups should never pass up on a World Youth Day pilgrimage:

1. **Refill the water bottle** (whenever you see a public tap. It's free and safe to drink!)
2. **Eat something** (from pilgrim pack meals or at local restaurants or vendors), and
3. **Use the toilet** (at portable toilets, public restrooms, or at your lodging).

Pilgrim groups should take advantage of these three key opportunities when they arise, because it is not always certain that another chance will come anytime soon.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Leading a WYD pilgrimage is a great experience, but it can be intimidating when you realize the awesome responsibility on your shoulders. A good pilgrimage leader assists his or her pilgrims throughout the pilgrimage experience and also in their continued formation as a disciple of Christ afterward.

The pilgrimage leader is a spiritual companion, tour guide, meeting planner, and risk manager all rolled up into one. This leader's guide includes both the spiritual and practical

elements that go into pilgrimage leadership.

Balancing these elements is a challenge, but one that Lord has trusted you to embrace. What follows are some additional strategies for you in your own leadership experience of a group.

Tour Companies or Do-It-Yourself

Organizing a WYD pilgrimage is a major undertaking and the amount of work can be daunting. Many larger pilgrim groups in the U.S. (such as dioceses, eparchies, movements, or clusters of parishes) hire a specialized travel company to take care of many of the details. Another advantage of hiring a travel company is that the company is there to assist you not only in advance, but on the ground. Before securing a particular organization or travel company, it is important to check that their references and financial state.

On the other hand, there is great flexibility in developing a WYD pilgrimage on your own. The overall costs may be less and there may be more options for transportation, accommodations, and mobility. While travel companies will try to meet individual needs, putting the trip together on your own allows you to tailor it more nearly to the pilgrims' needs. Additionally, you can set your own deadlines for payments and other matters.

Pilgrim Age Concerns

Although the title of this event is World *Youth* Day, most of the world treats the international gathering as a “young adult” pilgrimage - many of the pilgrims in Lisbon will be in their twenties. The standard recommended age for this pilgrimage is 16 to 35, and over the past few years, the core age of the U.S. pilgrims has been between 19 and 25.

An increasing number of U.S. dioceses that send pilgrims to WYD have shifted to a policy of bringing young adult pilgrims (age 18+). There are a number of reasons for this: some believe the WYD message, experience, and the endurance and virtues needed for it, are more suited to young adults; others want to cut down on the overseas travel risks and liability, since minors (under 17) require closer supervision and assistance. If your diocese/eparchy, parish, or apostolic movement has decided to bring minors to WYD, written parental permission and any documentation necessary for transporting minors abroad without their parents or guardians must be obtained.

Local communities can develop stateside WYD activities for those young people who do not go to the international event – to give them an opportunity to witness and experience WYD-

like events in their local diocese/eparchy or parish community. A list of the stateside gatherings can be found at the WYDUSA official website, www.wydusa.org.

Research, Research, Research

As previously noted, you should do extensive research on WYD, the pilgrimage travel, stops, lodging site(s) and venues.

If you are working with a travel company, be in frequent contact with them as details of the trip firm up. Some group leaders put together a notebook for their staff members and volunteers that includes the important details for each day of the pilgrimage as well as pilgrim rosters, rooming lists, and medical information for each pilgrim (which is to be kept confidential). This is a great way for your staff and volunteer leaders to be on the same page and have critical information at their fingertips. For example, on the day of departure for Lisbon, the notebook might contain a timeline for the day, prayers for departing pilgrims, flight numbers, reservation numbers, aircraft layouts, and airport terminal maps –anything that could help the leader feel prepared and confident. On a day during WYD, the notebook might contain the official schedule, accommodation info, festival options, a map,

prayers, lists of the pilgrims, and daily team tasks and contact information.

Leadership Team

You should bring (and fund) at least one other person on the pilgrimage (a volunteer leader, a fellow staff member, etc.) to act as co-leader. Many travel companies build in complimentary registrations for leaders so that pilgrims all pay a fair share of the costs. Co-leaders need to be among the first to rise each morning and often the last to sleep; they may miss some WYD events and moments (for example, they may have to take a pilgrim to the hospital while the rest of the group goes to the Opening Mass). There are several tasks that you, as the pilgrimage guide, need to be able to delegate to co-leaders so that you can keep your mind on the big picture. These may include attendance counts, tips, rooming lists, and other administrative tasks.

Lodging and Accommodations

A group traveling to WYD has a wide range of lodging options: schools, parishes, retreat houses, hostels, hotels, and more. Simple housing options are provided in the registration package. If the group is staying in simple housing, the pilgrims may need to bring a sleeping bag, sandals, and sleeping pad, as

shower facilities may be limited. A simple breakfast is included. The most inexpensive option, simple housing matches the spirit of a pilgrimage. Keep in mind that leaders do not have much say in where they are assigned, and if the site is far the central events, pilgrims may not be able to return during the day. Groups are also free to choose a hostel or hotel that may offer additional amenities and services.

Alcohol in Portugal

The drinking age in Portugal is 18. A pilgrimage is not the proper place for minors (under 18) to experiment with alcohol, so pilgrimage leaders should enforce the U.S. drinking age of 21. Be sure to explain this in advance and consider adding it to your pilgrim code of conduct. Encourage pilgrims over 21 not to engage in excessive or public drinking, if at all. The WYD pilgrimage is a time to focus on God and the Church, not to socialize the same way they might on weekend at home.

Constantly Looking Ahead

Throughout the WYD events, you are the point person for information for your group. Be prepared for schedule or venue changes. Look ahead and plan what your group will attend, how you will get there, and when to depart. The obvious travel route may not be the best route

for your group, especially if tens of thousands of pilgrims have the same idea. Your group will appreciate the time you put into giving them solid “intel” and seeking out creative ways around crowds or roadblocks. Sometimes you may need to leave the group in order to scout out the next route, site, or options for upcoming central or local events. This is why it’s so important to have a good co-leader at your side that you can trust to take over.

How Not to Lose Pilgrims

Just as Jesus sent the disciples out “in pairs,” pilgrims (no matter their age) should operate on the “buddy system” where every pilgrim has at least one (if not more) companion throughout the week to keep track of.

When traveling with a group by bus or rail, everyone should know two things: where they are getting off and what to do if they miss the stop. Leaders need to have a game plan, and a contingency plan, and make sure everyone knows them. Cell phones make this easier, but not everyone in your group will have one that works in Portugal.

Trying to keep a group together in a crowd is challenging. Some groups use an object like a flag, banner, cross, or simply an umbrella that

the group leader (or someone near the group leader) holds high. If you want to create a collapsible flagpole, buy a three-section aluminum tent pole at a camping store (the kind that uses a bungee cord to keep the three sections connected) and connect the flag or other object to it with zip-ties or similar connectors. Pilgrims then try to stay as close to the rally object as possible. Still, each pilgrim should know what to do to reconnect with the group if he or she does get separated.

Be sure to discuss with your pilgrims how to be “politely assertive” as they walk at WYD.

Pilgrims from the U.S. often get separated from their group because they were too, well, passively polite. While pilgrims should never be *rude* at WYD, they do need to be assertive walkers! Ask them to walk with confidence and purpose in order to stay together. Some groups try to stay together by linking arms and making a human chain; this is dangerous and *not* recommended, as individuals tend to lose control over their own steps and endanger others by blocking or running into them. Pilgrims should also stay in groups when going to the restrooms or off on their own to pray, visit sites, or meet other pilgrims. All these tips will help ensure group unity and safety.

Marking Your Territory

Consider using tarps, blankets, or beach mats to save your spot when your group finds a place to sit for one of the central events (opening Mass, papal welcome, Via Crucis, etc.). This will deter other groups from walking through your area or stealing space/items.

Check Your Wings

One idea for pilgrim check-in is an exercise called “check your wings.” During one of your WYD preparation sessions, gather the group into a large circle facing in. Ask everyone to memorize who is on their immediate left and immediate right. These two become the “wings” for the WYD pilgrimage. At other sessions, make sure everyone remembers who their “wingmen” are. Then, in Lisbon, when one of the leaders asks the group to “check your wings,” each person looks for their two “wings.” If both are there, the pilgrim is silent. They only speak up if they are missing a “wing.” Since the system has built-in redundancy, if someone is missing, there should be *two* people reporting it; different from the buddy system, this ensures two people are keeping an eye on anyone in the group.

This system is not perfect. If several people are missing, it gets tricky. However, leaders will at

least know that some people are missing and they can move from there. Most of the time, this exercise works efficiently and quickly, and pilgrims are held accountable to each other.

Doing this kind of check is especially important for transition moments: getting on and off public transit, upon arrival and departure from an event location, at the beginning and end of each day, and at meal times.

Fundraising

There’s no question that WYD is a financial challenge for many pilgrims. Some dioceses offer financial assistance, some parishes do group fundraisers, and some pilgrims do individual fundraisers or ask for financial assistance from friends and family. Raising funds as a group can build community and get local communities engaged and invested in the pilgrimage. There are a plethora of fundraising ideas available on the Internet (search “ministry fundraising”) and WYD organizers across the country have creative ideas as well.

While there is no perfect fundraising option (and no surefire way to secure the funding), the key is to integrate the spiritual and communal goals of the pilgrimage into whatever fundraising activity is developed for the group.

One way to get the local community more involved and engaged with WYD is for parishioners, families, or peers to “adopt” pilgrims and assist them both financially and spiritually. These adopters and their “children” pray for each other during the preparation, celebration, and follow-up of WYD. Some communities and parishes host gatherings before and after the trip so that the pilgrims and the adopters can be together.

There are several ways to keep the cost of WYD down for the group: choosing the simple accommodation package; finding the best possible deal on airfare; using the meal voucher system of WYD, among other options.

Information Relay

Good leadership requires good information and good communication. Pilgrimage guides are strongly encouraged to carry a mobile device and check daily for the latest WYD updates and messages (either from the WYD organizers in Lisbon or through WYDUSA). Organizers may use apps or social media to relay changes or alerts to group leaders. A mobile phone is a great way to communicate with the pilgrims either through voice or text options (international rates may apply). Some travel companies may provide one or more mobile phones to their groups.

Inevitably, group leaders will need to make daily announcements to their pilgrims about gathering times, transportation plans, meal options, changes to the schedule, and so forth. Some groups are small enough for a leader to communicate with the group at any time, while large groups may need to gather at a set time every day. If the group is too large to gather in one place daily, consider meeting with co-leaders once or twice per day, relaying the information to the pilgrims through them. If the group is housed together, consider posting any updates on a board or sign in a clear, visible location.

The Sacrifice of Joining a Group

Remind pilgrims that they sacrifice some of their individual freedom when they join a group, whether that group is five people, fifty people, or five hundred people. They need to trust their pilgrimage leader and follow instructions, even when they might rather do something else. This is essential to communicate to young adult pilgrims who may feel entitled to, and accustomed to, more independence. Make sure these young adults understand that if they choose to join the pilgrimage to WYD, they are agreeing to a set trip itinerary. This should deter pilgrims from

going rogue or trying to change their travel reservations during the pilgrimage.

Traveling with a large group is hard. On a spiritual level, the challenges that are inherent in group travel can be integrated with a lesson on the value of community and sacrifice. Leaders can point out that the good of the group must outweigh the preferences of the individual.

Pilgrim Blessings

Maintaining a prayerful spirit at WYD is essential to the true success of the pilgrimage. Pilgrims must be reminded of this constantly, and pilgrimage guides must seek as much as possible to model a recollected attitude.

The book, *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* from the USCCB (available online through the USCCB Store at www.usccb.org), has some excellent prayer services for the departure, journey, and return of pilgrims. Anyone may lead many of the prayers contained in the book, including the “Blessing of Travelers.” Consider using the prayers with your entire group or encourage parishes or dioceses to use them to send off their pilgrims. The book is portable enough for pilgrimage leaders to carry with them to Lisbon. Additional prayers and guides can also be found at www.wydusa.org.

Pilgrimage Leader Supplies

In addition to your own personal supplies, you should consider bringing extra gear, even if it means checking an extra bag. You may want to bring some basic office supplies, inexpensive radios, duct tape and blue tape, tarps and beach mats, sticky notes, pens, a compass, zip-ties, small clear bags, and garbage bags.

You could also purchase some of this in Lisbon. Having these extra items is helpful when you have a with large group faced with unexpected circumstances, bad weather, or even just having a pilgrimage meeting or pausing for a time of prayer and reflection.

It is also important for you to bring some items (devotionals, books, prayer cards, a cross, rosary, journal, music, etc.) for the spiritual well-being of the pilgrims (and yourself). Leading a group at WYD can be very exhausting. Therefore, it is important for you to have tools to assist pilgrims in prayer, reflection, and rejuvenation. Caring for others cannot be done without also caring for yourself.

The World Youth Day experience offers pilgrims and pilgrimage leaders the opportunity of a lifetime – but not one that happens without preparation and planning.

Coming Down from the Mountain: Accompanying Pilgrims on the Return Home

Nourishing the pilgrim's experience of discipleship after WYD requires intentionality and forward thinking. Without effort on the leader's part, WYD may become an isolated experience that does not lead a pilgrim to a deeper faith in Christ.

WYD is meant to strengthen the faith of pilgrims. Like Peter, James, and John at the Transfiguration, World Youth Day pilgrims have a mountaintop experience and they may want it to last forever. But Jesus reminded Peter, James, and John – and he reminds pilgrim travelers today – that they cannot live on mountaintop experiences alone. Returning home to the United States does not mean that everything is finished; rather, leaving Lisbon is just the beginning of the next phase in the pilgrim's lifelong journey of faith.

In Luke's account of the Transfiguration, when Jesus speaks with Moses and Elijah, he "spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem" (9:31) – pointing towards the work that still needed to be accomplished after this moment of glory. WYD likewise is meant to give pilgrims direction and formation for the tasks they lay ahead of them. In order to put

into motion those dreams and hopes begun in Portugal, the pilgrim must come down from the mountain. He or she ought to look forward to the next step of the journey, but leaders may need to accompany and support someone through the melancholy that can descend when the excitement is over. Helping pilgrims to see WYD as a stop along the way instead of the end goal will help to ensure that the pilgrimage is an encounter with God that bears fruit. The pilgrimage leader's work, then, is not over when everyone is back in their home; the work continues.

Go Make Disciples

One of the ways to assist pilgrims in the return experience is to introduce them to the understanding that they are missionaries. Keeping the 2023 WYD theme in mind, the pilgrims are to be servants of the Lord, responding with haste to God as they are sent forth to serve others in love. In Pope Francis' final homily in Rio de Janeiro at the Closing Mass of the last WYD, he sent pilgrims forth with the theme of the 2013 encounter: "Go ... and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19). He said:

“With these words, Jesus is speaking to each one of us, saying: ‘It was wonderful to take part in World Youth Day, to live the faith together with young people from the four corners of the earth, but now you must go, now you must pass on this experience to others.’ Jesus is calling you to be a disciple with a mission!”

The end of WYD was only the beginning. Pope Francis explained that the beatitudes should be the action plan for the young people’s lives: “Look, read the Beatitudes: that will do you good!” Like Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, “the man of the beatitudes,” the young adults of WYD were to be simple and pure in heart; to peacemakers, hungering for righteousness and justice; poor in spirit; strong in the face of persecution. For the upcoming WYD, the Holy Father has asked pilgrims to focus on responding to God’s will in service of others with a great quickness. The image to encapsulate this message that he chose for this WYD is the young Mary of Nazareth who sets out to visit her cousin Elizabeth as the living Word dwells within her. Mary responds to her vocation as the Mother of God in action, “Mary arose and went with haste (Lk 1:39)

Pope Francis spoke about this hastily response of young Mary of Nazareth in a message to WYD Lisbon pilgrims saying,

After the Annunciation, Mary could have focused on herself and her own worries and fears about her new condition. Instead, she entrusted herself completely to God. Her thoughts turned to Elizabeth. She got up and went forth, into the world of life and movement. Even though the astonishing message of the angel had caused a seismic shift in her plans, the young Mary did not remain paralyzed, for within her was Jesus, the power of resurrection and new life. Within herself, Mary already bore the Lamb that was slain and yet lives. She arises and sets out, for she is certain that God’s plan is the best plan for her life. Mary becomes a temple of God, an image of the pilgrim Church, a Church that goes forth for service, a Church that brings the good news to all!

To experience the presence of the risen Christ in our own lives, to encounter him “alive”, is the greatest spiritual joy, an explosion of light that can leave no one untouched. Mary sets out immediately, anxious to bring the news to others, to bear witness to the joy of this encounter. This

too is what caused the haste of the first disciples following the resurrection: “[the women] left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples” (Mt 28:8)”

The young Mary of Nazareth, then, is the blueprint for Christian life, encouraging all pilgrims and all people to embrace God’s will for their lives and set out to bring Jesus into their world.

After the Transfiguration, a large crowd was waiting for Jesus as soon as he came down from the mountain (Lk 9:37). After seeing the glorious vision of the divinity of Christ, the apostles were immediately confronted with suffering humanity. Jesus is asked to heal a man’s son who is seized by a demon.

As soon as they return home, perhaps even on the way, pilgrims will be given a chance to meet suffering humanity and bring Christ to it. When they do this, pilgrims become true missionary disciples. WYD “alumni” are sent into their own homes, backyards, schools and workplaces, to bring love, mercy, and the compassion of Christ to all.

“Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries,’ but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples’”(EG, no. 120). The call to missionary discipleship is the call to holiness as conveyed by Saint John Paul II: “The universal call to holiness is closely united with the call to mission” (no. 90).

Assisting Pilgrims Through This Call

Pilgrims come to WYD for a variety of reasons, but very few come looking for more work to do! Yet pilgrims’ transformation into missionary disciples is exactly what the Holy Father and the Church are hoping for from WYD.

How can pilgrimage leaders encourage their pilgrims to become missionaries? How can they bring excitement to their departure when nostalgia and memory tend to be the first considerations in the days after Portugal?

Another step is to actively and intentionally talk about their future mission in the last days of the pilgrims’ time in Portugal. Help them to process and understand that the best way to revisit their mountaintop experiences is to share the graces they received with others.

Many pilgrims come back eager to share their story. Storytelling is a key part of the initial days back home, and it should be done in a way that invites others to share in the fruits of the journey. Even though people may want to hear the stories and experiences of Lisbon pilgrims, it may be hard for those who were not able to travel overseas not to feel left out or jealous. Remind pilgrims to be sensitive of this reality.

Pilgrimage leaders can follow up with their pilgrims on several occasions— perhaps a week or several weeks after WYD, and again on different occasions throughout the year. At the same time, the leader should encourage pilgrims not to get caught up in each other, but rather to look outward and invite others to share the journey of faith. This includes friends and family, fellow colleagues and students, and those who do not share their Catholic faith.

Pope Francis challenges a missionary disciple to accompany his or her peers with a listening heart and a gentle spirit. He says that the “art of accompaniment ... teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other. The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates, and encourages growth in the Christian life” (EG, no. 169). Pilgrimage leaders

should model this steadiness in their own work with the pilgrims, helping the young people in their group to act in the same manner to those who might think or act differently than they do. It is also important for pilgrimage leaders to help the international pilgrims engage with stateside pilgrims, if there was a stateside celebration in their area. Help pilgrims to understand that both experiences were important, and encourage the international travelers, especially, to be humble.

At home after WYD, the pilgrimage leaders should try to keep in touch with their pilgrims, asking them how they are doing and giving them strength and guidance whenever necessary. Asking good questions and praying for and with the pilgrims in the months and years after WYD will remind pilgrims that their journey does not end at the airport but continues throughout their lives.

Ideas to help pilgrims return home:

- Encourage pilgrims to write thank you notes to their youth or young adult minister, pastor, parents and grandparents, benefactors, and anyone who had a hand in providing the opportunity for them to attend WYD.

- Encourage pilgrims to write an article for their parish, campus, or diocesan website, blog, social media page, newsletter, newspaper, or magazine.
- Encourage pilgrims to speak to people in their parish, campus, or diocese/eparchy after one of the Masses or during any large gathering within their local community.
- Help pilgrims to direct their renewed energy and enthusiasm into projects or activities in their local parish, campus, diocese/eparchy, or community, especially beyond the work of their particular youth or young adult ministry program.
- Point pilgrims towards a spiritual director or mentor, who can help them process their ongoing spiritual development.
- Encourage international pilgrims to collaborate with stateside pilgrims on some kind of project; this collaboration can include a jointly-planned event or reunion experience, as well as shared service, formation, and social events.

Questions leaders can ask pilgrims upon returning home from WYD:

- What was the high point of your WYD experience? Why?
- What was the most frustrating part? Why?

- What is one thing you learned from reflecting on the theme of Lk 1:39??
- What is one thing you learned about being a missionary disciple?
- What was your favorite prayer experience?
- What stood out to you about Lisbon?
- How does the Portuguese Roman Catholic spirituality differ from your home parish, (arch)diocese/eparchy, and/or Catholicism as practiced across the United States?
- Where did you find peace or illumination on your pilgrimage?
- What did the Holy Father (or a bishop, catechist, or leader) say or do that really impacted or challenged you?
- Who are the memorable people you met?
- How was this pilgrimage different from the vacations or excursions you may have taken in the past?
- How do you plan to keep in touch with the new people you met?
- Who do you wish you could have brought with you on this pilgrimage?
- How will you bring that person into the experience now that you are back home?
- How will you engage stateside pilgrims, as well as friends and family at home, in your continuing pilgrimage of faith?
- How has your relationship with God been changed or enhanced?

- What three action steps or resolutions are you taking next?
- How do you imagine you can make a difference in your community now? In your parish, diocese/eparchy, or movement?
- Where do you feel God is calling you to go next? What are your future plans?

Coming down the mountain can be a sobering experience, but it can also be very exciting – for God has great things in store for the pilgrims of World Youth Day and for all who respond to the call of the Lord in their lives.

Many of those who have had such an impact were assisted by pilgrimage leaders who accompanied and guided them along the way. Jesus accompanied Peter, James, and John down Mount Tabor, continuing to journey with them to Jerusalem, teaching, guiding, supporting, and encouraging them. The pilgrimage leader follows in Jesus' footsteps as he or she journeys with the pilgrims and equips them with the tools they will need to turn their experience in Lisbon into a mission to turn the hearts of others towards Christ.

APPENDIX: Sample Post-WYD Group Sharing Sessions

Group sharing sessions and activities allow pilgrims to share their faith with others and to grow together in community. They are helpful in assisting pilgrims integrate their personal and communal WYD experiences into their daily lives.

SAMPLE GATHERING #1

Downward then Upward:

Continuing the Mission

NOTE TO LEADER: *You will need sticky notes, pens, and a Bible for the activities of this gathering.*

Opening Activity

Sticky Note Transfiguration Mountain

Action: Give each participant multiple sticky notes and ask them to write down three memories from the beginning of his or her personal faith journey. This could be a memory of a memorable sacramental moment, an overnight retreat, or a childhood memory of their family or parish community. Then have each person write on a sticky note a memory from the most recent WYD. Have them arrange these notes in the shape of a mountain (triangle) on the wall, placing the most memorable, mountaintop moments at the peak.

Explain: “Upward then downward, upward then downward.” People can describe their lives as an up-and-down experience, often feeling like a rollercoaster ride. Although there are tough moments and valleys of darkness, there are also times at the top of the mountain. Just as Jesus accompanied the disciples at both points, so God is with his people all the time.

To map out these mountains in our own lives, we will remember the moments that have shaped us along the way.

Opening Prayer

God our Father, we gather today
as we continue this lifelong journey
that you have called us to through our Baptism.

Help us to hear your word,
be docile to the Holy Spirit,
and realize that you have been with us
throughout our lives.

Give us strength, wisdom and humility
to respond to the great needs
of our brothers and sisters around the world.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Scripture

Read the Transfiguration Story:
either Mt 17:1-9, Mk 9:2-10, or Lk 9:28-37

Catechesis and Reflection

When Peter, James, and John had witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus, they were so amazed that they wanted to stay with Him on the mountaintop; they did not want to leave. As we reflect on our experiences of World Youth Day, some of us wish we could have stayed on that mountaintop in Lisbon, too.

But Jesus called his followers not only to be disciples, but missionaries – to take what they had learned and share it with others. Now Jesus calls *us* to do the same. Coming down from the mountain can be difficult.

The Apostles had the same challenge after watching Jesus ascend to heaven. The angels asked them: “Men of Galilee, why are standing there looking at the sky?” (Acts 1:11) And even after this angelic “nudge,” the Apostles needed to receive the Holy Spirit before they were ready to go out to preach the Gospel.

We must ask ourselves if we remain “standing here,” looking at pictures and videos, talking about the great moments of WYD in Lisbon,

without going out and evangelizing. You are challenged to keep Christ present in your life, and to share the joy of the Gospel with others.

Small Group Discussion

Share with one another different mountaintop experiences of WYD and how those might inspire you as you “come down from the mountain.” What evangelization steps and acts of service are you considering doing as a response to WYD?

Large Group Discussion

After this WYD experience, what do you feel God is asking of you? How will you go out and share this Good News with those around you? What message from the WYD most affected you? Where are you being sent? What is the next mountain God is placing before you, that you must climb next? And what might await you at the top of that summit?

Closing Exercise

Action: Ask each pilgrim to write down (on sticky notes) five to ten things they want to do next in their faith lives. Invite them to post those notes in a descending pattern on the right “slope” of their triangle mountains.

Explain: Your journey is not complete. WYD was just a moment along the way. Your mountain now represents the continued journey you are taking as you “come down from the mountain” and look ahead.

Closing Prayer:

Mary, our Mother, Queen of the Apostles, we are mindful of the role you play in the evangelization of souls. We ask you to guide us and help us to fulfill the mission of evangelization and mercy which your Son has given to his Church and which falls to us. Mary, Help of Christians, we entrust ourselves to you in the work of carrying the Gospel ever deeper into the hearts and lives of all those around us. Amen.

**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.**

Our Lady, Queen of Apostles, **pray for us.**
Saint James the Apostle, patron
of pilgrim travelers, **pray for us.**
Saint Therese of Lisieux, patroness
of the missions, **pray for us.**
Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, young witness
from our native land, **pray for us.**
Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, patron
of young adults, **pray for us.**
Saint John Paul II, patron
of World Youth Day, **pray for us.**

SAMPLE GATHERING #2

What Just Happened?

Unpacking World Youth Day

Opening Prayer

Lord, thank you for the opportunity to gather with the Universal Church at World Youth Day. Open our hearts and minds to see how your grace appeared during that sacred moment in our lives.

In your name, we pray. Amen.

Reflecting on the Moments

Explain: We will take time to look back on what just happened at WYD through the lens of prayer and with the desire to discern where God is calling us now. First, we will reflect in the large group on the major events of WYD.

Action: If you are able, show video or photos from WYD, or bring up three major moments from your group's pilgrimage journey. This could include moments from before or after WYD itself. In the large group, reflect on and discuss the following questions:

- What was most exciting about that moment?
- What were you thinking then about that experience?

- What was most challenging about that moment?
- Do you think of this moment any differently now that you are home?
- Why was this moment so moving or special for you?

After discussing each of the three moments, take a few moments of silent prayer to thank God for them.

Reflecting on the Words

Explain: Now we would you to reflect on the words spoken at WYD by the Holy Father, by the bishops, and by others.

Action: Bring to the gathering written copies of Pope Francis' homilies and presentations at WYD, as well as copies of talks given by bishops, catechists, or other speakers there, if available. Give each pilgrim a different one (though there may be some duplicates depending on the size of your group).

Alternatively, if audio or video files are available online, allow pilgrims to bring earphones to listen to talks on their mobile device or laptop. If this is too chaotic or logistically difficult, the entire group could listen or watch one of the pope's talks together. Allow approximately 45 minutes of quiet time where each pilgrim can sit

with his or her particular text in a comfortable space. Encourage them to take notes, underline lines that strike them, and pray over the words they read or listen to. Then bring them together for small group discussions.

Small Group Discussion

NOTE TO LEADER: *Gather the group back together and assemble into small groups, which will use the following questions to guide their conversation:*

- What stood out to you about the talk that you read? What was distinct about it?
- Why do you feel those words were said at World Youth Day?
- What was the pope/speaker responding to?
- Do you remember hearing these words in Lisbon? (and if so: What was your initial reaction to these words then? Did it change when you read it again?)
- How might this message intersect with your own life, situations, concerns, or calling?
- Why do you think God wanted you to read through this particular talk?

Reflecting on the Encounters

Explain: Finally, we would like you to reflect on the encounters of WYD.

Action: Allow each person some room to write, but make sure they can still hear everyone else in the large group. Ask them to reflect on and write down any thoughts about these questions:

- Who were the people you met during the **preparation process**? Think about fellow pilgrims. Think about the people who assisted you in preparation, fundraising, and prayerful support. Think about parish, diocesan, campus, or local leaders. Think about family and friends with whom you discussed your plans.
- Who did you meet **on the road to Portugal**? Think about the people in the airport, the fellow travelers to Lisbon, the people who greeted you upon your arrival, etc.
- Who were the people you met **at the events of WYD**? Think about the WYD pilgrims from other countries and areas. Think about the bishops, catechists, leaders, artists, and presenters at the events. Think about the security, business owners, local residents, and passers-by.
- Who were the people you met **coming home from Portugal**? Think again about those in the airport, on the road, your

family and friends, and those with whom you have shared details of your trip.

Explain: Consider all these different people you encountered. Call to mind their faces, their voices, and their words. Pray for them. Now consider the following questions, and reflect on them on your own:

- Where did you encounter God along the way?
- What moment, what words, what person paved the way to this encounter?
- When did that moment of God's grace come to you? When did you notice it?
- How did it feel? What did you think? What did you do when you noticed God there?
- What might the Lord be asking of you in these encounters with these people?

Explain: Take a moment for silent prayer, to thank God for giving you this experience. Thank the Lord for the moments, for the words, and for the people you met – and for having a chance to encounter him on the mountaintop of WYD.

Small Group Discussion

NOTE TO LEADER: *Gather the group back together and assemble into small groups, which will use the following questions to guide their conversation:*

Action: Organize the pilgrims into groups of 3 to 5 persons for some additional questions; encourage pilgrims to be open if they are comfortable doing so.

Explain: Being grateful for the moments, words, and people of this pilgrimage, discuss the following questions, as you feel comfortable doing so, with one another:

- How might these people, moments, and elements of WYD impact your life now?
- Are these moments, words, and people pointing you towards something that needs to be adjusted in your life – or are they affirming a direction, decision, or inking that you have had up until now?

Activity: Four Things

Action: Once the small groups have finished, come together in the large group and ask every pilgrim to write down four things on four sheets of paper:

1. What is one way that the exciting moments of WYD can help me to find the grace, grandeur, or transformative

- experience of God in simple things and in situations of everyday life?
2. What word, passage, or speech from WYD will I carry with me through the coming days, weeks, months, or years?
 3. Who in my everyday life do I need to be more intentional about meeting and knowing more about, just as I met and learned about others in Lisbon?
 4. What one action will I take to keep the moments, words, and encounters of WYD alive beyond today?

Action: Encourage pilgrims to keep these four pages in their journals, Bibles, or in a special place where they can refer to these notes and resolutions in the future. Encourage them to take these pages into prayer with them.

Closing Prayer

Good and gracious God,
 thank you for the moments of grace,
 the words of wisdom,
 and the wonderful people
 you put along our paths
 to and from WYD.

May these moments and these people
 continue to guide us
 in all that we do, in all that we think,
 and in all that we are,
 now and for the rest of our lives. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven...

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Glory be to the Father...

SAMPLE GATHERING #3

The Joy of the Call:

Sent Out as Disciples and Missionaries

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, we want to bring
 your love, your peace, your justice, your life
 to all who are in need of it.
 Enkindle our hearts, take away our fears,
 give us strength, enlighten our paths,
 and guide us onward. Amen.

Addressing Fears

Explain: WYD 2023 has officially come to a close, but the pilgrimage continues. Your duty as missionary disciples is not over. Your missionary mandate may be carried out alone or with others, but each person to become a missionary disciple in some way.

- Do you have any fears or hesitations about this call? What are they, and why?

Action: Discuss these fears and concerns about the mission ahead.

Reflection on Pope Francis' Words

Explain: The following are excerpts from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. In this work, he shares what it means to be a missionary disciple. We will take some time to reflect on these passages in light of our international WYD experience.

“Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (EG, no. 20).

“Each individual Christian ... is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society” (EG, no. 187).

“We should not think, however, that the Gospel message must always be communicated by fixed formulations learned by heart or by

specific words which express an absolutely invariable content” (EG, no. 129).

“God’s word, listened to and celebrated, above all in the Eucharist, nourishes and inwardly strengthens Christians, enabling them to offer an authentic witness to the Gospel in daily life” (EG 174).

Individual Reflection

Having listened to the Holy Father’s words, consider the following questions:

- After WYD, how are God’s Word and his missionary call fresh for you?
- How are you responding or now planning to respond to his invitation to missionary discipleship?
- What frightens you about the Holy Father’s words in *Evangelii Gaudium*?
- What excites you about his challenge?

Small Groups: Missionary Courage

Explain: In pairs (or trios), read the following Gospel passage aloud (Mt 10:26-33).

“Therefore do not be afraid of them. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in

the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father.”

Explain: Reflect on and discuss the following:

- How does this passage relate to your experiences at WYD and your call to missionary discipleship?
- Do you find comfort in these words or do they frighten you?
- Jesus did not mislead the disciples with false promises; we know that being his missionary disciple is not trouble-free. What challenges and difficulties do you imagine you might face as a missionary disciple?
- Jesus says to share what you have received. How do you plan to do that in your own

circumstances and the environment in which you live and work?

- Do you trust God to take care of you when you are challenged for your faith or your commitment to serve others?

Missionary Direction

Explain: Saint John Paul II wrote the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, devoted to, “the urgency of missionary activity” (RM, no. 1) and, “to invite the Church to renew her missionary commitment” (RM, no. 2).

The fact that there is a diversity of activities *in the Church's one mission* is not intrinsic to that mission, but arises from the variety of circumstances in which that mission is carried out. Looking at today's world from the viewpoint of evangelization, we can distinguish three situations.

First, there is the situation which the Church's missionary activity addresses: peoples, groups, and socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and His Gospel are not known, or which lack Christian communities sufficiently mature to be able to incarnate the faith in their own environment and proclaim

it to other groups. This is mission *ad gentes* in the proper sense of the term.

Secondly, there are Christian communities with adequate and solid ecclesial structures. They are fervent in their faith and in Christian living. They bear witness to the Gospel in their surroundings and have a sense of commitment to the universal mission. In these communities, the Church carries out her activity and pastoral care.

Thirdly, there is an intermediate situation, particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. In this case, what is needed is a ‘new evangelization’ or a ‘re-evangelization’” (RM33).

Explain: Here are three situations in which we are called to be missionaries: (1) the places that do not know God; (2) the places where faith is strong and celebrated; and (3) the places in need of a reawakening of the practice of the

faith. Take a moment for personal reflection and ask yourself: to which of these three situations are you being called? Reflect on this in your heart and consider what may lie ahead.

Small Group Discussion

Action: Divide into groups of no more than five persons. Reflect on the following and then share as a small group.

- After your time of personal reflection, which of the three areas do you think you are called to?
- Do you feel you need to continue to discern how God wants you to share in the mission of Christ?
- What characteristics in you (gifts, talents, affections, passions) might be indicators of your particular vocation?
- Do you have any doubts or confusion about your calling?

Large Group Final Reflection

NOTE TO LEADER: *Reconvene the group together for a final large group gathering.*

Explain: Missionary discipleship means that we are challenged to truly act as Christians: to serve the least, to advocate for justice and goodness, to courageously act with mercy and compassion, to share our story and our witness

of faith, to teach and accompany others, and to build up the Kingdom of God in our local communities and among our peers.

No one ever feels “fully prepared” for this mission. The Apostles certainly were not. But while we continue to learn and grow as disciples, we are called to take initiative and act with mercy and justice. We can start small; the most important thing is to take the first step. With that, we pray:

Closing Prayer

At this point, the pilgrim leader can conclude the gathering with the World Youth Day Prayer for the United States (see next page), a litany of the many titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially in Portugal/ Europe, and/or an invocation of the patrons of World Youth Day 2023 and the patrons of pilgrims from the United States, before a final benediction and blessing by a bishop, priest, or deacon, if circumstances allow.

God our Father, be with us
on our pilgrim journey of faith.
Give us the grace and courage
to step forward in faith and hope
on the road ahead.

Open our eyes to see your face
in all those we encounter.
Open our ears to hear your voice
in those who are often ignored.
Open our hearts that we might be
faithful disciples of mercy and truth.

Transform us. Empower us
to give of ourselves to the poor;
to welcome the lost;
to forgive those who hurt us;
to comfort those who suffer
and are marginalized.

Bless those who travel
from the United States of America
to Portugal, to join the universal
Church for World Youth Day.
Bless, too, those who celebrate stateside,
united in faith and joy.

Like the disciples who journeyed
up the mountain to witness the
Transfiguration, may this experience be
an encounter that strengthens us
for our work in the world.

Through the intercession of Mary,
the Immaculate Conception,
patroness of our nation,
may we be worthy witnesses of our faith,
humble representatives of our country,
and inspired missionaries bringing peace,
hope, and mercy into our communities.

We ask all this through Christ Our Lord.
Amen.

St. Anthony, **pray for us.**

St. Vincent, **pray for us.**

St. John Bosco, **pray for us.**

Bl. Joana of Portugal, **pray for us.**

St. Bartholomew of Martyrs, **pray for us.**

Bl. Chiara Badano, **pray for us.**

Bl. Carlo Acutis, **pray for us.**

St. James the Apostle, patron of
pilgrim travelers, **pray for us.**

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, young faithful
witness from our native land, **pray for us.**

St. Therese of Lisieux, patroness of
missionaries, advocate for youth, **pray for us.**

Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, patron of young
adults, man of the beatitudes, **pray for us.**

St. John Paul II, founder and patron
of World Youth Day, **pray for us.**