

WORLD YOUTH DAY USA

# Retreat Manual



Meeting Jesus on the Road  
to World Youth Day



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



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**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 Retreat Manual

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# World Youth Day USA Retreat Manual: *Meeting Jesus on the Road to World Youth Day*

## An Introduction

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“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” (Mt 5:7) This short and simple sentence is one of the eight Beatitudes, the introductory teaching of Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount. Through the Beatitudes, Jesus was revealing himself and showing the way for every disciple. Jesus also used these words to provide hope to the suffering and struggling people he encountered. This, too, is the theme of the 2016 World Youth Day, chosen by Pope Francis to illuminate the face of the Lord and provide hope to youth and young adults who may suffer and struggle, as well as seek purpose, direction, and an encounter with God.

It is not coincidence that Jesus chose to speak these words of hope from a mountaintop. In Sacred Scripture, important events happen and great words are often said on a mountain. In fact, mountains and hills are mentioned over 500 times in the Bible. Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai/Horeb. Mount Zion, the city of David and Solomon and capital of Judea, is the location of the great Jerusalem Temple. Elijah heard the “still small voice” of God on Mount Sinai/Horeb. Jesus appoints the Twelve

Apostles on a mountain in the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Jesus’ final agony in the Garden takes place on the Mount of Olives, and he is crucified atop Mount Calvary. Matthew’s Gospel uses mountain imagery nine times:

1. Jesus’ third temptation on a mountain in the wilderness (Mt 4:8-11)
2. Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-7:29)
3. Many healings and the feeding of 4,000 atop a mountain (Mt 15:29-39)
4. The Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor (Mt 17:1-9)
5. Jesus pauses at Bethpage on the Mount of Olives prior to entering Jerusalem (Mt 21:1)
6. Jesus’ final discourse on the Mount of Olives (Mt 24:3-25:46)
7. Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives (Mt 26:36-56)
8. The Crucifixion of Christ on Golgotha (Mt 27:33-56)
9. Jesus gives the Great Commission on a mountain in Galilee (Mt 28:16-20)

World Youth Day (WYD) is coming soon. Opening this manual is one of the first steps of *your own mountaintop experience* as a pilgrim leader. As you know, World Youth Day is a pilgrimage, not merely a trip to go and see the Pope, as wonderful as that is. It is a journey for all participants, young pilgrims and group leaders alike, to discover a deeper relationship with God (and thus, the call to personal and missionary discipleship) – not only on the physical journey but in the act of preparation and the return home. As St. Ignatius of Loyola reminds us to seek and find God in all things, so the leader’s mission is to direct all pilgrims in a way that helps them discover the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at all points along the path up to, on top of, and down from the mountaintop experience of World Youth Day. In addition, the leader accompanies those, too, who may not have as transformative an experience as other pilgrims, helping them on their own journey.

### **How To Use This Manual**

This manual contains a number of elements for you to use in different ways. It will be essential to prepare ahead of time for these gatherings.

Included here are three (3) retreats to use during the preparation process for World Youth Day, a pilgrim blessing for sending forth, an optional mission component, prayer

experiences to use during World Youth Day and then a post-pilgrimage retreat that helps pilgrims climb down the mountain back to everyday life, where God is still very much present, beckoning us to encounter him more deeply and to witness to his grace and mercy in the everyday moments.

The initial three retreats focus on meeting Christ, who accompanies pilgrims on their journey: as a fellow traveler, as the teacher of mercy, and as one who walks with those who struggle and suffer. These three ways of looking at Christ focus on three important elements of World Youth Day 2016: encounter, mercy, and the cross, all of which will be integral to the international and stateside pilgrimage experiences. The return retreat experience is another chance to meet Christ as the one who sends us forth as missionary disciples.

There are many ways to use this manual, depending on the needs of your group and the ways you plan to prepare for this great pilgrimage experience with the Holy Father, the global Church, one another, and most importantly, with the Lord Jesus, who is the face of the Father’s mercy and who, with the Father, sends the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts and lives.

Please familiarize yourself with all of the material presented in this guide in order to fully

discern what best fits the needs of your pilgrims. You are free to modify the materials and schedule to fit the particular needs of your group. It will also help if you know how you want to engage outside resources or people to assist in preparing or facilitating the retreats. You will want to take into consideration the availability and configuration of space (church, gathering hall, etc.), the budget and financial expectations, as well as gathering necessary resources ahead of time.

It is important for retreat leaders to think about how they plan to break participants into small groups and whether the groups will be the same for each retreat/section. For instance, small groups could be divided along parish or campus lines – or they can be mixed between those who know each other and those who do not (e.g. depending on the topic, some pilgrims may be more comfortable speaking with those they know, while in other sections, it would be helpful to interact with new people they do not know). Some sessions may call for groups as small as two or three people. Group leaders can determine what is best for their group. Additionally, the length of time for the small group conversations is flexible and is at the discretion of the retreat leader.

It would also be helpful for leaders to offer pilgrims a journal in which to write. This can be a booklet developed and designed by the

leader/team or simply an empty store-bought journal. This journal may be helpful if groups opt to offer the retreats over an expanded period of time, and for further reflection while traveling to, during, and while returning from the World Youth Day events.

An essential element to each retreat is the presentation of a peer witness talk. A suggested outline for this presentation is given in the retreat manual. We strongly recommend that you identify a young adult who can be an effective witness to his or her peers and that you work one-on-one with this individual prior to the retreat as he/she prepares remarks. There are several examples of retreat options listed in this manual. When looking through these options, carefully consider the resources, and abilities – and the needs of the pilgrims. The presenters and leaders that you choose are a vital part of the retreat, with the understanding that they should “make way” for the Lord to work in the hearts of the young people attending.

One way to consider preparing is to note how much time you have before World Youth Day begins. If you have several months before WYD, then you may wish to think of this as a formation program that prepares your pilgrims over time for the pilgrimage. This can be particularly helpful for groups that have never been to World Youth Day in the past. You can,



for example, do three (3) one-day retreats between now and departing for Poland. Another option, especially if time and availability are a concern for pilgrims, is to combine all three pre-WYD retreats into a single gathering (usually over a weekend).

Regardless of what option you use prior to WYD, it is highly recommended that you offer a post-World Youth Day retreat experience. It is important to keep people engaged and connected *well after* the international experience of World Youth Day. Helping pilgrims “come down the mountain” of an event like WYD is crucial; otherwise, they may be left feeling stranded with little guidance on how to deepen the experience of the pilgrimage and to integrate the spirit of WYD into their everyday lives. The memories of mountaintop experiences fade over time. That is normal and even healthy. A pilgrim cannot be on the mountain forever, nor can they live in the past as they move into the future, no matter how phenomenal the encounter with God on the

mountaintop might have been. Like Jesus (and the disciples who witnessed the Lord in his transfigured glory), all of us have to face our own post-transfiguration experiences where things aren’t exactly dazzling bright, but mundane or even challenging. Your job as group leader and retreat director is to facilitate the pilgrims’ spiritual journey – before, during, *and* following the pilgrimage.

Leaders: consider yourself a *spiritual tour guide*. You will be pointing out where God might be present, asking people where they found meaningful experiences of the Lord, and linking the young with the vast and varied experiences of the universal Church. You will also be equipping these pilgrims with insights and understanding of the message of mercy that the Holy Father and the Church’s teaching and Tradition proclaim so dynamically. Advanced preparation and a good team are essential for a successful formation process. So put on your hiking boots and lace up! Your journey, and that of your pilgrims, starts here.

**General Introduction**  
*To the Retreat Experiences*

# General Introduction to the Retreat Experiences

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NOTE TO LEADER: *If each retreat experience is done individually, these general introductions should be repeated at the beginning of each session (or at least referred to in later sessions).*

## Introductions and Process

You may want to take this opportunity to explain your particular group's preparation process. Consider sharing the background to World Youth Day (history, goals, why you're going, logistics and other details).

If your bishop or pastor is present, introduce him to the participants and vice-versa. Allow time for the bishop or pastor to make some welcoming remarks.

## Personal Introductions

We encourage you to begin each session together with introductions. Whether the pilgrims in your group already know each other or not, introductions are important for getting to know one another, building community, establishing trust, deepening existing friendships and creating an atmosphere of sharing throughout your time together.

This can also be used as an opportunity to “check-in” with one another, to let go of any outside distractions, and be present with one another in the space.

## Suggested Remarks

**Leader:** We hope that our introductions today will help everyone begin to think about what it means to be on pilgrimage. I hope that everyone here is excited to go to World Youth Day. But being on pilgrimage is different than going on a vacation. What is unique about a “pilgrimage” is that we're called by God to go somewhere, with the hope that we will encounter the Lord along the way and be somehow transformed by the experience. Every journey we take has the potential to be a “pilgrimage” of sorts, especially if those day-to-day encounters lead us closer to Christ.

Sometimes it is a matter of reflecting on whom we meet, what we learn, and what we discover about ourselves – like confronting our fears or discovering our own inner strength. For our introductions today, we'd like you to share your name, your hometown, your school name or occupation, and parish. Then tell us about a trip that you have taken recently. It could be routine trip, like a trip to the mall or the grocery store. It could also be a more extended trip, like a camping trip or a vacation. Tell us where you went, whom you met, and what you learned. How might you see this encounter through the lens of “pilgrimage” and not just an ordinary trip?

Please share the following:

- Name
- Simple Fact – Hometown, Work, School, Parish (if done multi-parish/diocesan)
- Where did I go recently?
- Whom did I meet there?
- What did I learn there? (What did I learn about myself, and about the people I met?)

*Example: Hi, my name is Amanda, and I'm from St. Mary's parish. Last week, I took a trip to the nursing home to visit my grandmother. She just turned 85, and it was her birthday. Whom did I meet there? I met one of the nurses, and I learned that she was born in Poland! We talked about my upcoming trip to World Youth Day. I also met my grandmother's roommate Helen. I learned that she has 18 grandchildren, and she is sad because they rarely come to visit her.*

### **Overview of the Retreat Process**

*NOTE TO LEADER: If you are doing all of the retreats (which is recommended), please take time to remind pilgrims of the larger scope of this process. Use this or your own summary of that journey.*

**Leader:** The theme of our WYD formation retreats centers around the idea that Jesus was once a pilgrim too – and how he still walks with pilgrims today. There will be four formation retreats (this is the first). Three retreats will be done prior to WYD and one after WYD. We will be exploring the different ways Jesus was a pilgrim throughout his life and what he models for us as we embark on our own pilgrimage.

### **What is a pilgrimage?**

- The act of pilgrimage is about an intentional encounter with Christ on a journey towards transformation through prayer, mission and acts of charity and justice, catechesis and formation, the experience of one another, the Sacraments (especially the Eucharist and Penance), our lived experiences, and an encounter with the universal Church.
- Jesus was impacted by his encounters. Being fully human, Jesus was a pilgrim who journeyed through life alongside his disciples and the people of his day. Because Jesus was fully divine, the Church has been able to journey with him through the centuries and continues to do so today.
- Throughout his life, Jesus showed many ways of being a pilgrim which echo our experience of being a pilgrim on the journey of faith. Jesus encountered many people from many different places – some were sinners, fishermen, housewives, business owners, religious leaders, and more, just as we encounter many on our own pilgrimage. Jesus, the face of the Father's mercy, manifested his Father's mercy for others. He suffered and walks with us in our suffering. As he was sent by the Father, we are also sent in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Through our pilgrimage to World Youth Day, we will journey with Christ just as Peter, James, and John walked up the mountain with him to the Transfiguration – so that our pilgrimage will have a lasting impact on those we encounter and ourselves.

**We will first meet Jesus,  
Who Encounters Others**

- As Jesus embarked on his public ministry, he showed us how to encounter others.
- Jesus encounters:
  1. His disciples who walk with him on the journey
  2. The Jewish community, which shared his common religious heritage
  3. Those who challenge and disagree with him
  4. Those in need of mercy, healing, and compassion
- Throughout his ministry, Jesus taught, engaged, and built relationships with people.

- The Church – one, holy, catholic, and apostolic – is a sign and model of the encounter that Christ continues to have with the world, through the works of the community of believers.
- We will be asked to follow Jesus’ example as we encounter the Church at World Youth Day.

**We will then meet Jesus, Who is Merciful**

- Jesus is the Divine Son, the very face of God the Father’s mercy who manifests the Father’s mercy in his humanity – Jesus is therefore the merciful one.
- The Jubilee of Mercy invites us in a particular way this year to consider the many ways we can be merciful in all we do.
- As we journey towards World Youth Day, we will more deeply explore the 2016 theme, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Mt 5:7)
- We reflect on our own struggles and sinfulness, aware of our need for forgiveness, and ask to receive God’s boundless mercy through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

## **We will also meet Jesus,**

### **Who is With Us in Our Suffering**

- Jesus experienced suffering as a human – mocked, betrayed by friends, insulted, tempted by the devil, all the way to death on the cross. He is with us in our suffering because he, too, experienced it and, even more, took our suffering upon himself.
- People in each generation are in need of healing – weighed down by sins, sickness, and heartbreak. We all need Jesus’ healing in our lives.
- We follow Jesus’ example and walk with those who suffer and struggle, especially as we hear Pope Francis at World Youth Day, who challenges us to be “a Church that is poor for the poor.”

### **Upon our return from the mountaintop, we will meet Jesus, Who Sends Us Forth**

- Jesus sent his disciples out two by two, to become missionary disciples.

- On the road to Emmaus, Jesus walked alongside two disciples and opened their eyes, so that they might become heralds of the Good News. Before his Ascension, Jesus tells all the disciples, “Go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations!” (Mt 28:10)
- After the events of World Youth Day, we are called to do the same, bringing Christ and the Gospel into our own communities.
- Yet we are not alone: we have each other and we have the promise of the Holy Spirit as we embark on the journey of the missionary disciple.

**Leader:** This process of preparation and ongoing formation is best done in the context of prayer. These retreats will be our way to focus our hearts and minds and souls, so that we will be transformed by the spiritual encounter with God and the Church on pilgrimage

**First Retreat Experience**  
*Meeting Jesus,*  
*Who Encounters Others*

## First Retreat Experience: Meeting Jesus, Who Encounters Others

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The focus of the first formation experience for World Youth Day is “Meeting Jesus, Who Encounters Others.” The retreat looks at the notion of pilgrimage, and on Jesus, who accompanies us on this journey. The experience of being on pilgrimage is essentially one of encounter – encountering God in prayer, learning new things about ourselves, and interacting with others along the way.

This first retreat experience prepares pilgrims to recognize the presence of Christ in their midst and to be aware that they are the presence of Christ to one another.

Throughout the day, two major themes will be covered: The first theme looks at how Jesus encounters people in Scripture. Jesus is the model for what it means to be a pilgrim – from the moment of his birth, to the temptation in the desert, throughout his years of ministry in Galilee, and on his final journey on the way of the cross. Through shared prayer, reflection, and catechesis, the pilgrims will consider the second theme: that is, how Jesus encountered ordinary people in the daily events of their lives and how we can come to know Jesus through Sacred Scripture, the living word of God.

The second theme looks at how one encounters Jesus through the Church. World Youth Day is both a journey to a holy place and a means of interacting with the entire universal Church. In the Creed, Catholics profess a belief in “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.” This guide will look at each of the four marks of the Church, and consider how they draw the WYD pilgrims into greater unity and solidarity with one another as Catholics.

As pilgrims come to know and experience the presence of Christ, they will be sent forth to be the presence of Christ to others. Pilgrims will be asked to reflect on how they have experienced Jesus’ forgiveness, healing, teaching, and ministry and how they are called to share those gifts with others in return.

A suggested outline for this retreat experience, with anticipated timeframes for each section, may include the following elements, found on the next page. (NOTE: this outline does not include breaks; however, these are advisable to add, but can be done at the discretion of the retreat organizers based on the needs of the participants and other circumstances such as space and schedule.)



## **Suggested Outline**

1. **Introductions/Check-In** (15 minutes)
2. **Opening Prayer** (15 minutes)
3. **Catechetical Presentation 1:**  
*Jesus in the Scriptures* (20 minutes)
4. **Prayer Experience:**  
Ignatian Contemplation (30 minutes)
5. **Personal Reflection Time** (15-25 minutes)
6. **Small Group Discussion** (20-30 minutes)
7. **Catechetical Presentation 2:**  
*Encountering the Church* (30 minutes)
8. **Peer Presentation** (15 minutes)
9. **Personal Reflection Time** (15-25 minutes)
10. **Small Group Discussion** (20-30 minutes)
11. **Closing Ritual/Prayer** (15 minutes)

TOTAL TIME (without breaks): 3.5 to 4.0 hours

If the schedule and space permit, a Mass may open or, more appropriately, close this retreat experience.

Once participants have had a chance to know and pray with each other during this experience, a liturgical celebration would be an ideal way to offer the emotions and thoughts generated in the retreat up to God through the celebration of the Eucharist. The experience of the Mass also unites those on retreat with other pilgrims across the United States and around the world in preparation for World Youth Day – as the Eucharist is our common source and summit.

Closing the retreat in such a liturgy would also mirror the closing of the World Youth Day experience in Kraków with the Closing Mass with Pope Francis in July 2016 (and the Closing Masses of stateside celebrations throughout the United States taking place concurrently with the events in Poland).

## **OPENING PRAYER**

NOTE TO LEADER: *You will need a “prayer leader.” This could be you or one of the participants. For the reflection on Jesus the Pilgrim, you will need four readers. To open the session, the official WYD theme song (in English, Spanish, or Polish, or in the language(s) of the participants) should be sung (with accompaniment) or played (via a recording). Having Bibles and a worship aid would be helpful.*

### **Opening Hymn**

World Youth Day Theme Song,  
“Blessed Are the Merciful”

### **Opening Prayer**

**Leader:**

+ In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gracious and merciful God,  
you gather us from places far and wide  
to be in your presence.  
You call us to follow you as  
your beloved sons and daughters.  
Bless our walking and our wandering,  
our serving and our stumbling.

Help us to recognize you along the way, and  
may our journey always lead us closer to you.  
We ask this in the name of Christ Jesus, our  
teacher and Lord.

**ALL: Amen.**

## **Scripture Reading** (Lk 9:28b-36)

**Reader:** A Reading from the Gospel of Luke:

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. 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.

Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” But he did not know what he was saying.

While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my chosen Son; listen to him.” After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## **A Reflection on Jesus the Pilgrim**

**Leader:** As we prepare to embark on this journey to World Youth Day, we remember Jesus was once a pilgrim like us. He walks up and down the mountain with us, just as he walked with Peter, James, and John. Whether we board a plane to Poland, or pray in solidarity with fellow pilgrims at home, we recall Jesus's journey and reflect on the ways Jesus show us how to be a pilgrim in our daily walk of faith. Let us listen attentively to the story of Jesus who was once a pilgrim like us.

**ALL: Jesus, you were once a pilgrim, too.**

**Reader 1:** Your life began as a pilgrim, carried in your mother's womb from Nazareth to Bethlehem, to fulfill the word of the prophets.

You fled with your family to Egypt, entering a strange land to escape the hands of King Herod

As an infant, Mary and Joseph presented you to the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem, where Anna and Simeon gazed upon you and recognized you as the messiah.

As a young boy, Jesus, you were separated from Mary and Joseph in the temple. You remind us that not all who wander are lost.

**ALL: Jesus, you were once a pilgrim, too.**

**Reader 2:** You stepped into the Jordan River to be baptized by John. The heavens opened and the Father declared, "You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!"

You were led by the Spirit into the wilderness. For 40 days you wandered in the desert, facing one temptation after the next.

Nourished by angels and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, you returned home to begin your public ministry.

You spent three years as an itinerant preacher, roaming the back roads and crossing the sea, making disciples of fishermen, forgiving sinners, and seeking out the sick and the lame.

You walked on water and calmed the storm at sea. You went off alone, to a quiet place to pray. You ascended the mountaintop with three disciples, revealed to them your glory, and then journeyed with them down the mountain.

You traveled from one small town to another, teaching in houses and synagogues. You told stories and parables, and you spoke words that everyone could understand.

You cured a blind man in Bethsaida, chased away demons in Genesaret. You passed through Jericho where Zacchaeus waited for you in a sycamore tree.

You visited the homes of tax collectors and sinners, and you ate with them. You went home again to Nazareth, only to be rejected by the people there.

**ALL: Jesus, you were once a pilgrim, too.**

**Reader 3:** You journeyed through Samaria, a place where few dared to go. You stopped at Jacob's well and spoke with a woman there, and she proclaimed you to the people.

You returned to Bethany in Judea, at the request of Mary and Martha. Your friend Lazarus was dead, you wept, and you brought him to life again.

In your final days, you entered Jerusalem, riding atop a simple mule. You were greeted with shouts of joy by the young people of the city under a canopy of palm branches.

You feasted one last time with your disciples. You washed their feet and urged them to do the same. After the Last Supper where you instituted the Eucharist, you went out to the Mount of Olives to pray, yet your disciples could not stay awake.

You were betrayed, abandoned, and arrested, and the soldiers escorted you to the Praetorium where you were beaten and scourged. They sentenced you to death, saying "Crucify him!"

Jesus, your final voyage was yet another march uphill, this time to Golgotha. You stumbled under the weight of the Cross. You fell down hard, and still, you got up again.

Along the way you encountered your Mother, the women of Jerusalem, Mary Magdalene, and the Beloved Disciple. Simon from Cyrene, a stranger, helped you to carry the cross to the summit of that mountain of death.

There, on Calvary, you were crucified in the midday sun for hours, while the soldiers mocked you. You forgave them, just as you have forgiven us. You promised heaven to the criminal and you entrusted your Mother to the Beloved Disciple.

When it was finally over, you breathed your last. It was finished.

**ALL: Jesus, you were once a pilgrim, too.**

**Reader 4:** Jesus, many thought your pilgrimage was done. They brought your body down from the cross. They laid your body in a borrowed tomb. But your story was far from over. The journey had just begun.

Three days went by and Easter morning arrived. You greeted Magdalene in the garden, and she ran back to tell the others.

Two pilgrim friends journeyed from Jerusalem, alone and afraid. You walked alongside them, broke open the Scriptures, and they recognized you in the breaking of the bread.

You returned to the Upper Room, where the disciples were locked in fear. You sent the Holy Spirit to be with them and promised that you would come again.

Jesus, you were once a pilgrim, and you invite us to be pilgrims, too.

### **Silent Reflection**

Spend about five minutes in silent reflection. Consider the following question: "How am I being invited to be on pilgrimage with Jesus?"

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Leader:** Remembering all who are in need of our prayers this day, we pray together the words that Jesus taught us.

**ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven ...**

**Leader:** Jesus, you are the beginning and the end, you are the source of all life and the reason we embark on this journey.

You have called each one of us to be your follower. You send us forth to proclaim your word, and to be your hands and feet in the world. Make us worthy to do your work and to be your presence to everyone we meet.

May this journey that we are on draw us into greater friendship with you, and may it unite us eternally with you, forever and forever.

**ALL: Amen.**

### **Conclusion**

May the Almighty God be with us this day and bless us with peace.

+ In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
*If a priest is present, he can conclude the rite with the usual blessing.*

## **CATECHETICAL PRESENTATION**

### **“JESUS IN THE SCRIPTURES”**

NOTE TO LEADER: *For this session, you will need a dry erase board or large sheets of white paper (for a collective brainstorming activity, with markers). When speaking about Christ, it might also be good to have the New Testament and the Catechism of the Catholic Church on hand for reference, especially if specific questions arise on this topic. The retreat leader may use the text here as suggested notes for this session.*

#### **Two-Fold Purpose for Today:**

**1) Meeting Jesus as he encounters people in Scripture** – We will spend some time reflecting on Jesus, specifically Jesus as pilgrim. We will consider how Jesus encountered people in Scripture, and how we encounter him through the living word of God.

**2) Meeting Jesus who encounters us through the Church**, in particular at World Youth Day – Jesus invites us to follow him in community with others. We will consider how Jesus invites us to encounter him through the life and community of the Church and in all our encounters with others. Specifically, we will explore how we encounter Christ during our time at World Youth Day, a pivotal moment of the universal Church for all generations.

But first, let us explore the very concept of **pilgrimage**: that unique road we walk upon as we meet the Lord along the way.

### **Pilgrimage**

What makes World Youth Day a “pilgrimage” and not simply a vacation, a travel excursion, or a just a chance to go to another country?

1. There is *intentionality* about pilgrimage. It is a journey with great purpose. We are called by God and sent out to be evangelizers. As pilgrims, we are evangelizers of our local community and the Church from the United States. We also know that people at home will be praying with and for us during the events of World Youth Day, supporting us and journeying with us in solidarity as stateside pilgrims of faith.
2. Pilgrimage, no matter where or how it takes place (stateside or internationally), is also about *encounter*. In the same way that Jesus encountered many people throughout the Gospels, we hope to encounter the Lord and fellow disciples along the way to World Youth Day.
3. The experience of pilgrimage is *transformative*. While vacations are relaxing and excursions are adventurous, a pilgrimage transforms a person in their heart, mind, and soul. As a result of their journey, a pilgrim sees the world differently and begins to act, speak, and think anew. It truly transforms and illuminates them.

There are many ways of encountering God. We encounter God in our personal prayer and faith journey, as a community of believers through our communal prayer, the Eucharist, and celebration of the Sacraments. We are also called to be the presence of Christ in the ways in which we encounter others – to be forgiving, merciful, and compassionate in whatever we do. But on pilgrimage, especially World Youth Day, we encounter Christ in the company of others and in a very intentional way, physically moving from one place to another as our heart, mind, and soul move closer and closer to God and his Gospel.

### **Encountering Jesus: Who is Jesus?**

*It is recommended to use selections from Part One, Section Two, Chapter Two (“I Believe in Jesus Christ, The Only Son of God”) in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (422-682). Focus on areas that help pilgrims better understand how Jesus encounters people, most especially during his public ministry as recorded in Sacred Scripture.*

### **Learning the Lord’s Life and Ministry**

Some key moments of Jesus’ life: baptism in the Jordan (accepts and begins the mission to preach and teach the Good News); temptation in the desert (tested in every way but did not sin; sympathizes with our human struggle); transfiguration (helps disciples understand that suffering, death, and resurrection awaited him; and for a brief moment, Jesus reveals his

divinity); proclamation of the Kingdom (shares the Good News; heals and performs great miracles; teaches the truth about God); passion, death, and resurrection (the salvation of the world and the selfless love for all humanity).

- Jesus is a man of prayer – He goes off to a quiet place to pray and teaches his disciples the Lord’s Prayer.
- Jesus loves the poor, the outcast, and the sinner – He shows us we have a moral obligation never to overlook those in need, most profoundly in the words of the Beatitudes.
- Jesus taught in parables, everyday images and analogies, e.g the seed and sower, the Good Samaritan, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son.
- Jesus witnesses to the power of God by miracles, signs, healings, e.g. the paralytic, blind man, raising of Lazarus, and multiplication of loaves and fishes.
- Jesus came to save sinners – Mercy and forgiveness are at the heart of who Jesus is. He forgives the woman caught in adultery, the tax collectors, and the soldiers crucifying him on Calvary.

### **Collective Brainstorming Process:**

#### **“Whom does Jesus encounter in Scripture?”**

*Invite participants to name specific people or stories from the New Testament. Ask the pilgrims: Whom does Jesus encounter throughout his public ministry*

and after the Resurrection? Be specific. Tell us their names or what you remember about their stories. *The leader (or another volunteer) writes the name and stories on a dry erase board as participants share their answers.*

Some possible responses might include:

Mary and Joseph, John the Baptist, the Twelve Apostles, the crowds of four or five thousand, Nicodemus, Mary and Martha, Lazarus, the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, the ten lepers, scribes and Pharisees, Jairus and his daughter, the bent-over woman, the man afflicted with a demon, Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate, Simon the Cyrenian, Mary Magdalene, the companions on the way to Emmaus, Saul (Paul) on the road to Damascus.

Once pilgrims have had sufficient time to share, summarize the following types of people Jesus encounters in Scripture:

- People in need of forgiveness – such as the tax collectors, the woman caught in adultery, Saul (Paul)
- People in need of healing – such as the paralytic, the lepers, Bartimaeus, the woman with hemorrhage
- People in distress – such as the disciples in the storm at sea and Jairus, whose daughter is dying
- People in authority – such as the scribes, Pharisees, temple leaders, Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas.
- People whom he calls forth to minister to others – such as his disciples, Mary and Martha, Lazarus, the companions on the Road to Emmaus, Saul (Paul)

**Leader:** We spent time talking about Jesus and how he encountered people in the Gospels – and now it is time for us, as pilgrims, to encounter him once more – through our own reading of Sacred Scripture, through prayer and Sacrament, and in our everyday lives.



## **PRAYER EXPERIENCE**

### **IGNATIAN CONTEMPLATION**

*Each participant will need a Bible or a handout with the Scripture verses. You may want to create a handout with the Instructions and Reflection Questions*

**Leader:** We are going to take some time for a prayer exercise called Ignatian Contemplation, also known as Imaginative Prayer (this has also been described in the tradition as meditation or meditative prayer – an aspect of *lectio divina*).

Our imagination is a powerful source of prayer and a place where we encounter Jesus by imagining scenes from the Gospel stories.

We do this by visualizing the scene and entering into the scene, as if we were in a dream. Consider “becoming” one of the characters in the story – imagine that you are the blind man or one of the disciples – and notice your own interaction with Jesus. Allow yourself to enter fully into the character and make the story your own. This is not simply a matter of repeating words on the page.

By fully “entering into the Scriptures” through our imagination, we experience the words of Scripture as they truly are, the living word of God. Ignatian Contemplation is one way that the Scriptures come alive for us, and God’s word becomes relevant to our lives today.

Jesus desires to meet us through the Scriptures just as he encountered the blind man, the leper, the woman at the well, and so many others.

Jesus *is* the Word – all of Sacred Scripture speaks of him and points to him. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Trust in his presence and that he is at work through your imagination.

Trust that the Lord is using your imagination to encounter you in a very deep and personal way.

#### **Instructions for Contemplation:**

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place where you won’t be distracted. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your mind and heart to his presence in prayer. Ask for the grace to encounter Jesus and receive his Holy Word.
2. Choose a Scripture passage from the Gospels, preferably a passage with a memorable “encounter” with Jesus.

**NOTE TO LEADER:** *You can choose one Scripture passage for everybody to use, or invite each participant to choose one of the following.*

- Lk 5:1-11 – Call of the fisherman
- Mt 16:13-20 – Who do you say I am?
- Lk 19:1-10 – Zacchaeus in the tree
- Mk 2:1-12 – Healing of the paralytic
- Mk 5:35-41 – Calming of the storm

3. Take a moment to read the entire passage (and what comes before or after this incident) to get a full sense of the story.

NOTE TO LEADER: *If the entire group is reflecting on the same story or passage, you might want to have someone read it aloud.*

4. Read the story again, very slowly, silently to yourself. Consider the following as you read:

- In your mind, begin to imagine yourself in the scene or situation. Compose the place in your mind. Use your senses to imagine everything around you.
- Are there any distinct sights, sounds, smells, feelings that arise? What does the air feel like – cool, warm, dry? Are there any distinct smells? What is the mood – joyful, tense, confusing?
- Where are you standing or sitting in the scene? What do you see? Is there anyone else with you? Do you talk with others? What do you say to or hear from others? Use your imagination and enter into dialogue with them.

- As the scene progresses, pay attention to the person of Jesus. Where is Jesus? What does he say or do? Does he talk with you? How do you respond?

- Take your time to really make the scene your own and allow yourself to enter fully into the story. Is there anything that God wants me to see or hear? What does God want to tell me?

- If necessary, continue to read through the story multiple times and imagine yourself interacting within the setting and especially with all the people.

5. Don't worry if your imagination is not historically accurate. Allow your imagination to pick up on subtle details that may not be written down. The point of this prayer exercise to make room for Jesus to encounter you, to let him reveal himself to you and show you part of our own stories in relationship to him.

6. When you are finished, give thanks to the Lord for all that has happened during this time of prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit for any direction of how you are called to respond. Consider making a resolution for the future.

## **INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Once the group has completed this prayer experience, give them further instructions on reflecting more deeply in personal time and subsequent small group conversations. Take approximately 15 to 25 minutes to allow the participants to reflect on the catechesis and the prayer.*

- What does it mean to me to be on a “pilgrimage”?
- How would I describe the difference between pilgrimage and other types of journeys? (e.g., a trip to the grocery store, driving long distance to visit grandparents, a vacation, etc.)
- Do you have a favorite parable or story of encounter from the Scriptures related to Jesus? What is it about its meaning that appeals to you?
- When have you encountered Christ who is calling, healing, forgiving, loving, and inviting you into friendship? What was that encounter like? Why was it memorable?
- As you consider the life and the teaching and person of Jesus what do you find most comforting? Most challenging? Most radical?

## **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to allow participants to join together in discussion; use the questions from individual reflection time to guide the conversation around the small groups.*

## **CATECHETICAL PRESENTATION**

### **“ENCOUNTERING THE CHURCH”**

NOTE TO LEADER: *For this session, you will need a dry erase board or large sheets of white paper (for a collective brainstorming activity, with markers). When speaking about the Church, it might also be good to have the **New Testament** and the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** on hand for reference, especially if questions arise on this topic. The retreat leader may use the text here as suggested notes for this particular catechetical presentation.*

### **A Culture of Encounter**

Pope Francis gives us a vision and the challenge of “a culture of encounter” by telling us:

Faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter others ... We must go out and meet them, and with our faith we must create a “culture of encounter,” a culture of friendship, a culture in which we find brothers and sisters, in which we can also speak with those who think differently, as well as those who hold other beliefs, who do not have the same faith. They all have something in common with us: they are images of God; they are children of God. We must be going out to meet everyone, without losing sight of our own position. (*Address to the Lay Movements on the Vigil of Pentecost, May 18, 2013*)

## Understanding Church

The Church is not just a building; rather, it is the community of believers gathered by God's grace, joined to Christ as his Body and Bride, and transformed as a Temple of the Holy Spirit.

- The Church's origins lie with Christ: through Mary's "yes" to the angel Gabriel (Lk 1:26-38), through the call of the first disciples (Mt 4:18-22), and from the Cross (Jn 19:23-30).
- When Jesus commissioned the disciples and upon receiving the Holy Spirit in the upper room at Pentecost, the Church was born or manifest – the new people of God were inspired to proclaim and live out the Good News which Jesus taught
- It can be tempting to think of "Church" as just the hierarchy or the leadership of the local parish to which we belong; or as a distant set of rules and regulations unrelated to our lives.
- However, the Church is the people of God, just like the first disciples after Pentecost, inspired to proclaim and live out the Good News of Jesus.
- To encounter the Church is to encounter Christ in one another ("For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them" Mt 18:20).

In a special way at World Youth Day, we are invited to encounter hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of other believers in one place

– united in faith with the Holy Father, Pope Francis, who guides and shepherds the universal Church.

## Collective Brainstorming Process:

### "How do we encounter Jesus in and through the Church today?"

*Invite participants to name specific experiences, moments, or parts of our Catholic tradition where we encounter Jesus. Be specific. The leader (or other volunteer) can write these experiences on a dry erase board as participants share their answers.*

Some possible responses might include:

- Scripture
- Sacraments
- Prayer, Devotional Life
- Magisterium, priesthood, and the structure of the Church as an institution
- Life in Christ: Catholic Morality
- Relationship with Jesus
- Communion of Saints, reading their life stories, or praying with them
- When we encounter holy people (a faith-filled grandparent, an influential teacher, etc.)
- Sacraments and the Catholic "sacramental worldview" (finding God in all created things)
- Evangelization and Missionary Work
- Catholic Social Teaching
- Faith in everyday life
- Works of Mercy

- Vocations and callings, including: Marriage, Priesthood, Religious Life, Single Life, Consecrated Life, Mission, and Lay Ecclesial Ministry
- Living the Pascal Mystery, recognizing the moments of “life, death, and resurrection” in our lives and how those moments draw us closer to Christ’s own suffering, death, and resurrection
- Church Teaching (e.g. the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the documents of Vatican II, encyclicals and other papal writings, Bible study, etc.)

### **One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic**

*It is recommended to use selections from Part One, Section Two, Chapter Three, Article Nine (“I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church”) in the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** (748-975), in particular 811-870. Focus on areas that help pilgrims better understand the four marks of the Church, so that this can be a guided large-group conversation between the facilitator and the participants. Focus especially on the ways pilgrims can encounter Christ through the Church. Help participants make the connection that these are elements that are shared among the Church throughout the whole world and in a particular way by the pilgrims at World Youth Day. You may also invite past World Youth Day pilgrims to participate and share their experiences as they relate to the Church.*

**Leader:** Each week at Mass, we pray together the Creed. This same Creed is prayed in every Catholic parish, in every language and culture, and around the world. It is a statement of faith that is shared among Catholics (and even among many other Christian denominations). In the Creed, we pray these words: “I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.” We call these the four marks of the Church. The Church is marked with these characteristics, given to us by Christ, which help us understand the Church’s mission. Today, we’re going to use the four marks of the Church to talk about the ways we encounter Christ in the Church, and the ways we are called forth to encounter others as disciples of Jesus. With each of these areas, we offer a few examples to get us started.

#### **A. The Church is ONE:**

- Praying at World Youth Day liturgies in many languages, but as one body.
- Praying with the Communion of Saints, and in a special way, the WYD patron saints.
- Sacraments, Prayer, and other devotions, at World Youth Day, but also in daily life.
- Stateside celebrations praying in solidarity with pilgrims around the world and in Kraków.
- *(open the conversation to retreat participants and World Youth Day alumni)*

**Questions to prompt large group discussion on this particular topic:**

- How are we “one” as the Body of Christ? When we do experience the Church as “one”?
- What will it be like to have an experience of “one Church” at World Youth Day?
- How does Christ encounter us as “one” community?
- How are we united? Where are divisions?
- We are “one” Church, but there is still work to be done within the Church and in the world, so that all might truly become one people of God. We all have non-Catholic and non-religious friends. We might even have Catholic friends who express their religiosity in ways that are different from us. How can we all work together towards unity?
- What are ways we ignore or stand in the way of unity in the Church and community?

**B. The Church is HOLY:**

- Engaging in deep prayer in preparation for, during, and after World Youth Day
- Learning and following God’s law as handed on through the moral teachings of the Church as new life in the Spirit
- Learning and following Catholic social teaching in the world
- Intentional care for the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized

- Engaging in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy
- Participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, at World Youth Day and throughout life
- Responding to God’s call through vocation (priesthood, religious life, marriage).
- *(open the conversation to retreat participants and World Youth Day alumni)*

**Questions to prompt large group discussion on this particular topic:**

- How does Christ encounter us and call us to be holy?
- How do we encounter and recognize one another as holy?
- How do we do this in our daily lives?
- How do we do this specifically on our pilgrimage to World Youth Day?
- How can we continue to grow in holiness?

**C. The Church is CATHOLIC:**

- Reading the Scriptures in preparation for, during, and after World Youth Day
- Regular participation in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist
- Being aware of the diversity in the universality of the Church
- Engaging in the Church’s mission of evangelization, charity and social justice, and missionary discipleship
- *(open the conversation to retreat participants and World Youth Day alumni)*

**Questions to prompt large group discussion on this particular topic:**

- How do we encounter each other as “catholic” at World Youth Day?
- What is so special about the universal aspect of World Youth Day that we cannot already get from our local parish or diocesan experience of the Church?
- How do we approach those of different faiths or no belief, recognizing that we are all called to be “catholic” (universal) in our relationship with God?

**D. The Church is APOSTOLIC:**

- Experiencing the Church at World Youth Day (and in our lives) as an institution, with the leadership of lay leaders, priests and religious, bishops, and the Pope.
- Following Tradition and teaching of the Church handed down through the ages
- Learning about Apostles and Fathers of the Church who first unpacked Jesus’ teaching
- Respecting the leadership of the community, not putting them down if they proclaim things with which we are uncomfortable.
- Considering a calling to Church leadership: lay ministry, diaconate, priesthood, and consecrated life.
- *(open the conversation to retreat participants and World Youth Day alumni)*

**Questions to prompt large group discussion on this particular topic:**

- How does Christ encounter us as “apostolic”?
- How do we encounter each other as “apostolic” at World Youth Day?
- What does it mean to encounter lay leaders, priests and religious, bishops, and the Pope at World Youth Day?
- Why is this important to the experience of being an “apostolic” Church?
- How do we, as pilgrims, participate in the apostolic experience of the Church?

Pope Francis said: “The Church must step outside herself. To go where? To the outskirts of existence, whatever they may be, but she must step out. Jesus tells us, ‘Go into all the world! Go! Preach! Bear witness to the Gospel!’ – But what happens if we step outside ourselves? The same can happen to anyone who comes out of the house and onto the street: an accident. But I tell you, I far prefer a Church that has had a few accidents to a Church that has fallen sick from being closed. Go out, go out!” (*Address to the Lay Movements on the Vigil of Pentecost, May 18, 2013*)

## **PEER PRESENTATION**

NOTE TO LEADER: *This reflection from one of the pilgrims should focus on a time when he or she encountered Jesus through the Church. This talk could be given by a World Youth Day alumnus or alumna, who can connect the encounter with the Church to the World Youth Day experience, or it can be given by a young adult who is active in his or her local parish, diocese, campus, or movement. The focus of the talk is the call to encounter Jesus, and to be living witnesses of Christ through the work of the Church.*

### **General Outline and Points to Consider:**

- Describe a personal encounter with Jesus through the Church – through prayer, Sacraments, parish or diocesan community, service to the poor, etc.
  - Describe your reaction to or encounter with the Holy Father (St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, or Pope Francis), and how he takes time for youth or young adults (at events like World Youth Day), but also his concern for and encounter with those who are poor and marginalized.
  - If applicable: What was your experience of World Youth Day? Where did you go? Whom did you meet? What were the liturgical celebrations like? What did you learn about the Church there?
  - How has your life been changed or transformed as a result of World Youth Day or my involvement in the Church?
- Where are you today? How do you continue to live out your faith? How are you striving to be active in the Church? How are you continually being called to transformation and conversion of heart? What “more” (than what is expected) have you done for the sake of Christ through the work of the Church?
  - How have you taken up the challenge to find Jesus more fully in the Church in new, even unfamiliar, ways?

### **Suggested Scriptures for Presentation**

(related to the four marks of the Church):

- ONE: 1 Cor 12:12-28 – There are many gifts/parts, but one body.
- HOLY: Mt 5:48 – Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect; 2 Cor 12 – I will boast of my weakness, for the sake of Christ; Rom 5 – where sin increased, grace increased.
- CATHOLIC: in the Gospels: the Baptism of Jesus, the call of the disciples, the healing of lepers, or the woman caught in adultery
- APOSTOLIC: Mt 28:19 – The Great Commission: Go and make disciples.



## **INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Take approximately 15 to 25 minutes to allow the participants to reflect on the catechesis and witness. Have the pilgrims use the following questions to guide their reflection:*

- When and how have you encountered Christ in your own experience of the Church?
- What does the Catholic Church mean to you?
- Where do you see evidence of Jesus' life and ministry at work in the Church today? How does that make a difference for you personally?
- What mark of the Church do you most resonate with (one, holy, catholic, apostolic)? With which of them do you struggle, or in which do you need to grow more going forward?
- What do the popes, or in a special way Pope Francis, mean to me? How does his ministry impact my experience of the Church, of Christ, and my faith?
- Who are bishops, priests, religious, deacons, or lay ministers who have impacted my experience of the Church and of Christ and my faith?
- How can I learn to encounter others and live in solidarity with others within the Church at World Youth Day and on an international level?

## **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to allow participants to join together in discussion; use the questions from individual reflection time to guide the conversation around the small groups.*

## **CLOSING PRAYER/RITUAL**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Following the small group discussion, return to the large group and conclude the session with a closing prayer such as the following.*

**Leader:** Today, we reflected on Jesus, who encountered people just like us in need of healing, forgiveness, mercy and love. We talked about the ways in which Jesus encounters the Church today and sends us forth to be Church in the world. As we close, I invite you to name a word or phrase that clarifies what you are taking from this experience about how you are feeling and what you are taking with you from this time together.

### **Naming of Graces:**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Light a candle and pass the candle to each person. Each person shares the grace he or she received from God today. A "grace" can include a blessing or moment of illumination or understanding.*

**Leader:** Gathering all of the graces we received today, we stand, renewed in our understanding of Jesus and the Church, and we together pray the international prayer of World Youth Day 2016, which reminds us of our journey in solidarity with the universal Church around the world.

**God, merciful Father,  
in your Son, Jesus Christ,  
you have revealed your love  
and poured it out upon us  
in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.**

**We entrust to you today  
the destiny of the world  
and of every man and woman.**

**We entrust to you, in a special way,  
young people of every language,  
people and nation:  
guide and protect them  
as they walk the complex paths  
of the world today and  
give them the grace  
to reap abundant fruits  
from their experience of the  
Kraków World Youth Day.**

**Heavenly Father,  
grant that we may bear  
witness to your mercy.**

**Teach us how to convey  
the faith to those in doubt,  
hope to those who are discouraged,  
love to those who feel indifferent,  
forgiveness to those who have done wrong,  
and joy to those who are unhappy.**

**Allow the spark of merciful love  
that you have enkindled within us  
become a fire that can transform hearts  
and renew the face of the earth. Amen.**

**Mary, Mother of Mercy, pray for us.  
St. Faustina, pray for us.  
St. John Paul II, pray for us.**

**Second Retreat Experience**  
*Meeting Jesus,*  
*Who Is Merciful*

## Second Retreat Experience: Meeting Jesus, Who is Merciful

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The theme for the 2016 World Youth Day is “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy” (Mt 5:7), and the theme for the 2015-2016 Jubilee of Mercy is “Merciful like the Father” (Lk 6:36). Throughout the formation process for World Youth Day and within the Jubilee of Mercy, we turn to Jesus, who models the way for us to live as merciful disciples. The second formation experience on the pilgrim journey will be encountering “Jesus, Who is Merciful.” Throughout His life, Jesus was constantly showing mercy to all he encountered. Jesus is able to show mercy because he, too, experienced the love of his merciful Father – but even more, Jesus, the divine Son, is the face of the Father’s mercy; he is the Father’s mercy. In this retreat, we will take a look at what “mercy” means in the Old Testament and the New Testament. This retreat will look closely at how Jesus relieves others’ suffering and how Jesus relieves our own suffering. This retreat will explore how all people and all pilgrims are never abandoned, and are never alone. God always seeks to welcome everyone with open arms.

For tools to lead pilgrims through this topic, visit the USCCB resource page on the Jubilee of Mercy, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/year-of-mercy/index.cfm>.

In addition, consider the message of the Holy Father in anticipation of the thirty-first World Youth Day, in which he outlines the specific connection between mercy and WYD 2016: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/youth/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150815\\_messaggio-giovani\\_2016.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/youth/documents/papa-francesco_20150815_messaggio-giovani_2016.html).

During this retreat, people will have the opportunity to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and reflect on their own experiences of receiving God’s mercy. For it is through our experience of receiving Jesus’ mercy that we are strengthened in our understanding and experience of the Lord’s love for us. Mercy given to us by God prepares us to share his loving kindness and mercy with others. As the day closes, retreatants are invited to reflect on their call to show mercy to others, while drawing on the strength of Jesus’ example of living a life of mercy. A suggested outline for this retreat experience, with anticipated timeframes for each section, may include the following elements, found on the next page. (NOTE: this outline does not include breaks; however, these are advisable to add, but can be done at the discretion of the retreat organizers based on the needs of the participants and other circumstances such as space and schedule.)

## **Suggested Outline**

**1. Introductions/Check-In** (15 minutes)

**2. Opening Prayer** (15 minutes)

**3. Catechetical Presentation: *Mercy***  
(20 minutes)

**4. Personal Reflection Time** (15-25 minutes)

**5. Small Group Discussion** (20-30 minutes)

**6. Prayer Experience:**

Reconciliation Service (60 minutes)

**7. Peer Presentation** (15 minutes)

**8. Personal Reflection Time** (15-25 minutes)

**9. Small Group Discussion** (20-30 minutes)

**10. Closing Ritual/Prayer** (15 minutes)

TOTAL TIME (without breaks): 3.5 to 4.0 hours

If the schedule and space permit, a Mass may open or, more appropriately, close this retreat experience.

Once participants have had a chance to know and pray with each other during this experience, a liturgical celebration would be an ideal way to offer the emotions and thoughts generated in the retreat up to God through the celebration of the Eucharist. The experience of the Mass also unites those on retreat with other pilgrims across the United States and around the world in preparation for World Youth Day – as the Eucharist is our common source and summit.

Closing the retreat in such a liturgy would also mirror the closing of the World Youth Day experience in Kraków with the Closing Mass with Pope Francis in July 2016 (and the Closing Masses of stateside celebrations throughout the United States taking place concurrently with the events in Poland).

## **OPENING PRAYER**

NOTE TO LEADER: *You will need a “prayer leader.” This could be you or one of the participants. For the Psalm, you will need to divide into two smaller groups “Side 1” and “Side 2.” It may be helpful to divide the large group into two groups from the beginning. To open the session, the official WYD theme song (in English, Spanish, or Polish, or in the language[s] of the participants) should be sung (with accompaniment) or played (via a recording). Having Bibles and a worship aid would be helpful.*

### **Opening Hymn**

World Youth Day Theme Song,  
“Blessed Are the Merciful”

### **Opening Prayer**

**Leader:** Generous and merciful Father,  
you gather us from many places  
to be here with you.  
You recognize us as your beloved  
sons and daughters, with all the gifts  
and struggles that we bring.  
You invite us on this pilgrimage,  
as a part of our journey of faith.  
We turn to your Son, Jesus,  
asking him to teach how to be pilgrims,  
so that we can hear your call  
and be ready to follow you  
as faithful disciples.

We ask this in the name of  
Christ Jesus, our teacher, and Lord.

**ALL: Amen.**

### **Scripture Reading** (Lk 6:36-50)

**Reader:** A Reading from the Gospel of Luke:

A Pharisee invited him to dine with him,  
and he entered the Pharisee’s house  
and reclined at table.

Now there was a sinful woman in the city  
who learned that he was at table  
in the house of the Pharisee.

Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment,  
she stood behind him at his feet weeping  
and began to bathe his feet with her tears.  
Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed  
them, and anointed them with the ointment.

When the Pharisee who had invited him  
saw this he said to himself,  
“If this man were a prophet, he would know  
who and what sort of woman this is who is  
touching him, that she is a sinner.”

Jesus said to him in reply,  
“Simon, I have something to say to you.”  
“Tell me, teacher,” he said.

“Two people were in debt to a certain creditor;  
one owed five hundred days’ wages and the  
other owed fifty. Since they were unable to  
repay the debt, he forgave it for both.  
Which of them will love him more?”

Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose,  
whose larger debt was forgiven."  
He said to him, "You have judged rightly."

Then he turned to the woman and said to  
Simon, "Do you see this woman?  
When I entered your house,  
you did not give me water for my feet,  
but she has bathed them with her tears  
and wiped them with her hair.  
You did not give me a kiss,  
but she has not ceased kissing my feet  
since the time I entered.  
You did not anoint my head with oil,  
but she anointed my feet with ointment.  
So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven;  
hence, she has shown great love.  
But the one to whom little is forgiven,  
loves little."

He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."  
The others at table said to themselves,  
"Who is this who even forgives sins?"  
But he said to the woman,  
"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

### **Psalm Response**

**(Ps. 25:1-2, 4-5, 7-10, 12, 14, 16-18)**

*Separate the group into "Side 1" and "Side 2"  
to read the psalm response aloud.*

**ALL: Remember your compassion and your  
mercy, O LORD, for they are ages old.**

#### *SIDE 1:*

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul,  
my God, in you I trust;  
do not let me be disgraced;  
do not let my enemies gloat over me.

**ALL: Remember your compassion and your  
mercy, O LORD, for they are ages old.**

#### *SIDE 2:*

Make known to me your ways, O LORD;  
teach me your paths.  
Guide me by your fidelity and teach me,  
for you are God my savior,  
for you I wait all the day long.

**ALL: Remember your compassion and your  
mercy, O LORD, for they are ages old.**

#### *SIDE 1:*

Remember no more the sins of my youth;  
remember me according to your mercy,  
because of your goodness, LORD.  
Good and upright is the LORD,  
therefore he shows sinners the way.

**ALL: Remember your compassion and your  
mercy, O LORD, for they are ages old.**

*SIDE 2:*

He guides the humble in righteousness,  
and teaches the humble his way.

All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth  
toward those who honor  
his covenant and decrees.

**ALL: Remember your compassion and your  
mercy, O LORD, for they are ages old.**

*SIDE 1:*

Who is the one who fears the LORD?  
God shows him the way he should choose.  
The counsel of the LORD  
belongs to those who fear him;  
and his covenant instructs them.

**ALL: Remember your compassion and your  
mercy, O LORD, for they are ages old.**

*SIDE 2:*

Look upon me, have pity on me,  
for I am alone and afflicted.  
Relieve the troubles of my heart;  
bring me out of my distress.  
Look upon my affliction and suffering;  
take away all my sins.

**ALL: Remember your compassion and your  
mercy, O LORD, for they are ages old.**

## **Silent Reflection**

*Spend about 5 minutes in silent reflection. Invite  
participants to consider the following questions:*

How am I experiencing Jesus' mercy these past  
several days or weeks? Where am I noticing the  
need for mercy in my life and in the lives of  
those around me? Am I aware of my profound  
need for the Lord's mercy?

## **Intercessions**

**Leader:** Let us bring our prayer and petitions  
before the Lord.

Merciful and loving Father, we thank you for  
the gift of your presence here with us today.  
We ask you to bless our time together. May this  
time of preparation open our eyes and our  
hearts to encounter you and your mercy as we  
begin this pilgrimage. We pray to the Lord.

**ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** We pray for Pope Francis and for all  
leaders of the Church. May they proclaim the  
gospel message with joy for all to hear, and may  
their lives bear witness to the faith we  
profess. We pray to the Lord.

**ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.**



**Leader:** We pray for the people of Poland as they prepare to welcome pilgrims from around the world into their home country. Give them a spirit of hospitality and free them from any fears or anxiety. May this time of anticipation fill them with great hope, so that their faith may be recognized all who gather there.

**ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** We pray for all those in need, especially the poor and the marginalized. Grant healing to the sick, peace to the dying, and hope to those who despair. May we bring Christ's mercy out into the world and respond with generosity to all who cry out to us for aid. We pray to the Lord.

**ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** I invite you to share the name of a person you would especially like to keep in prayer today. (*Pause while people share names aloud...*) For the needs of those we have named aloud and those in the silence of our hearts. We pray to the Lord.

**ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** Gathering our prayers into one, we pray together the words Jesus taught us.

**ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven...**

### **Benediction**

**LEADER:** May the Almighty God be with us this day and bless us with peace.

+ In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*If a priest is present, he can conclude the rite with the usual blessing.*

## **CATECHETICAL PRESENTATION**

### **“MERCY”**

NOTE TO LEADER: *It is recommended to use selections on mercy in the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**. These include: God’s mercy (210-211); Jesus, who shows the Father’s mercy (545, 589, 1439, 1846); our acceptance of God’s mercy (1847, 2840); the Church’s bestowing of mercy (2040); Mary as the “mother of mercy” (2677); and the works of mercy (1458, 1473, 1815, 1829, 1853, 2044; 2443-2449). You may also consider using selections from St. John Paul II’s 1980 encyclical, **Dives in misericordia** (*Rich in Mercy*) and Pope Francis’ 2015 Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, **Misericordiae Vultus** (*The Face of Mercy*). The following text is suggested for this session.*

#### **Mercy in the New Testament:**

- Blessed are the merciful (Mt 5:7)
- The call of Matthew (Mt 9:9-13) – Jesus invites sinners and desires mercy.
- Christ’s compassionate invitation (Mt 11:28-30) – Jesus invites all who struggle, suffer, and are heavy burdened to come follow him.
- The feeding of the five thousand (Mt 14:13-21) – Jesus heals the sick and feeds the hungry.
- Love of enemies (Lk 6:27-36) – “Be merciful, just as...your Father is merciful.” (Lk 6:36)
- Parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son (Lk 15:1-31) – The Father

never gives up searching for the lost and, with great mercy, rejoices in those who have returned.

- The Samaritan Woman at the Well (Jn 4:4-42) – Jesus knows the Samaritan woman’s heart and past, and yet still loves her and shows mercy and compassion.
- The Woman Caught in Adultery (Jn 8:1-11) – “Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go (and) from now on do not sin any more.’” (Jn 8:11)
- The Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1-18) – Jesus announces that he is the Good Shepherd, who welcomes in all the sheep and lays down his life for those in his care.
- Jesus forgives Peter (Jn 21:15-19) – Jesus asks Peter if he loves him three times.
- Jesus heals and cures (*note: there are many of these examples; here are a few*)
  - Simon’s mother-in-law and other healings in Capernaum (Mt 8:14-17)
  - Healing of paralytic man: “...rise, pick up your mat, and go home.” (Mk 2:1-12)
  - Large crowds needing healing (Mk 3:7-12)
  - Healing of the blind beggar on the way to Jericho (Lk 18:35-43)

**Leader:** These are a few examples of the ways Jesus shows and teaches mercy, compassion and forgiveness. Jesus transforms suffering into something redemptive by taking it upon himself on the Cross. He shows us compassion, literally “suffering with us,” in the most radical way ever – through the Crucifixion (Mt 27:33-56, Mk 15:22-41, Lk 23:33-49, Jn 19:16-37).

### **Pope Francis and Mercy**

*Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has spoken and written on the theme of mercy on numerous occasions. A collection of many of his early statements, homilies, and speeches on this topic was compiled by Loyola Press in their publication, The Church of Mercy by Pope Francis: A Vision for the Church (2014). Some highlights from the Holy Father’s writings on mercy include the following, which can also be found on the Vatican website:*

“Let us not close our hearts, let us not lose confidence, let us never give up: there are no situations which God cannot change, there is no sin which he cannot forgive if only we open ourselves to him.” *Homily for Easter Vigil (March 30, 2013)*

[vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130330\\_veglia-pasquale.html](http://vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130330_veglia-pasquale.html)

“What a beautiful truth of faith this is for our lives: the mercy of God! ...For God, we are not numbers, we are important: indeed we are the most important thing to him; even if we are sinners, we are what is closest to his heart.”

*Homily for the Mass for the Procession of the Chair of the Bishop of Rome (April 7, 2013)*

[vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130407\\_omelia-possesso-cattedra-laterano.html](http://vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130407_omelia-possesso-cattedra-laterano.html)

“How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy... Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love.”

*Evangelii Gaudium, 3.*

[vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

“Let us respond, not like those who push away people who make demands on us, as if serving the needy gets in the way of our being close to the Lord. No! We are to be like Christ, who responds to every plea for his help with love, mercy and compassion.” *Homily for Closing Mass of the Sixth Asian Youth Day (August 17, 2014)*

[vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140817\\_coreia-omelia-gioventu-asiatica.html](http://vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140817_coreia-omelia-gioventu-asiatica.html)

“We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it.” *Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, Misericordiae Vultus, no. 2 (April 11, 2015)*

[vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.html](http://vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html)

“The New Testament speaks to us of divine mercy (*eleos*) as a synthesis of the work that Jesus came to accomplish in the world in the name of the Father (cf. *Mt* 9:13). Our Lord’s mercy can be seen especially when he bends down to human misery and shows his compassion for those in need of understanding, healing and forgiveness. Everything in Jesus speaks of mercy. Indeed, he himself *is* mercy.”  
*Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Thirty-First World Youth Day 2016 (August 15, 2015)*  
[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/youth/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150815\\_messaggio-giovani\\_2016.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/youth/documents/papa-francesco_20150815_messaggio-giovani_2016.html)

Pope Francis, like Pope Benedict XVI before him (in his book, *Jesus of Nazareth*), calls the prodigal son story the parable of “merciful Father” in that the Father runs to welcome his lost son home, just as God waits on us and opens his arms when we return and lovingly welcomes us home.

Pope Francis models mercy by his actions:

- Washing of the feet of men and women in prison
- Baptizing unwed mother’s child
- Frequently welcoming and blessing individuals with disabilities, disfigurement, and marginalized people.

Pope Francis has called for a Jubilee of Mercy and a World Youth Day dedicated to mercy; some points to consider:

- A special jubilee celebration is important to remember the central teachings of the Church and the core of the Gospel through a particular lens (in this case, through mercy). Pope Francis told young people in his message for World Youth Day 2016: “When the Church proclaims a jubilee in the name of Christ, we are all invited to experience a wonderful time of grace.”
- The papal bull, *Misericordiae Vultus*, was written by Pope Francis as a guiding document for the Jubilee of Mercy. The document can be found online at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html).
- Pope Francis calls young people to reflect on this devotion as they journey into and through Poland, the “Campus Misericordiae,” or “Land of Divine Mercy.”
- The pilgrimage to Kraków is a chance to physically visit the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy, celebrating the revelation to St. Faustina Kowalska that God wants to extend mercy and compassion to the world. St. John Paul II, himself a native of Poland, handed on this particular understanding of mercy to the world during his papacy.
- Pope Francis challenges young people to engage in corporal and spiritual works of mercy in anticipation of World Youth Day in his Message for the Thirty-First WYD in

Krakow, saying “Mercy does not just imply being a ‘good person’ nor is it mere sentimentality. It is the measure of our authenticity as disciples of Jesus, and of our credibility as Christians in today’s world.”

**Jesus’ mercy for us – reflections to consider:**

- Where do we encounter Jesus’ mercy?
- Where do we see it in our lives?
- Where do we notice forgiveness?
- Where do we notice Jesus relieving us from our burdens, struggles, or pains?
- Where have we experienced God’s mercy?
- How has that mercy appeared in our lives?

**How can we help others encounter God’s mercy? By being merciful to others!**

- Receiving mercy compels us to show mercy to one another.
- It is through our experiencing of receiving Jesus’ mercy (in many ways, but especially through the Sacrament of Reconciliation) that we are strengthened in our understanding and experience of God’s love for us. This gift prepares us to share God’s love with others.

**INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Take 15 to 25 minutes to allow the participants to reflect on the catechesis. The following are questions for personal reflection:*

- Why did Jesus preach so much on mercy?
- What’s the alternative to mercy that I am called to avoid?
- What strikes me about the person of Jesus, who is merciful?
- Where am I experiencing or have I experienced Jesus’ mercy in my life?
- What does this experience of receiving mercy help me know about my relationship with Jesus?
- Where in my life am I in need of Jesus’ mercy and healing today?

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to allow participants to join together in discussion; use the questions from individual reflection time to guide the conversation in the small groups.*

## **RECONCILIATION SERVICE**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Allow approximately one hour for this prayer service. An appropriate number of individual confessors will need to be present. The tone should be solemn, with candlelight, and participants are asked to enter in silence (with soft music or chant). A central candle could be placed in a prominent and accessible place. It is also recommended to be in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The priest who leads the service uses the Church's **Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution.***

*Among the various choices permitted by that Rite, here are some suggestions:*

### **Opening Song:**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Use an appropriate song that focuses on forgiveness and mercy.*

### **Invitation:**

NOTE TO LEADER: *After the greeting, the priest might use these words to speak briefly about the importance and purpose of the celebration:*

We come together to seek mercy and to remind ourselves that we also need to be merciful. We need to show mercy to others who have harmed us. We need to show mercy to ourselves when we forget that no sin is unforgivable. We need to remind ourselves of the boundless compassion that God our merciful Father has for us and for all people. So let us pause now and call to mind the mercy of God.

### **Homily:**

*After a reading from Sacred Scripture (including those in the **Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution** or Mk 2:1-12 or 2:13-17, Lk 15, Jn 21:15-19), the priest offers a brief reflection or asks compelling questions on the Gospel reading, highlighting the great mercy the Lord has for us and reminds all that through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we can wipe our slate clean and then “go and sin no more.”*

### **For the Individual Confessions:**

- Point out to the group the locations of the priests who are available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Provide time for a careful examination of conscience, which can be directed by a priest or another minister.
- Remind the penitents to be sure to say their penance after their confession.
- All sit and pray quietly for the remainder of the hour, as others complete their confession (appropriate in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament).

NOTE TO LEADER: *Reflective music can be played in the background during this time.*

## **PEER TALK**

NOTE TO LEADER: *After a short break after the reconciliation service, a short ten-minute reflection by a young person can be given on the topic of “mercy received, mercy given.” Reflections should be personal, about a*

*time they experienced Jesus' mercy and in light of this, how they feel called to show others mercy. The focus of this talk is on our call to be merciful as Jesus was merciful. Some points for the participant to consider when developing their presentation:*

- *What is my understanding of God's mercy?*
- *When did I find myself needing God's mercy in my life?*
- *How did I experience God's mercy?*
- *What did this teach me about God's love for me?*
- *How was God's mercy experienced as healing in my life?*
- *How did this merciful encounter with God impact my relationship with God, with others?*
- *In light of receiving mercy, I am now called to be merciful to others in this way...*

#### **Suggested Scriptures for Presentation:**

- **Lk 6:36-38** – Pardon of the Sinful Woman
- **Lk 15:11-32** – The Prodigal Son
- **Lk 23:33-43** – Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.
- **Jn 8:2-11** – Has no one condemned you? ... Neither do I condemn you.

#### **INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION TIME**

*NOTE TO LEADER: After the prayer service and peer presentation, take approximately 15 to 25 minutes to allow the participants to reflect on the peer talk.*

- What struck me about the example of mercy just shared?

- Have I had a similar experience in my own life? How was it the same/different?
- What is my own understanding of God's mercy?
- Who has shown mercy to me? When have I received the compassion of others?
- I am called to be merciful, but where and how am I called to do this?
- Reflect on how receiving mercy allows us to be merciful to others.
- When I look around, whom do I notice that is in need of Jesus' mercy? How might I respond to this need I see?

#### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TIME**

*NOTE TO LEADER: Take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to allow participants to join together in discussion; use the questions from individual reflection time to guide the conversation around the small groups. Once the small groups have finished their conversations, proceed to the closing ritual and prayer.*

#### **CLOSING RITUAL & PRAYER**

**Leader:** Today, we reflected on Jesus, who is merciful and the ways in which Jesus encounters us as pilgrims of faith, loving us where we are and calling us closer to his heart of mercy. As we close, I invite you to name a word or phrase that you are taking from this experience about how you are feeling and what you are keeping with you.

**Naming of Graces:**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Light a candle and pass the candle to each person. Each person shares the grace he or she received from God today. A "grace" can include a blessing or moment of illumination or understanding.*

**Leader:** Gathering all of the graces we received today and through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we now stand renewed by Jesus' mercy and love. Let us pray together the international prayer of World Youth Day 2016, which reminds us of our journey towards Kraków in Poland, the Land of Divine Mercy:

**God, merciful Father,  
in your Son, Jesus Christ,  
you have revealed your love  
and poured it out upon us  
in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.**

**We entrust to you today  
the destiny of the world  
and of every man and woman.**

**We entrust to you, in a special way,  
young people of every language,  
people and nation:**

**guide and protect them  
as they walk the complex paths  
of the world today and  
give them the grace  
to reap abundant fruits  
from their experience of the  
Kraków World Youth Day.**

**Heavenly Father,  
grant that we may bear  
witness to your mercy.**

**Teach us how to convey  
the faith to those in doubt,  
hope to those who are discouraged,  
love to those who feel indifferent,  
forgiveness to those who have done wrong,  
and joy to those who are unhappy.**

**Allow the spark of merciful love  
that you have enkindled within us  
become a fire that can transform hearts  
and renew the face of the earth. Amen.**

**Mary, Mother of Mercy, pray for us.  
St. Faustina, pray for us.  
St. John Paul II, pray for us.**



**Third Retreat Experience**  
*Meeting Jesus,  
Who Walks With Us  
In Our Suffering*

## Third Retreat Experience: Meeting Jesus, Who Walks With Us in Our Suffering

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Throughout the World Youth Day preparation and experience, pilgrims will meet many people, including those who struggle living in poverty. There are also many international World Youth Day pilgrims who have sacrificed a great deal to travel to the host country, especially those pilgrims of impoverished nations. All people suffer to various degrees and in many different ways – for some, it is economics; for others, it is physical, mental, or spiritual; for some, it can be persecution, oppression, or violence. Moreover, none of us is free from the suffering that comes from the consequences of our sins or the sins of others.

This retreat experience focuses on an encounter with Jesus, who is with us in our suffering. With the World Youth Day theme of “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Mt 5:7), this retreat aims to help pilgrims better understand how to receive mercy and compassion from God and others, and how they are called to extend mercy and compassion to all, grounded in their call to be missionary disciples (and not simply to do good deeds). During this experience, pilgrims will hear about the healing of the paralytic, who at first is simply told by Jesus that his sins are forgiven and told to rise. Jesus was showing that his “illness” was more than his physical malady, but a deeper paralysis of mind and heart

brought about by sin. In this particular case, the scribes scoff that Jesus dares to forgive the paralyzed person of his sin. But the mercy of God heals. The person not only rises, but carries his mat all the way home. His healing shows that compassion and mercy allowed him to move beyond the sufferings of his illness. In this retreat, there will also be an opportunity to learn about the Church’s teachings on solidarity and social justice, to hear a young adult’s experience of living out the social teachings of the Church in their lives, and an optional service experience where pilgrims can place themselves directly in solidarity with and service to others. In light of these experiences and reflecting on the Scriptures, the retreat will invite pilgrims to reflect upon questions such as: What ties you down to your mat? How do you encounter those who are poor and those who are marginalized? Do you secretly think that they deserve their situation? The goals of this particular World Youth Day retreat are: (1) to help pilgrims recognize their dignity and the dignity of others; (2) to encourage pilgrims to more readily offer mercy, not blame; (3) to seek and trust in the Lord’s forgiveness of our sins; and (4) finally, to invite World Youth Day pilgrims to reflect on how God might be inviting them to serve, advocate for justice, and live in solidarity with others, especially those who live in poverty.

## **Suggested Outline**

1. **Introductions/Check-In** (15 minutes)
2. **Opening Prayer: Lectio Divina:**  
*The Healing of the Paralytic* (30 minutes)
3. **Catechetical Presentation: *Solidarity and Suffering*** (30 minutes)
4. **Personal Reflection Time** (15-25 minutes)
5. **Small Group Discussion** (20-30 minutes)
6. **Peer Presentation** (15 minutes)
7. **Personal Reflection Time** (15-25 minutes)
8. **Small Group Discussion** (20-30 minutes)
9. **Closing Ritual/Prayer** (15 minutes)

TOTAL TIME (without breaks): 3.0 to 3.5 hours

If the schedule and space permit, a Mass may open or, more appropriately, close this retreat experience. Once participants have had a chance to know and pray with each other during this experience, a liturgical celebration would be an ideal way to offer the emotions and thoughts generated in the retreat up to God through the celebration of the Eucharist. The experience of the Mass also unites those on retreat with other pilgrims across the United States and around the world in preparation for World Youth Day – as the Eucharist is our common source and summit. Closing the retreat in such a liturgy would also mirror the closing of the World Youth Day experience in Kraków with the Closing Mass with Pope Francis in July 2016 (and the Closing Masses of stateside celebrations throughout the United States taking place concurrently with the events in Poland).

### **10. Service/Justice Experience** – length up to organizers

NOTE TO LEADER: After the retreat experience or on another date in the near future following this retreat, it is highly recommended that pilgrims engage in active service or social justice work in their local community. This allows the pilgrims an opportunity to move beyond talking about social teaching and into a lived experience of showing solidarity with those who struggle and suffer, especially the poor. It should also be noted that service and justice are distinct. Charitable works are short-term emergency assistance for individuals, while social justice addresses systematic, root causes of problems that affect many people. For more about this distinction, go to: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/two-feet-of-love-in-action.cfm>.

## **OPENING PRAYER**

NOTE TO LEADER: *You will need a “prayer leader.” This could be you or one of the participants. To open the session, the official WYD theme song (in English, Spanish, or Polish, or in the language(s) of the participants) should be sung (with accompaniment) or played (via a recording). Having Bibles and a worship aid would be helpful. Before beginning, organize the participants into small groups of 3 or 4 people each (especially for the Lectio Divina exercise).*

### **Opening Hymn**

World Youth Day Theme Song,  
“Blessed Are the Merciful”

### **Lectio Divina Exercise:**

***The Healing of the Paralytic** (Mk 2:1-12)*

**Leader:** We begin our time together in prayer, reflecting on one of the first stories of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. This story is placed in the context of Jesus’ great mercy and compassion which inaugurates his mission in the world. We will read the passage a first time and allow you to reflect on it. We will read it twice more to allow you to fully enter the story. Consider also all the people in the story, their words, their actions and reactions, and of course, consider how Jesus responds.

*Read the story aloud the first time, and ask:*

Who is the person in the story, or what is the word or phrase that draws your attention as you first hear these words of Scripture?

*Read the story a second time aloud, and ask:*  
What feeling or feelings are evoked in you as you listened a second time?

*Read the story a third time aloud, and ask:*  
How does this story apply to your life right now?

*After three rounds of short small group conversation, return to the large group.*

**Leader:** This story can help us get to know how to be with others in suffering, following the example of Christ and those who accompanied the paralytic and opened the roof for him. In this Scripture passage, Jesus teaches us that suffering is not based on “karma” or divine retribution, that suffering can be a consequence of our sins or the sins of others, that suffering can be both physical but also spiritual, and that all people have dignity and worth, no matter what others may say or do, or what obstacles stand in our way.

To conclude, we ask that you call to mind anything that you are struggling with or that you are suffering from at this time. Pause for a moment to collect your thoughts. To begin the rest of our time together, we lift those struggles and sufferings to our merciful Father to whom Jesus has taught us to pray, as we all say: **Our Father, who art in heaven... Amen.**

## **CATECHETICAL PRESENTATION**

### **“SUFFERING & SOLIDARITY”**

NOTE TO LEADER: *It is recommended to use selections on solidarity in the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, in particular Part Three, Chapter Two, Article Three (“Social Justice”), 1928-1948. These include: respect for the human person (1929-1933); human solidarity (1939-1942); respect for persons and their goods (2407); and justice and solidarity among nations and love of the poor (2437-2463). You may also consider using selections from the **United States Catholic Catechism for Adults**, in particular Chapter 31 (“Seventh Commandment: Do Not Steal – Act Justly”) and its review of the Church’s social teaching (pgs. 420-428) and the 2009 encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, **Caritas in Veritate** (Charity in Truth), as well as the online collection of statements and resources for Catholic social teaching: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/index.cfm>. You might also consider inviting those involved with social justice work locally to lead, facilitate, or serve as a guest for this session.*

#### **I. What is Solidarity?**

- Being in relationship with others is the key to solidarity.
- Union or fellowship arising from common responsibilities, experiences and interests, as between members of a group or between classes, peoples.
- Walking in the footsteps of another to gain mutual understanding of the

other’s experience.

- Common life and common concerns.
- Performed not to relieve suffering, but to *understand it better*.

In the New Testament, the concept of solidarity is seen in the following ways:

- Mystery of the Incarnation: God chooses solidarity with humanity by the divine Son entering the world as a humble child, born in poverty in a people struggling with imperial rule and oppression.
- Eschatology (the last things): Heb 6:17-20; theology of St. Athanasius (and others): “God became man, so that man might become God.” God enters humanity and then enters heaven on our behalf to give secure hope for the future.
- Breaking of social convention for the sake of the Kingdom: In the Gospels, Jesus eats with sinners, tax collectors, and women (see Mk 2:15-17). Christ broke a number of social conventions of his day to be with those in poverty and to invite all in need of mercy to communion in and with him, in the one family of God.
- Eucharist: We are one Body in Christ. Christ unites where sin divides. Solidarity means that God also calls us to be in unity and right relationship with one another – with Jesus through the Eucharist and through the universal Church, our community of believers.

- Jesus walks with many who are suffering; restores their dignity and offers hope:
  - a) The woman who touches his cloak (Mt 9:20-22)
  - b) A crippled man is healed by Jesus (Mk 2:9-12)
  - c) Lepers are healed (Lk 17:12-16)
  - d) Blind man at Siloam (Jn 9:6-7)
  - e) Disciples at Emmaus, struggling with Jesus' crucifixion (Lk 24:13-35)

For those traveling to World Youth Day in Kraków, the concept of solidarity has another important connection: the Solidarity (Solidarność) movement in Poland in the 1980s, led by Lech Wałęsa. This movement had a connection to the principle of the dignity of the worker in communist-block countries, a concept echoed by Catholic social teaching (e.g., the 1987 encyclical of St. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* [The Social Concern]).

In 1984, Blessed Jerzy Popiełuszko, a Polish priest, was martyred by his country's Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to silence him for protesting the unjust treatment of workers in Poland's Solidarity movement. This definition of solidarity is a particular cultural understanding of this Catholic teaching important to the people of Kraków and the heritage of St. John Paul II.

## II. Pope Francis on Solidarity

“The Brazilian people, particularly the humblest among you, can offer the world a valuable lesson in solidarity; this word solidarity is too often forgotten or silenced, because it is uncomfortable. It almost seems like a bad word: solidarity. I would like to make an appeal to those in possession of greater resources, to public authorities and to all people of good will who are working for social justice: never tire of working for a more just world, marked by greater solidarity! No one can remain insensitive to the inequalities that persist in the world!” *Address of Pope Francis to the community of Varginha/Manguinhos, Rio de Janeiro, July 25, 2013* [vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130725\\_gmg-comunita-varginha.html](http://vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130725_gmg-comunita-varginha.html)

“Let me tell you what I hope will be the outcome of World Youth Day: I hope there will be noise. Here there will be noise, I'm quite sure. Here in Rio there will be plenty of noise, no doubt about that. But I want you to make yourselves heard in your dioceses, I want the noise to go out, I want the Church to go out onto the streets...do not cease to be the cultural storehouse of our people, a storehouse that hands on justice, hands on history, hands on values, hands on the memory of the people.” *Address of Pope Francis to young people from Argentina, Rio de Janeiro, July 25, 2013* [vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130725\\_gmg-argentini-rio.html](http://vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130725_gmg-argentini-rio.html)

In this, the Holy Father reminds young people that solidarity is messy and noisy. We choose to be uncomfortable for the sake of others, so that we might understand their needs better and inform ourselves at a deeper level about how we should live. We also choose to be bold in these acts of witness and compassion.

“Lent is a fitting time for self-denial; we would do well to ask ourselves what we can give up in order to help and enrich others by our own poverty. Let us not forget that real poverty hurts: no self-denial is real without this dimension of penance. I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt.”

*Lenten Message of Pope Francis 2014*

[vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/lent/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131226\\_messaggio-quaresima2014.html](http://vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/lent/documents/papa-francesco_20131226_messaggio-quaresima2014.html)

Pope Francis models solidarity: he chose the name “Francis” to remind himself and the Church of the call to be in solidarity with those who are poor; he walked among the barrios in Rio de Janeiro; he visited Lampedusa off the coast of Italy to be in solidarity with immigrants and refugees from Africa; he unexpectedly prayed at the dividing wall of Israel and Palestine; he kissed the feet of prisoners in Rome during the rite of the washing of feet on Holy Thursday; he called forth bishops and leaders from smaller countries; he embraced the sick and those who are marginalized in his public audiences; he released *Laudato Si'*, an

encyclical on solidarity with creation and its impact on global poverty.

World Youth Day itself is an encounter of solidarity – of standing together with pilgrims from almost every country, from developing nations and developed nations, mutually learning about the global Church through evangelization in catechesis, central events, in the encounters at meals and in prayer, and journeying together through the host country.

In his 2014 World Youth Day message, focusing on the theme and beatitude of “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:2), Pope Francis reminded the young pilgrims:

“All of us need to experience *a conversion in the way we see the poor*. We have to care for them and be sensitive to their spiritual and material needs. To you young people I especially entrust the task of restoring solidarity to the heart of human culture. Faced with old and new forms of poverty – unemployment, migration and addictions of various kinds – we have the duty to be alert and thoughtful, avoiding the temptation to remain indifferent. We have to remember all those who feel unloved, who have no hope for the future and who have given up on life out of discouragement, disappointment or fear. We have to learn to be on the side of the poor, and not just indulge in rhetoric about the poor! Let us go out to meet them, look into

their eyes and listen to them. The poor provide us with a concrete opportunity to encounter Christ himself, and to touch his suffering flesh. However... the poor are not just people to whom we can give something. They have *much to offer us and to teach us*. How much we have to learn from the wisdom of the poor! ...In a very real way, the poor are our teachers. They show us that people's value is not measured by their possessions or how much money they have in the bank. A poor person, a person lacking material possessions, always maintains his or her dignity. The poor can teach us much about humility and trust in God.”

[vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/youth/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140121\\_messaggio-giovani\\_2014.html](http://vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/youth/documents/papa-francesco_20140121_messaggio-giovani_2014.html)

### III. Tradition of Solidarity within the Catholic Church

- Mission Work: A number of young people participate in a volunteer mission organization during and after college. Volunteerism promotes solidarity among young people who give a year of their life in volunteer service and inspires them to live simply in community in the very neighborhoods that they serve.
- Catholic organizations emphasizing solidarity include: Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD); Catholic Charities; Catholic Relief Services; Just Faith; the Pontifical Mission Societies;

various diocesan social justice organizations; work camps and mission networks; religious orders (with their respective vows of poverty); ecumenical and interfaith alliances, among others.

- Seven themes of Catholic social teaching, as articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents:
  1. the life and dignity of the human person;
  2. the call to family, community, and participation;
  3. rights and responsibilities;
  4. a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable;
  5. the dignity of work and the rights of workers;
  6. care for God's creation; and
  7. solidarity.

For details, go to [www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm)

- Two Feet of Love in Action: social justice and charitable works are distinct, but complimentary ways we are called to live the Gospel. What are the systems in which we participate that need to be changed to promote greater justice in the world? [www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/two-feet-of-love-in-action.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/two-feet-of-love-in-action.cfm)



#### IV. Concluding Thoughts on Solidarity and Suffering

- Struggle is not punishment or karma, “...for (your heavenly Father) makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust.” (Mt 5:45b).
- We are called to be in solidarity and accompaniment with those who struggle and suffer.
- Being in solidarity with those who live in poverty and those who suffer: what does this mean, in light of the Gospels and Catholic social teaching?
- Indifference keeps us from fully experiencing others in the world.
- The Eucharist reminds us that we are to be in communion with God and with one another: “being the body of Christ in the world for those who need us” (St. Teresa of Avila).
- Through experiences of solidarity, we come to know one another better, but we also come to know the Lord better through the experience of seeing and hearing from one another.
- 
- The 2016 World Youth Day Theme (“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” – Mt 5:7) leads us to consider how we might show mercy to those most in need and to consistently act more merciful in our everyday lives, and to be critical of systematic injustices by criticizing the systems that keep people in poverty and in dangerous situations like racism, unfair housing practices, and food scarcity.
- Family Life: sometimes people who need mercy are right in front of us in our daily lives (our friends, our families). How might we be in solidarity with people closest to us so that we might better model solidarity and mercy as a family? In doing so, we are then able to be better attuned to the needs of others.
- Jesus is our model of solidarity. Jesus knows and understands human suffering because he became man, experienced poverty, took our sufferings upon himself. Jesus lived with those who lived in poverty and ate with outcasts (prostitutes, tax collectors, lepers, among others). Jesus was able to look beyond the events of people’s lives and offer them mercy, reminding them of God’s mercy and their own dignity.

- Global and Social Dimension to Solidarity: “Think Globally, Act Locally,” as we are called to be conscious of our everyday actions, and how they impact the world. Some people are called to serve in international missions, and some are called to serve locally. However, we are *all* called, through our baptism, to be on mission (*Ad Gentes 2*).

### **INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Take approximately 15 to 25 minutes to allow the participants to reflect on the catechesis and witness.*

- Name an experience of suffering or struggle in your own life.
- How did I experience Jesus, walking with me in this suffering experience? (Through prayer? Through friends/family helping me? Throughout pain and recovery?)
- How did Jesus suffer, in his life and in his Passion?
- How does your understanding of Jesus’ suffering and your personal experience of Jesus’ solidarity with you help you to better understand God and his mercy?
- What aspects of solidarity and justice, as expressed in the Scriptures and in Church teaching, are most compelling, inspiring, challenging, or helpful for you?
- What action steps are you considering with regards to solidarity and justice?

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to allow participants to join together in discussion; use the questions from individual reflection time to guide the conversation around the small groups.*

### **PEER PRESENTATION**

NOTE TO LEADER: *This reflection from one of the pilgrims should be personal and share about a time when he or she encountered Jesus through the works of mercy, service, and social justice. This talk could be given by someone who has lived an experience of solidarity (for instance, a former long-term volunteer, a missionary, someone who has participated in a mission trip experience, college students who have been part of immersion programs, or a young adult who works on a local level with social justice and charitable work). While not necessary, the person can also have past World Youth Day experiences (in particular during the experiences of Mission Week or Days in the Diocese in past years), as these would be helpful in connecting the work of justice and service with the World Youth Day pilgrimage. This presentation would focus on the experience of working with those who live in poverty, those who are suffering, and/or those who are marginalized in the local community of the pilgrims.*

#### **General Outline for the Presentation:**

- Describe a personal encounter with Jesus through mission work and/or social justice initiatives, and through the eyes of those who live in poverty, who are suffering, or who are marginalized.

- If applicable: What was my experience of World Youth Day and/or Mission Week and/or Days in the Dioceses? Where did we go? Whom did we meet (most especially if the encounters involved meeting young people from third world or impoverished countries)?
- Who or what inspired me to act differently – to be transformed? What did we do (especially in Days in the Diocese or Mission Week)?
- What did I learn about the Church’s mission to those who are marginalized and to promote a sense of global solidarity?
- How has my life been changed or transformed as a result of my involvement in charity or through social justice?
- Where am I today? How do I continue to live out my faith? How am I striving to be active in the Church and in society through justice and service work?
- How am I continually being called to transformation and conversion of heart?
- How is this living out my missionary discipleship?

**Suggested Scriptures:**

- Isaiah 58:1-14 – True Fasting: “This, rather, is the fasting that I wish...”
- Amos 5:7-25 – Woes against injustice: “Let justice surge like water...”

- Matthew 25: 31-46 – Judgment of the nations: “When did we see you hungry....?”
- Luke 10:29-37 – Good Samaritan: “Go and do likewise...”

**INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Take approximately 15 to 25 minutes to allow the participants to reflect on the catechesis and witness.*

- What struck you about the witness? What challenged you about his/her story?
- How are these experiences similar or different from your own experiences in life and faith?
- What might God be asking of you in your own encounters with those who live in poverty and those who are marginalized?
- Many times we are unable to provide long-lasting or even direct relief to the suffering of those who live in poverty. How does that challenge you in your relationship with God and to what should you pay attention?
- Solidarity is not service. Solidarity is an attempt to understand the life of another – to empathize, not sympathize. How might the suffering of the life of those who live in poverty relate to your own life?

## **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to allow participants to join together in discussion; use the questions from individual reflection or the following additional points for conversation. Once the small groups have finished their conversations, proceed to the closing ritual and prayer.*

- The Scriptures tell us Jesus spent much of his public ministry accompanying those who lived in poverty. Jesus continues to be in solidarity with those who live in poverty today. What strikes you about Jesus' commitment to solidarity?
- How have you experienced an act of solidarity in your own life?
- Where are you in need of solidarity?
- How might Jesus' witness help you to be more sensitive to the needs of others?
- How might you experience solidarity and being in relationship with others on the World Youth Day pilgrimage?

## **CLOSING PRAYER & RITUAL**

**Leader:** Today, we reflected on Jesus, who encountered people in need of healing, forgiveness, mercy and love in scripture. We also talked about the ways in which Jesus encounters the Church and sends us forth to be Church in the world. As we close, I invite you to name a word or phrase that you are taking from this experience about how you are feeling and thinking.

## **Naming of Graces:**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Light a candle and pass the candle to each person. Each person shares the grace he or she received from God today. A "grace" can include a blessing or moment of illumination or understanding.*

**Leader:** Gathering all of the graces we received today, we now stand renewed by Jesus' mercy and love. Let us pray together the international prayer of World Youth Day 2016, which reminds us of our journey in solidarity with the universal Church around the world:

**God, merciful Father,  
in your Son, Jesus Christ,  
you have revealed your love  
and poured it out upon us  
in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.**

**We entrust to you today  
the destiny of the world  
and of every man and woman.**

**We entrust to you, in a special way,  
young people of every language,  
people and nation:  
guide and protect them  
as they walk the complex paths  
of the world today and  
give them the grace  
to reap abundant fruits  
from their experience of the  
Kraków World Youth Day.**

**Heavenly Father,  
grant that we may bear  
witness to your mercy.**

**Teach us how to convey  
the faith to those in doubt,  
hope to those who are discouraged,  
love to those who feel indifferent,  
forgiveness to those who have done wrong,  
and joy to those who are unhappy.**

**Allow the spark of merciful love  
that you have enkindled within us  
become a fire that can transform hearts  
and renew the face of the earth. Amen.**

**Mary, Mother of Mercy, pray for us.**

**St. Faustina, pray for us.**

**St. John Paul II, pray for us.**

### **EXPERIENCE OF SOLIDARITY (optional, but highly recommended)**

After the retreat experience, take time later in the day or on separate occasion to provide participants an experience of mission and solidarity with those who are poor, suffering, and/or marginalized. Ideally, this should be an experience of immersion rather than simply a service or charity project, where being with and accompanying those who are poor and vulnerable is a high value in the pilgrimage experience of mercy. The decision to organize such an activity, which should be promoted at the retreat itself, is ultimately up to the local organizers and pastoral leaders, based on the needs of the pilgrims and the resources available in the community.

While service components are possible elements of the experience (e.g. visiting a soup kitchen, delivering meals to those in low-

income areas, visiting those who are sick and suffering in local hospitals, nursing homes, or shelters), the goal of this mission work should be focused on accompanying and immersing one's self in the experience of those who struggle. It should also be noted, however, that these acts of charity or justice should be done with respect to those individuals and communities impacted by injustice, poverty, or suffering. In addition, retreat leaders should emphasize to the pilgrims that a person's struggle (and the relief thereof) is not meant as an avenue towards advancing one's own faith journey; rather, such an experience should open a pilgrim's eyes to the struggle of others, and it can serve as an opening to continued acts of solidarity with those who are poor and those who are marginalized locally, nationally, and internationally.

**Pilgrim Blessing**  
*for World Youth Day*

## Pilgrim Blessing for World Youth Day

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In the days or weeks prior to departure, consider inviting all World Youth Day pilgrims from the local community (parish, campus, movement, or diocese) for a Pilgrim Blessing after a regularly-scheduled liturgy or a special Mass. As a sign of solidarity, it may also be helpful to include youth and/or young adults traveling internationally to Poland as well as those celebrating stateside. It is also important to include families and adult members of the broader community, as the young people are sent forth from the local Church on to pilgrimage.

Near the end of a Mass, following the Prayer after Communion, the bishop, priest, or deacon calls forth the World Youth Day pilgrims, and introduces the blessing with these words:

**Presider:** The time is growing short before you embark on the next stage of your pilgrimage. Your local community supports you in this endeavor, and we would like to continue journeying with you in spirit. I would invite you now to be witnesses as you go forward along the way.

With the members of this local Church, we will bless you with our prayers as you approach the mountaintop of your pilgrimage. Please know that you take the prayers of all of us with you.

*NOTE TO LEADER: One suggestion is that members of the local community write down their prayers on sheets of paper and give those papers to the young people at this time. If this has happened, the following may be added to the presider's remarks:*

We now entrust our prayers to you. Carry them along the way to the mountaintop of World Youth Day and pray for these intentions each day as you make the journey. Light candles or place them before the Lord at one of the shrines, sanctuaries, or churches you will visit. We entrust them now to you, for you carry the thoughts and intentions of this community.

We, here, will be praying for your journey, for safe travel, and for your spiritual and physical needs. You will remain in our thoughts and prayers wherever you may go from here today.

*NOTE TO LEADER: The leader of the group comes forward to introduce the pilgrims.*

**Leader:** For the last (*insert length of preparation here, i.e. "six months," "year," etc.*), these pilgrims have been preparing to travel to visit with the Holy Father and the global Church at World Youth Day in Kraków (and if stateside pilgrims are also present: "We also have with us those who will be celebrating World Youth Day stateside here in the United States, united in

solidarity with the pilgrims traveling internationally.”). They have prepared well and I attest that they will represent our community with great faith and humility. Therefore, we invite the following pilgrims about to embark on this journey to please come forward.

NOTE TO LEADER: *If possible, read names slowly and have them stand in front of the assembly.*

**Presider:**

All-powerful God,  
you always show mercy  
toward those who love you  
and you are never far away  
for those who seek you.  
Remain with your servants  
as they travel on this holy pilgrimage  
and guide their way  
in accord with your will.

Shelter them with your protection by day,  
give them the light of your grace by night,  
and, as their companion on the journey,  
bring them to their destination in safety.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**ALL: Amen.**

NOTE TO LEADER: *At the conclusion of the blessing, the presider turns to the assembly.*

**Presider:** Together, let us pray in solidarity with pilgrims and communities around our country with the special World Youth Day Prayer for the United States:

**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.**

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. Thérèse of Lisieux,  
patroness of missionaries and  
advocate for youth, **pray for us.**

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

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

NOTE TO LEADERS: *This prayer may conclude  
with an appropriate final blessing given by the presider.*

**Prayer Experience**  
*On the Road to Emmaus*

## Prayer Experience: On the Road to Emmaus

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A favorite Scripture passage about people on journey is the story of the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). This post-resurrection narrative takes place between two disheartened travelers who are leaving Jerusalem. While they walk along the way, they are accompanied by a man whom they do not recognize. They share with him all that they have experienced in the previous days. He listens to them, and in return, he breaks open the Scriptures to them. They are so enamored by his presence that they invite him to stay. As they share a meal together, he blesses the bread which they are about to share, and they recognize him as Jesus, the Risen One. You are invited to use the story of the Road to Emmaus as a pilgrimage prayer experience prior to or during your group's time at World Youth Day. Invite pilgrims to reflect not only upon the words of the Scripture passage, but to feel truly present to and aware of what happens along their way.

The story of Emmaus reminds us that Jesus meets us while we are on pilgrimage, too. Specifically, Jesus meets us in conversation with one another. As people walk together in pairs at or before World Youth Day, encourage them to share stories about their faith journey, their life story, their struggles, and their own encounters with Christ throughout their lives. Encourage them to trust that Jesus meets them in their

journey with one another and that Jesus wants to share his story with us as well.

This exercise can be done during a retreat prior to World Youth Day, or during World Youth Day. If it is included in the time of preparation, the pilgrim leader might consider encouraging participants to carry a full backpack and treat this time of walking as an opportunity to practice the challenging pilgrimage walks that are a part of World Youth Day, and begin to get a sense of the physical challenges that accompany pilgrimage. This exercise can also be used very effectively during the World Youth Day events, especially on the way to one of the catechetical sessions, as an evening reflection at some point during the trip, on the way to one of the central events (Opening Mass, Papal Welcome, Via Crucis), or when the group is walking to the site of the overnight Vigil Prayer Service and Concluding Mass.

*NOTE TO LEADERS: Arrange the group in pairs of two people each. It is best to do this in some random fashion, by drawing names out of a hat, or picking numbers. You may want to create small cards that have the discussion questions listed on them so that partners can remember them and refer to them more easily while walking. Read the scripture story of The Road to Emmaus together (Lk 24:13-35). Invite a member of the group to read the passage, while the others listen.*

## **OPENING EXPLANATION**

**Leader:** The story of the Road to Emmaus reminds us that Jesus meets us while we are on pilgrimage. No matter the destination, Jesus encounters us when we are on the road. Jesus meets us in our conversations with one another. Jesus meets us in our walking and in our resting. Jesus meets us when we reflect in our minds and hearts about our experiences. Most importantly, Jesus wants to meet us to share his story with us, so that it might transform us. You have each been given a partner to journey with. Take some time to walk and talk together. We invite you to share a story about your life with one another. This could be the story of your faith journey. It might be a story about World Youth Day (why you came or what you've experienced here). It could be another important story from your life. Just as the pilgrims on the road to Emmaus encountered Jesus as they walked and talked, we hope you discover Jesus' presence as you share your stories with one another.

## **CONVERSATIONS & QUESTIONS**

### **Primary Reflection Questions:**

- Remember that Jesus is always with you on the journey.
- If Jesus were walking with you, how would he respond to your stories?
- What would he celebrate with you? What would he challenge you on?
- What would he want to share with you?

*NOTE TO LEADERS: If there is time, here are some additional reflection questions for the pilgrims to consider in their Road to Emmaus journeys.*

### **Additional Reflection Questions:**

- Whom have I encountered at World Youth Day (or on the journey there)?
- Whom have I seen along the way?
- What languages do they speak?
- What songs do they sing?
- What have we learned from one another along the way?
- What gifts have we exchanged?
- Who has encountered me?
- Has anyone recognized the presence of Christ in me (or in our group)?
- How do I know that they have felt Christ present in my life, my words, or my actions?
- In what ways have I encountered Jesus throughout my time at World Youth Day (or on the journey there)? Has it been hidden or obvious? Has it given me a new perspective?
- What blessings has God placed before me on this journey?
- For what am I grateful?
- What challenges have I encountered?
- How have I responded during those difficult moments?
- Where am I being led?
- What might be next for me?

## **THE ROAD TO EMMAUS STORY**

**Luke 24:13-35**

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?"

They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive.

Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see."

And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.

As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

## **ARRIVAL AT THE DESTINATION**

In Luke's Gospel, the destination was seemingly the place where the encounter experience was shared; but ultimately, Jesus was present throughout the journey along the road to Emmaus, not just at the end.

In the same way, when your group reaches its physical destination (whether that be the overnight prayer vigil at World Youth Day or another moment in preparation for the trip or during the activities of the week), the arrival is an opportunity to share some of this experience with others. A practical way to do this is to share one way the pilgrims felt the presence of Christ in the story of another person (without going into any private details that were revealed

during the walk). Regardless of what is shared, it is important to keep the spirit of confidentiality with one's walking partner by sharing one's own feelings and thoughts, not those expressed by others (without permission to do so). It is important for leaders to remind their group of this expectation when the sharing begins at the destination site.

Looking forward, challenge the group to continue to walk with others at World Youth Day and especially in their daily lives after the trip. Encourage them to be open to hearing other people's stories, to be a listener more than speaker, and to train themselves to recognize God in the lives and moments of others, and in their own lives.

**Return Home**  
**Retreat Experience**  
*Meeting Jesus,*  
*Who Sends Us Forth*

## Return Home Retreat Experience: Meeting Jesus, Who Sends Us Forth

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The focus of this final formation experience for World Youth Day is meeting Jesus, who sends us forth into the world. This retreat should be held after the World Youth Day trip is over and all pilgrims have returned stateside.

Consider the story of the Transfiguration. The three disciples who witnessed the Lord's glory, accompanied by Moses and Elijah, would have loved to remain on the mountaintop (even Simon Peter declares, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents..." but the Gospel writers follows that by saying "But he did not know what he was saying." Lk 9:33). In the same way, while it is good that pilgrims are able to be transformed at World Youth Day, the Lord invites us to journey back down the mountain as Jesus did with those three disciples on Mount Tabor. Even more, after the Resurrection appearances to the disciples, Jesus sends forth the Twelve to spread the Good News – yet even those disciples needed to be reminded to move onward (after the Ascension of Jesus, "While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?'" Acts 1:10-11a). So, too, are those who end their World Youth Day experience: they need reminding to move onward and become missionary disciples.

This retreat attempts to aid leaders in encouraging their pilgrims to go forth from World Youth Day. The program begins with an opening prayer in which Jesus commissions his disciples to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." (Mt 28:19). The pilgrims are invited to begin reflecting on where they feel God is calling them to go out and share the Good News. Before moving into concrete action steps, however, retreatants are invited into a sharing of the graces they received. This prayer experience invites participants to deepen their awareness of all God's gifts of the World Youth Day experience. From naming the graces of the experience, participants then turn to discerning what actions steps they feel called to take both as individuals and as a group so that the mountaintop experience of World Youth Day is brought back into daily life. Through a guided reflection process, the facilitator helps the group discern all the ways the World Youth Day experience can bear fruit locally. A suggested outline for this retreat experience, with anticipated timeframes for each section, may include the following elements, found on the next page. (NOTE: this outline does not include breaks; however, these are advisable to add, but can be done at the discretion of the retreat organizers based on the needs of the participants and other circumstances such as space and schedule.)



## **Suggested Outline**

1. **Re-Gathering/Check-In** (15 minutes)
2. **Opening Prayer:**  
**The Great Commission** (15 minutes)
3. **Catechetical Presentation: *Jesus Who Sends Us On Mission*** (15 minutes)
4. **Examen of the World Youth Day Experience** (45-55 minutes)
5. **Discernment Overview** (15 minutes)
6. **Personal Reflection Time** (15-25 minutes)
7. **Small Group Discussion** (20-30 minutes)
8. **Large Group Processing** (20 minutes)
9. **Closing Ritual and Commissioning** (20 minutes)

TOTAL TIME (without breaks): 3.0 to 3.5 hours

If the schedule and space permit, a Mass may be used to open or, more appropriately, close this retreat experience. Once participants have had a chance to know and pray with each other during this experience, a liturgical celebration would be an ideal way to offer the emotions and thoughts generated in the retreat up to God through the celebration of the Eucharist. The experience of the Mass also unites those on retreat with other pilgrims across the United States and around the world who are following up their World Youth Day experience – as the Eucharist is our common source and summit. The word Mass comes from the root word meaning “sent,” an ideal thing to remember in this retreat experience dedicated to World Youth Day pilgrims being sent forth into the world.

## **OPENING PRAYER**

NOTE TO LEADER: *You will need a “prayer leader.” This could be you or one of the participants. To open the session, the official WYD theme song (in English, Spanish, or Polish, or in the language(s) of the participants) should be sung (with accompaniment) or played (via a recording). Having Bibles and a worship aid would be helpful.*

### **Opening Hymn**

World Youth Day Theme Song,  
“Blessed Are the Merciful”

### **Opening Prayer**

#### **Leader:**

+ In the name of the Father,  
the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, we gather today in thanksgiving,  
to celebrate and to remember  
our journey as pilgrims on World Youth Day.

May the graces you gave us on our pilgrimage  
deepen within us as we return home.  
We ask that your Holy Spirit guide us  
as we are sent forth into the world.

We pray for the courage to go out  
and “make disciples of all the nations.”  
We ask all of this in your name.

**ALL: Amen.**

## **Scripture Reading**

(Mt 28:16-20 – *The Great Commission*)

### **Reader:**

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:  
The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the  
mountain to which Jesus had ordered  
them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but  
they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said  
to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has  
been given to me. Go, therefore, and make  
disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the  
name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the  
Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I  
have commanded you. And behold, I am with  
you always, until the end of the age.”

### **Silent Reflection**

**Leader:** Take a moment of silence to allow the  
words of Christ to penetrate our hearts.

*After some time of silence:*

### **Reader:**

Let us reflect on these words of Pope Francis:

I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a  
missionary impulse capable of transforming  
everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways  
of doing things, times and schedules, language  
and structures can be suitably channeled for the  
evangelization of today’s world rather than for  
her self-preservation. (EG 27)

**Leader:** “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...Behold, I am with you always...”

These are the words we hear from Jesus.

Two powerful reminders: First, that Jesus is with us always, and second, that we are urged and called outward to carry on his work of building the Kingdom and spreading the Gospel. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, shares with us his dream for a missionary impulse for each of us who have encountered God in a powerful way. With these words in mind, we invite you to reflect on the following questions:

- How do I feel the presence of Christ with me today?
- How am I feeling a “missionary impulse” now after World Youth Day?
- What challenges me most about Christ’s call to “go and make disciples”?
- To whom, to where, to what, and when is Christ asking me to go forth on mission?

*After some time of personal reflection:*

**Leader:** With one other person, share one or two insights from your personal prayer.

*After a few moments of reflection with one other person:*

**Leader:** Gathering all that is in our hearts with expectant faith, we now turn to God and pray together the international World Youth Day prayer for 2016, which has been our guide for the past (months/years) in preparation for our pilgrimage. We pray this now with eyes focused ahead:

**God, merciful Father,  
in your Son, Jesus Christ,  
you have revealed your love  
and poured it out upon us  
in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.**

**We entrust to you today the destiny  
of the world and of every man and woman.  
We entrust to you, in a special way,  
young people of every  
language, people and nation:  
guide and protect them as they walk  
the complex paths of the world today and  
give them the grace to reap abundant fruits  
from their experience of the  
Kraków World Youth Day.**

**Heavenly Father, grant that we  
may bear witness to your mercy.  
Teach us how to convey  
the faith to those in doubt,  
hope to those who are discouraged,  
love to those who feel indifferent,  
forgiveness to those who have done wrong,  
and joy to those who are unhappy.**

**Allow the spark of merciful love  
that you have enkindled within us  
become a fire that can transform hearts  
and renew the face of the earth. Amen.**

**Mary, Mother of Mercy, pray for us.**

**St. Faustina, pray for us.**

**St. John Paul II, pray for us.**

## **CATECHETICAL PRESENTATION**

### **“Jesus, Who Sends Us Forth”**

NOTE TO LEADER: *This should be a very brief presentation. Most of this retreat will be focused on sharing of the World Youth Day experience and how this calls us outward. Nonetheless, it is important to offer the participants some insights on what it means to be sent on mission.*

#### **Jesus sends us forth**

- We have come to the end of the *mountaintop portion* of the World Youth Day pilgrimage (in Kraków or stateside). Yet our journey is not complete. Just as the journey of the disciples on Mount Tabor did not end at the top, the best is yet to come. In a sense, our true pilgrim journey is just beginning.
- Today we gather to share what we have learned along the way about Jesus, our fellow pilgrims, and ourselves and what the Lord is calling us to do next in our lives.
- We gather to remember and share our experiences of what it was like walking with Jesus, with each other, with the universal Church, with the Pope, and with those who do not share our language, our culture, or our experiences.
- Jesus called his disciples to walk with him, not only up Mount Tabor, but throughout Galilee and ultimately, to Jerusalem. As his disciples gathered around him on those first-century roads, Jesus taught them how to encounter others, how to be merciful,

and how to be with those who suffer. Jesus modeled the way to live abundantly – rooted firmly in the Father and led by the Holy Spirit, with regular prayer and reflection.

- Before his Ascension, Jesus gave very clear directives to his disciples to “Go, therefore, and make disciples...” (Mt 28:19), “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel” (Mk 16:15), and “...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses ...to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
- In all of these, there is clear call to action on the part of the disciples.

#### **What about us?**

- With your fellow companions at World Youth Day, you have nurtured good relationships, in much the same way that the disciples who accompanied Jesus and one another nurtured their relationships through dialogue, storytelling, and witness.
- You have spent months preparing for your mountaintop experience at World Youth Day. Consider what you were preparing for over the past year. Was it to see the Pope? Was it to travel to a foreign country? Was it the events of World Youth Day? Or were you preparing for something more (and long-term) beyond the international pilgrimage trip itself?

- Like the disciples on Mount Tabor, you have had a transfiguring experience of faith; but remember that, as Jesus accompanied the disciples up the mountain, he was not preparing them for the events at the summit only, but for the continuing work of discipleship and mission yet to be done after the return journey was complete.
- Pope Francis has called all Christians to be on fire with the “joy of the Gospel” through a daily encounter with the Lord, and thereby to be missionary disciples. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Holy Father says: “The Church which ‘goes forth’ is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice...Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy...Evangelizers thus take on the ‘smell of the sheep’ and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance.” (24)
- Inspired by Pope Francis’ words, then, our missionary impulse must be to support each other in our work, to be joyful and merciful, to immerse ourselves in the lives of the poor, the lost, and the marginalized, to encourage those who struggle, and to be

patient with one another, all for the sake of Christ and his Gospel.

- So now what? That is the question that we will delve into today. In light of all that we have done, received, and learned, what is Jesus inviting each one of us to do? How are we being called to go forth and bring the Good News? How are we to become missionary disciples?
- Before we go further, we invite you to reflect more thoroughly on the experiences you have had at World Youth Day – to find the voice of God calling to you through the moments along the journey up to, atop, and down from the mountain.

### **EXAMEN OF THE WYD EXPERIENCE**

**Room Set-Up:** Small groups of 3 to 4 each, with chairs in circles

**Supplies:** Pen and index cards and/or paper with reflection questions

**Leader:** God has blessed us abundantly with our pilgrimage to World Youth Day. I invite you to name, celebrate, and remember all the ways Jesus broke into our lives in our formation process and our time together on World Youth Day. Get comfortable in your chairs. I will invite you to reflect on a question within the silence of your hearts, and then write notes of whatever comes. Then, I will invite you to share with your small group.

NOTE TO LEADER: *The leader will prayerfully read a step, then pause for individual silent prayer and for participants to capture their thoughts, and then inviting them to share in small groups. It should also be noted that there is no sharing after step one; however, there can be sharing after steps two through five. Remember to take time to do this. Do not rush through this exercise, but let this be an intentional holy sharing that builds community and helps participants name all they received so they might discern action.*

### **STEP 1: Asking for Guidance**

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you model for us the way to live as men and women of faith. You walked with us throughout this World Youth Day experience. It was you who accompanied us along the way and who continues to journey with us now. Give us your eyes to see, your ears to hear, and your heart to understand all that we received and learned from you. Within the silence of your own hearts, ask Jesus for help seeing your experience as he sees it.

*Pause for silent prayer time*

### **STEP 2: Thanksgiving**

**Leader:** What are you thankful for? As you look back on your World Youth Day experience, what are the gifts you notice? For which personal encounters are you most thankful? What did you hear that brought you joy? What experiences are you thankful for? I invite you, within the silence of your hearts,

to thank Jesus for all the gifts you have received. If you feel called, write down those gifts. After a few moments of silence, I invite you to share the gifts you received with those in your small group.

*Pause for a silent prayer time, and then invite participants into small group sharing.*

### **STEP 3: Presence**

**Leader:** Looking back on our time together and on World Youth Day, where did you feel Jesus' presence? Through which people did you encounter Jesus? Through which experiences did you feel an increase of faith, hope and love? Where did you experience mercy? Where did you experience Jesus who is with us on the journey and in our suffering? What messages, words, prayer experiences or scriptures caught your attention? In the silence of your hearts, talk to Jesus about all the ways you encountered him through the people you met, through the universal Church, through his gift of mercy. What is Jesus saying to you in all of these? After a few moments of silence, I invite you to pick one moment that was meaningful to you and share about it with your group.

*Pause for a silent prayer time, and then invite participants into small group sharing.*

#### **STEP 4: Absence**

**Leader:** As you look back over your time and experience of World Youth Day, where did you struggle to see Jesus at work in your experiences? Was there an encounter with someone that did not show Jesus' mercy? Was there a message you heard that left you feeling restless? Was there an experience that left you with a decrease in faith, hope and love? Speak to Jesus honestly about those experiences. What is Jesus saying to you about these experiences? Is he waking you to how you might have acted or not acted? Is he showing you an area in need or a place of surrender? After a few moments of silence, I invite you to pick one thing and share that within your group.

*Pause for a silent prayer time, and then invite participants into small group sharing.*

#### **STEP 5: The Future**

**Leader:** In light of all you have received, what might Jesus be inviting you to do next? What concrete actions is Jesus inviting you to take in terms of deepening your relationship with him? What concrete actions is Jesus inviting you to take in terms of bringing the World Youth Day message of "blessed are the merciful" home? How might this group support each other? What might this group do together to bring the message of mercy outward? How might you be called to be a

missionary disciple? Notice what arises within your heart and speak openly to Jesus about your hopes, dreams and fears in responding to these calls. After a few moments of silence, share with your small group any commitments you are looking to make going forward.

*Pause for a silent prayer time, and then invite participants into small group sharing. After the small group conversations have ended, address the large group.*

**Leader:** Gathering all gifts, graces, and prayers together, we stand together, ready to look ahead, supported by the prayer Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven... Amen.**

#### **DISCERNMENT OVERVIEW**

**NOTE TO LEADER:** *This time will be spend helping participants learn about discernment, especially in relation to what God is calling them to after the World Youth Day mountaintop experience. It might be helpful if someone from a religious community or vocations work could assist with this process, especially those skilled in spiritual discernment. Leaders may use the following text and process, unless an outside leader has a process they would like to share with the group.*

**Leader:** As we gather back together, we are going to move into a discernment process to discern what Jesus is inviting us to do as we move forward. Discernment plays a significant part in the Christian experience and helps us to reflect deeply on what God is calling us to do.

It is a slow, reflective process instead of quick decision-making. Here is one method that can help us discover what God is asking of us after the mountaintop World Youth Day experience.

*Pass out personal reflection sheets and give participants a time to gather back in small groups. The following steps can be incorporated into a handout for the participants; in the next few moments, though, the leader(s) should walk the participants through the discernment process.*

### **STEP 1: Pray**

- Spend a few moments in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to help you know what you are being invited to do in light of your World Youth Day experience.
- What comes to mind as possible steps you can take in terms of your own prayer life and deepening your relationship with the Lord?
- What do you notice as possible invitations from God to spread his message of mercy? To build the Kingdom?
- What ideas, thoughts, and creative suggestions do you have as possible invitations for your World Youth Day group to do together?

### **STEP 2: Gather Information**

- What data or information do you need to gather in terms of being able to

move forward to act on any one of these ideas?

- Who needs to be part of your support team in turning these ideas into concrete actions?
- What concrete steps are needed to move forward to turn one of these invitations into reality?
- What tools can help you/the group weigh out your decisions? Examples include a pro/con list, a discussion with a mentor or spiritual director, or a particular devotion or prayer.

### **STEP 3: Come to a Decision**

- Do you feel ready to make a decision, or do you need to spend more time in prayer?
- If you are ready to act, what is the action God is inviting you to take?
- What might need more time in prayer?
- Commit to the decision and let the Lord affirm it in prayer.

### **STEP 4: Act**

- What steps is God inviting me to take after I leave here today?
- What do I see as fruits from my decision?
- How will I know if this was the right choice for me or not?
- What steps can the group take towards bringing the message of mercy home?



## **INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Take approximately 15 to 25 minutes to allow the participants to reflect on this discernment process.*

## **SMALL GROUP REFLECTION TIME**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to allow the participants to reflect together on this discernment process, sharing what ideas or thoughts came to the surface in the reflection time.*

## **LARGE GROUP PROCESSING**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Gathering everyone back into the large group, you can help guide the process.*

**Leader:** Now we bring some of the fruits of our prayer time and small group time to the large group. We invite you to capture the action steps you feel called to take on large post-it notes. Put one idea on each post it note.

Then come forward when you are ready and post your notes around the room under the following categories: Individual Steps, Group Action Steps, Local Community Steps, and Collaborative Steps.

*Give participants time to post their notes. When finished, the leader again addresses the group.*

**Leader:** Here are some questions to consider:

- What are we hearing and noticing?
- What are common themes we notice?

- What are common needs?
- What are common ideas?

NOTE TO LEADER: *If necessary, move post-it notes around common themes or areas of focus. Pick one theme/idea/commonality and invite discussion about how this might come to fruition. Have someone take notes. Listen closely to see if there are specific tasks that can be assigned to move something forward.*

*As time allows, work through the many ideas to help move things from an abstract idea to the concrete. Once discussion is complete, close out the discernment process with a commissioning service that concludes the retreat.*

## **CLOSING RITUAL/COMMISSIONING**

NOTE TO LEADER: *Assign a leader and a reader for this closing service. In addition, you will want to have a small token or gift for each of the participants. This can be a cross, candle, symbol of a saint (i.e. seashell for St. James, lily for St. Kateri Tekakwitha), prayer card, or something from World Youth Day.*

*This commissioning piece may also be done during or at the conclusion of a Mass, if the retreat concludes with a liturgy and if the local pastor finds this appropriate within the context of the Mass.*

**Leader:** We close our time together today listening to the words of Jesus before he ascended to the Father and before the Apostles received the Holy Spirit:

**Scripture:** Jn 20:18-22

**Reader:**

In the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [Jesus] said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit.”

**Leader:** Jesus sent his disciples forth. “As the Father sent me, so I send you.” We are sent out also just as the disciples were once sent. The first disciples were not alone. They went out with the gift of the Holy Spirit. We, too, are not alone as we go out and bring Jesus’ message of mercy and love to the world. The Holy Spirit is with us guiding our actions and steps. We invite you to come forward and receive this small gift as a reminder that you are not alone as you return home and that you are being sent forth by Jesus.

*Invite people up one by one and hand them the small gift. After they come forward and receive their gift, invite them to respond to the following:*

**I commit to bring Jesus’ message of mercy to (insert their goals/mission).**

**Leader:** Go now and be missionary disciples, like the first Apostles, and set the world ablaze with the joy of the Gospel and the mercy and love of Christ, rooted in your hearts and minds. Let the lessons and the spirit of World Youth Day always guide your steps in the years to come.

*NOTE TO LEADER: If the commissioning takes place in the context of a Mass, the presider can offer a special blessing to the participants to send them on their way. Otherwise, a simple blessing can be offered by a priest if one is present at the retreat or commissioning service. This final portion of the retreat can conclude with the singing of a hymn on mission, commissioning, or ministry, or with the 2016 World Youth Day theme song, “Blessed are the Merciful” (in English, Spanish, Polish, or whatever language is most appropriate to the local community). This prayer and final blessing concludes the World Youth Day retreat experiences.*

## **Conclusion and Final Thoughts**

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Prayer and retreat experiences are so very important to the pilgrim journey. Without taking time for prayer, reflection, and contemplation, a pilgrimage simply becomes a travelogue. Using some or all of the prayer experiences contained in this guide will go a long way towards equipping World Youth Day participants with the spiritual tools to make the trip and to integrate the lessons, inspiration, and experiences into their daily lives. Preparing for and reflecting on their experience will encourage them to become missionary disciples, proclaiming mercy, love, and faith to their local communities for years to come.

Leaders, too, need time for rest. Jesus would rise early before dawn to pray (Mk 1:35), and in other instances in the New Testament (Mt 14:13, Lk 5:16), he would take some time away from his public ministry for prayer and rejuvenation. In much the same way, pilgrimage leaders should spend time on retreat for their own spiritual growth and to pray for strength in the leadership of others.

While these World Youth Day retreats and experiences can offer leaders a wonderful opportunity to pray alongside pilgrims, it is important for a pastoral leader to find the time intentionally to go off by themselves (or in the company of their peers and/or with other ministers and pastoral workers) for one or more half-day, day-long, or overnight retreats. These can include staff retreats, guided meditations, preached or personally-guided and silent retreats, through the spirituality of saints and religious communities, with rituals and devotions, in a monastery or retreat center, or on one's own pilgrimage journey locally.

World Youth Day is not a one-time event, but a moment on a mountaintop that gives fuel for the spirit of the pilgrims throughout the remainder of their lives. These retreats, then, can help to prepare young people for an incredible journey, and remind them that the ultimate destination of this or any pilgrimage is Jesus Christ and eternal life with him in Heaven.

## NOTES

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