

## **World Youth Day USA – Krakow Kickoff – July 7, 2015**

### ***Bishop Frank J Caggiano's Opening Remarks (Video Clip 1)***

Thank you for coming here this afternoon to inaugurate the Pilgrim Year of Preparation for World Youth Day 2016 in this beautiful National Shrine to Saint John Paul II, who as you know, is the author and still the inspiration of World Youth Day

My friends, you and I are embarking on a very busy year, are we not? In a few months, we are going to welcome Pope Francis to the United States, a time of tremendous grace for all of us, and a few months later, we will join our sisters and brothers throughout the world in celebrating a Jubilee of Mercy.

But you and I are here today to inaugurate the year of preparation for what will continue that extraordinary odyssey of faith for our young people, who will be going to Krakow, where I think it is fair to say, is the heartland of the Jubilee Year, this Year of Divine Mercy.

We are certainly blessed to welcome the Pope here, but it will be a unique blessing for all of the young people who are able to go and encounter him in Krakow.

In fact, it is the vision of the saint for whom this shrine has been built to honor that there be a special chance for young people and young adults, from around the globe, to gather with the successor of Peter, their spiritual father and yours and mine. So that he might speak directly to them, to their minds, to their hearts, to their lives. It is a unique encounter for this generation to meet Pope Francis, and with him, his brother bishops, and please guard myself, so that we may help young people to move from an uncertainty perhaps in the hearts of some about their catholic faith, to a deeper ardor and enthusiasm for the Lord and our Church.

But as we begin this year, allow me to remind you, as I remind myself, that this pilgrimage is meant for every young person and young adult, for all young people of faith, not simply those who have the privilege to travel to Krakow. So I stand before you today, my friends, as I invite every Catholic young person, every catholic young adult, every leader in our church to come together and embark with me on this great pilgrimage of faith and mercy.

Consider that only about one percent, or perhaps even less, of our young people here in the United States will physically go to Krakow. Which means: that if we are to do what the Lord is asking of us, and he is asking this of every single one of us in this room, that it is incumbent upon you and me to extend this invitation of pilgrimage to every young person. Our job is not complete until everyone is accompanying us on this pilgrimage of faith. We are to stand in solidarity together with all of our young people. And quite frankly, that responsibility lies with you and me, we who are leaders of our Church, to equip our young people withal the tools that they need and to prepare them spiritually, physically, and for those who are traveling to Krakow, financially to engage in what I am suggesting should be a national movement of faith.

And I can think of no better place to inaugurate this year of preparation than in this national shrine in Washington, D.C. For in this beautiful place, particularly, where those who visit can see an exhibit not only of the life of this remarkable saint, but also of the World Youth Day exhibit, of which, as I said, he is the founder. Everyone who comes here to this sacred place can learn about the history of this pilgrimage of Saint John Paul II.

So regardless of whether some of us are going to Krakow and others of us are going to lead stateside celebrations for WYD, I invite everyone to come to this place of pilgrimage here at the national shrine in honor of Saint John Paul II, in this coming year, to prepare ourselves spiritually for the graces the Lord will give us all.

12 months from now, millions of Catholic young people and young adults will go to Krakow. 12 months from now, I and many of my brother bishops will accompany 30,000 or more young people from the United States, to Krakow. 12 months from now, Pope Francis, the successor of Peter, will have the opportunity in Krakow to encounter his young Church.

My friends, many of us who gather here today have an entire year to prepare, but the journey begins today, not a year from now. And we can, in so many ways, prepare ourselves beginning today for this pilgrimage. In fact, let us start walking together in faith when we get up from our chairs from this place today. And it begins in prayer.

You have all received the prayer that has been written as the official World Youth Day prayer by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. We will conclude our time today by praying that prayer together, we will begin this year of preparation together. But for information purposes, that prayer, as you see, is available in English and in Spanish and is available right now on the USCCB website.

Pray it every day. Pray it with your young people. Pray it with your families. Pray it in the quiet of your heart, but do not let a day go by when you and I do not, in prayerful solidarity, pray it together. It is for everyone, not just those traveling to Krakow. So allow me to be direct: this is an appeal to every bishop, every priest, every deacon, every woman and man in consecrated life, every lay minister, everyone who is involved in serving our young people, every baptized member of the church. This is the time we come together and pray.

My friends: if we want to give deeper consideration of what it is we are praying for, I ask you in the next few days, weeks, and perhaps all of the months leading up to World Youth Day, I suggest you and I meditate on the great mystery of the Transfiguration of the Lord.

Why? Because, my friends, many times when we look at that singular mystery in the life of the Church, in Christ, when we look at what happened as the Lord revealed his glory, many times we forget that the event was not simply what happened at the top of the mountain, but was a

story of a journey that led, by Jesus, his apostles up the mountain and then down the mountain to the rest of their life of faith.

And I would like to suggest that that's what World Youth Day is all about. A year of preparation up the mountain to have an encounter, not simply with the Pope, but with Christ himself who will transfigure the lives of all who make this journey. So that coming down the mountain, it will not end in life as usual, but a life that is blessed for a deepening faith in him.

There are three words that can describe this moment of transfiguration.

First, it is a *pilgrimage*. No matter where our young people, and you and I go, Krakow or stateside, because a pilgrim is someone who is searching for a deeper reality. It is not a trip of relaxation—it's work. But, the life of faith is a sacred work graced by Christ.

It is an *encounter*, number two, because pilgrimages are not done alone. So, you and I, my friends, must create a culture of encounter in this coming year and beyond so that young people who are searching for the face of Christ will find Him, in Krakow and wherever else they may live. The Holy Father will be then be a vehicle of grace for an encounter that no human being can create, but the Lord Jesus gives graciously.

It is lastly a *celebration* because young people, and you and I as well, need to have hope, and joy, and purpose. And it seems to me anyone who walks in pilgrimage discovers that in Christ and particularly in World Youth Day as you and I know, those of us who are veterans, can see it in the faces of young people when they stand, not thousands, not tens of thousands, not hundreds of thousands but millions strong. And what do they discover? That their pilgrimage has a destination, and that destination is Christ. And that they are not alone in their faith, but there are millions who stand with them, you and I included. And then they have hope, to go forth in joy and transform the world – that is their mission in Christ.

My friends, this is an exciting day. As we come together to now create this *national community* in preparation for World Youth Day. And I ask you to join me in beginning this journey up the mountain, for when we reach its top we will, you and I, and all of the young people we will accompany, millions strong, will discover a new chapter in their life of faith powered by the spirit of Christ. And let's see what happens when they come down the mountain and transform the world. Thank you.

## **World Youth Day USA – Krakow Kickoff – July 7, 2015**

### ***Bishop Frank J Caggiano's Closing Remarks*** (Video Clip 4)

My friends, our Holy Father Francis has asked us to become missionary disciples, has he not? Putting faith into action, so when we leave this place, this year of preparation for our pilgrimage begins, one step at a time. I am going to ask you now to join me in this prayer, so we can dedicate ourselves to walking with our young people and young adults.

And as we do that, I ask you to pause for just a moment and bring to mind not just the young people who will be traveling to Krakow, or the young people who will be accompanying us stateside in whatever celebrations we are planning. Let us follow our Holy Father's challenge.

Think to the periphery and shadows of life. Consider those young people or young adults who are hurt, or depressed, or lost. Consider those who are poor, where life is beginning to be crushing. Imagine those who no longer feel loveable or loved, those who are sick and suffering. I invite you to invite them, in spirit, to join us on this pilgrimage, for they too should not be forgotten. They will come with us in this moment of transfiguration and new life.

So together we lift them all up, all of our young people, as we say:

*WYDUSA Official Prayer*

**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.**

**Lord Jesus,  
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.**

**Holy Spirit,  
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 on mission from the United States of America  
to Kraków in Poland, Land of Divine Mercy,  
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. Amen**

*Bishop Caggiano gives a blessing.*

My friends, thank you for your time and your participation.