

WORLD YOUTH DAY USA



Stateside Pilgrimage Leaders Guide

in preparation for World Youth Day 2016



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

World Youth Day USA

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Pilgrimage
Leaders Guide**

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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 Stateside Pilgrimage Leaders Guide

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Introduction to the Guide

Congratulations! You have decided to host a stateside pilgrimage for World Youth Day. You have embarked on an adventure of planning, organizing, budgeting, visioning, negotiating, packing, and general busyness. You have also embarked on a process of helping young Catholics encounter Christ and walk in solidarity with fellow disciples around the world. The goal of this Stateside Leaders Guide is to assist in making the first part less daunting and the second part more powerful. In 2013, when Pope Francis offered World Youth Day (WYD) pilgrims a special blessing (officially speaking: a plenary and/or partial indulgence), he not only included those who were traveling to Rio de Janeiro, but also those “who are legitimately prevented” from traveling and those who would be following the activities “in spirit...via television or radio, or always with appropriate devotion, by the new means of social communication... wherever they may be during the above mentioned gathering.”¹ By this act, Pope Francis reminds us that the World Youth Day pilgrimage is not limited to those who have the means to travel internationally, but to all who journey with a faithful heart. Now more than ever, in the age of global media and

social networks, a new kind of pilgrim has emerged – and stateside gatherings are a real and powerful way to tend the spirit of those new pilgrims in our midst. The Stateside Leaders Guide begins with a reflection on the realities of *what it means to be a pilgrim* both as the one who goes to WYD and as the one who participates from afar. It also looks at the opportunities and pitfalls engaging in pilgrimage in the digital age. The second section shares insights on *the role you play* as a stateside pilgrim leader, particularly encouraging you to go beyond organizer to witness. The third chapter is presented as a workbook, designed to aid you in the process of *planning your stateside pilgrimage*. It includes checklists and space for brainstorming. This chapter also includes several templates of stateside celebrations. The guide ends with both the theory and the practice of engaging in *effective follow-up gatherings* with stateside and international pilgrims. It joins the experiences of the two groups by renewing the call to solidarity, witness, and going forth as missionary disciples. May God bless your plans, bless you in your work, and pour abundant blessings upon those who gather with you as part of World Youth Day 2016.

¹ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/tribunals/apost_penit/documents/rc_trib_appen_doc_20130709_decreto-indulgenze-gmg_en.html

Pilgrimage in the Advent of Technology

The modern age of technology has transformed the communal experience of faith in ways that we could never have imagined thirty years ago when St. John Paul II held the first international gathering of young people in Rome (in what would eventually be called “World Youth Day”) in 1984. The advances since then have significantly reshaped global events and the manner in which these events are shared.

In the early twentieth century, events such as the Olympics or the World Cup were the platforms for large international gatherings, but only a relatively few lucky individuals experienced them. These were events that newspapers and periodicals were vying to report on, later to be joined by the nightly newscasts on radio and then television. With technology in peoples’ homes, these special moments in history were no longer limited to the few but now included families and friends who would gather and share the excitement of the experience close to real time. This “viewing party – the virtual experience – became possible.

In recent years, virtual attendance at an event such as World Youth Day has become nearly ubiquitous. No longer restricted to cable or television media, World Youth Day activities

can be live-streamed through a computer, while simultaneously downloading images of the Pope on a phone, and reading the latest WYD blog post from the local diocesan seminarians on a tablet. Just sign up on Twitter or Instagram, and World Youth Day groups will send virtual pilgrims a flood of photos and quotes from the day's events. Facebook and Google groups can help filter out a lot of the noise and direct one’s focus on one diocese, religious movement, or parish that is closer to one's heart. If that isn't enough to make someone feel like they are almost there, one might get to video chat with a friend while the Pope is addressing the crowd, presuming enough bandwidth via Wi-Fi or a 4G hotspot has been secured. The use of technology in service to the Faith is truly remarkable. It has opened up a tremendous possibility to Catholic leaders. More people now will likely participate in the next World Youth Day through digital media and local gatherings than those who will physically go to Poland. The challenge and opportunity for dioceses, parishes, and religious groups is to find effective ways, as they invest resources and energy in the pilgrims who travel to the international celebration of World Youth Day, to invest also in the community from which those pilgrims are sent.

Putting Pilgrimage in Context

When pilgrims go on pilgrimage, where are they coming from? What is going on in that place? What are the blessings and burdens of that community from which they came?

These are not the questions that are usually asked. The main question usually is, “Where are they [the pilgrims] going?” The stories so often told about a pilgrim are the stories of the pilgrim's journey *to* someplace. But any good storyteller will remind her audience, “That is not the *full* story.”

All stories start *from* some place, and that place has an impact. The story is not over until the hero returns home, back to his or her community. What can tend to be overlooked is *that community*. The pilgrim does not exist in isolation but is surrounded by an abundance of relationships rooted in the community from which he or she comes.

The Olympics clearly demonstrate to us the role of community. Much of the media coverage surrounding the Olympics is the stories of the athletes and their relationships and experiences back home. We hear the stories of the high school coach who never got rich, but always inspired others to do their best, or maybe the sweetheart back home who is under hardship or the parents who sacrificed everything to make this moment

possible. In every city or village who has an Olympian going to compete, everyone there is invested and glued to the television, radio, or news reports during the international competition, wherever that might be.

The story of the pilgrim without the context of the community is incomplete. A million people gather for World Youth Day carrying flags of their countries—the communities from which they came. A full pilgrimage encompasses not just getting from point A to point B. Pilgrims come *from* a community, and journey *as* a community, to encounter the Lord, so that they can *return transformed* to the community from which they came and transform that community.

A pilgrim is only a pilgrim when put in context of the community.

Our modern culture often gets lost in the role of the individual. However, deep within the Judeo-Christian tradition is a notion called *corporate identity*. The Jewish people, like many ancient people, saw the world through the lens of the community first, not the individual; what happened to one, happened to all. The Jewish people held three annual feasts in Jerusalem. These feasts were also pilgrimages, as the Hebrew word “hag” is translated both as feast and pilgrimage. In

the book of Deuteronomy, there are many instructions on how these feasts and pilgrimages should take place. “Three times a year, then, every male among you shall appear before the Lord, your God, in the place which he chooses: at the feast of Unleavened Bread, at the feast of Weeks, and at the feast of Booths” (Dt 16:16). Although the men alone are instructed to go up (to Jerusalem or to wherever the Lord commanded), it was understood that the feast and pilgrimage was for the entire community – and the notion of corporate identity was firmly established.

Certainly, practical considerations played a role. The Jews in Galilee would have a much harder time going to the feast/pilgrimage than those in Judea. It would be difficult to leave behind homes and cattle unprotected and unwatched. Having a corporate identity meant that every Jew participated in the feast—vicariously through the men who went up to Jerusalem and directly by celebrating in their homes. For example, in the Passover feast, the homes of all Jews were free from leaven. The fasting from leaven was not just practiced by those who went to Jerusalem.

The significance of pilgrimage, community, and corporate identity is made most clear in the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ and his founding of the Church. Without the

community of the Church, there is no discipleship. The Church, a community of missionary disciples, is a pilgrim people. In Baptism, we become pilgrims on a journey, following in the footsteps of Christ by being joined to him through the Church, the Body of Christ. In and through the Eucharist, the salvific work of the Lord is not only celebrated but is actually and continually made present and participated in. As the source and summit of the Church’s life, the Eucharist is the Church’s, and thus the disciple’s, regular “pilgrimage” in a powerful way.

In this full context, the Christian pilgrimage (like the journey of World Youth Day) is a special and physical expression of *being the Church*, reminding pilgrims that their mission in the world has a greater destination *beyond* the world: in the communion of saints united with the Triune God.

In the Church, pilgrimage and community are inseparable. Not only is the community the backdrop on which the pilgrim’s journey to World Youth Day takes place, but it is an experience for the entire community. Those who cannot go are invited to participate with the same sense of *corporate identity* that is found in the Judeo-Christian notion of a festival/pilgrimage and fulfilled in the Eucharist. They are invited to a solidarity that

is meaningful, not marginal. The stateside gathering, viewing parties, parish prayer services, digital pilgrimages, and even joining in a practice such as sampling food particular to the host country during the World Youth Day “feast” are ways that Catholics in the United States can truly be part of the story of World Youth Day, and be transformed in the process. Everyone, then, can be a pilgrim on this journey.

The Digital Age: Knowing the Pitfalls

There is a general eagerness on the part of those who minister to younger generations – those who live largely in the digital universe – to jump into the latest technology with the same eagerness of a missionary who wants to know and utilize every intricacy of the culture where he or she is sent. The work of the New Evangelization calls for a use of variety of media to reach people, especially youth and young adults.

Media researchers may differ slightly on specifics, but unquestioned is the abundant consumption of media by youth and young adults. Reports suggest that the average young

person watches four and a half hours of television per day² and as much as three and a half hours on social networking.³ Through multiple platforms, young people consume as much as 3,000 advertisements per day⁴ and will view 200,000 acts of violence in the media by the age of 18.⁵ Ten years ago, advertisers spent in excess of 17 billion dollars on marketing to teens per year.⁶ Imagine what that number is now.

The statistics are staggering and the impulse of the concerned parent or ministry is to counteract the onslaught of secular media by adding sacred media to the flood. However, more is not necessarily better; rather, better is better. Throwing out more content for consumption without regard to its impact is not the answer and can yield negative, even if unintended, consequences.

Researchers out of Humboldt University and Darmstadt’s Technical University in Germany conducted studies demonstrating that “Facebook envy” is a reality plaguing those who use social media abundantly. For example, a subject viewing images on social

²

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/09/business/media/young-people-are-watching-but-less-often-on-tv.html?_r=3&hpw

³ <http://www.marketingcharts.com/online/social-networking-eats-up-3-hours-per-day-for-the-average-american-user-26049/>

⁴ *Goodman E. Ads pollute most everything in sight. Albuquerque Journal. June 27, 1999:C3*

⁵ Senate Committee on the Judiciary. Children, violence, and the media: a report for parents and policy makers. September 14, 1999.

⁶ James McNeil quoted in Horowitz, B. (2006, November 22). Six Strategies Marketers use to Make Kids Want Things Bad. USA Today, p. 1B

media might respond negatively because she sees “happy” people while she herself is not. Emotions might erupt over a friend’s good looks, jealousy over another’s vacation pictures, or apathy towards another’s success. In fact, the research showed that 36% of respondents in the survey demonstrated negative reactions to what they saw on Facebook, including sadness, envy, boredom, frustration, loneliness, anger, and so forth.⁷

Leaders of dioceses, parishes, and religious groups who desire to push out content about World Youth Day to their constituencies through any form of media should be cautious. An unintended consequence of simply relaying the story may be that one-third of the viewers react negatively or with no engagement. It is not enough to push out content.

Posting and sharing content does not necessarily yield community and connection. The key is the underlying relationships and how such are nurtured. Digital media, at its best, connects us to people and to community. Social media is successful specifically because it is built upon relationships. Dioceses, parishes, and religious groups can transform the experience of all

those participating in World Youth Day from afar and via technology by striving to cultivate real relationships and a real encounter with the Lord ... and that is the power and potential of stateside celebrations.

WYD is meant for the world

St. Paul says: “For as in one body we have many parts, and all of the parts do not have the same function, so we though many, are one body in Christ, and individually parts of one another.” (Rom 12:4-5)

The Church *is* the Body of Christ. What happens for part of the Church happens for all the Church. There are different roles, but what affects one affects all. What happens to one, happens for all, as the members of the Church are “individually parts of one another” in Christ. This is the *corporate identity* mentioned above.

While World Youth Day is a particular celebration encouraging the participation of young people and young adults, it is an event of and for the whole Church, truly meant for the world, not just for those who can travel there. Those who physically go have a great opportunity and responsibility. Their mission

⁷ http://warhol.wiwi.hu-berlin.de/~hkrasnova/Ongoing_Research_files/WT%202013%20Final%20Submission%20Krasnova.pdf

is to be ambassadors of solidarity—pilgrims—not privileged tourists or vacationers. Their responsibility to the Church is similar to those who in the book of Deuteronomy were directed to “go up to Jerusalem.” They go up on behalf of the whole community, united as one Body in Christ.

With World Youth Day, so much can get placed on the pilgrim’s role that the community’s role is sometimes neglected. How can dioceses, religious communities, and parishes foster solidarity among physical pilgrims and stateside communities? The key is preparation and intentionality. Below are some suggestions to enhance the preparation for and intentionality around the World Youth Day celebration.

Prior to World Youth Day, there should be opportunities for all young people, and even the Church at large, to prepare for the festival. Past participants (“World Youth Day alumni”) can share wisdom and insights in large assemblies or small groups with new pilgrims. Young adults who are not going can share with the pilgrims who are going “messages of hope” or “burning questions about faith.” Through this exchange, the pilgrims can then better fulfill their role as ambassadors. Plans can be made by both traveling pilgrims and those remaining stateside. For example, gifts

to give pilgrims from other countries can originate from the ideas and ingenuity of those who remain. Promoting “virtual pilgrimages” should be encouraged with special consideration of how to do it well and in a spirit of solidarity.

As the pilgrims go forth, the community can gather to bless them. *The Book of Blessings*, the *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers* (published by and available through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) and the USCCB’s World Youth Day USA website (www.wydusa.org) have prayers that can be used or adapted. This can be done publicly as part of the community’s liturgy or in a special prayer service including the local bishop or pastor. Local media can be invited to cover the event. Media should be prepped with the talking point that that these pilgrims are going *on behalf of the community and with the community’s blessing*. At the gathering, or even separately, community members can write petitions on small pieces of paper that they entrust to the internationally-bound pilgrims to bring to a shrine, a church, or special place on the journey to or at World Youth Day. Prayer partnerships between international and stateside pilgrims can be organized. There can also be an intergenerational aspect to the exchanges, remembering that World Youth Day is for the whole Church, not just youth

and young adults. Inclusion of parents, children, and older members of the community serves to foster a greater sense of community and eliminate divisions. All of these actions strengthen the bond between the pilgrim and the community and help to shape the *corporate identity* of the pilgrims, that community role that should be part of every pilgrimage of faith.

During the international World Youth Day events, social media can be promulgated widely. It is important for leaders to encourage people to make the virtual pilgrimage in a spirit of solidarity and unity. Physical pilgrims can push out blogs, posts, and tweets thoughtfully and with prayerful intentionality, remembering to pray for the community back home. Encourage them to tell the story and let the technology help them. Create a press release and try to make contact with reporters of major television stations and papers that will cover the event. Reporters always want to cover the “local story” and viewers want to see it.

It is also possible to initiate a direct connection using technology to create a meaningful exchange between people, even over a distance. This potential exists at World Youth Day. Stateside pilgrims can experience catechetical sessions, the Pope’s speeches,

prayer vigils, and the concluding Papal Mass over streaming video. Advancements in technology have made the use of Skype or FaceTime through Wi-Fi and wireless hotspots a way to connect pilgrims back to the community in real time. Imagine and plan how this can affect stateside gatherings and coordinate the effort to make it happen.

Promoting stateside pilgrimages and events is a dynamic way to decrease the isolation and “Facebook envy.” Having something special planned for stateside pilgrims (an experience distinct from and unique from the international pilgrims overseas) can further heighten the experience of the local pilgrim (in other words, just as international young people will get to see the Pope in person, what unique thing can stateside pilgrims experience?). Gathering with other stateside pilgrims is a great way for those young people to feel part of something special. When an individual is with others, it is easier to “feel” the *corporate identity* spoken about before. It helps to be in the presence of others who organically hunger to connect with the experience. There is a camaraderie and joy in being together to watch the international World Youth Day events that consuming a few quotes on Twitter or watching alone in one’s house doesn’t quite match. The bonding and experiences locally, while distinct from

the international experience, can be memorable in their own ways.

Finally, what happens when the stateside activities are finished and the international pilgrims come back home? The hope of the community is that the stateside pilgrim has not just been watching television and the international pilgrim has not just had a vacation and snapped a few pictures.

The hope is that all these pilgrims have had an experience of encounter and transformation so that they might transform their communities. Such an experience is a grace, but it is also difficult to achieve if there is no intentionality on the part of the community, the leadership, and the pilgrim upon their return. Evenings of reflection where the stateside and international pilgrims report back to the community or offer gifts to the community are ways of making a lasting impression on others and help solidify the impact of World Youth Day.

Imagine the simple action of a hundred pilgrims each bringing ten rosaries that were blessed in a sacred shrine and then giving them out to 1,000 people as an invitation to deepen their prayer life and solidarity with others.

What is being asked of leaders and planners is to see the bigger possibility of what World Youth Day can be. Since 1984, over half a million young people from the United States have been impacted directly by physical participation at World Youth Day. How many came back to communities without the mission or permission to work for the transformation of the Church? How many youth and young adults, who did not have the opportunity to travel to World Youth Day, were never engaged or transformed themselves by such experiences? The community is and must be integral to the pilgrim's story. In more recent times, digital media has increased the access of non-pilgrims to engage the experience, but left to chance and mere consumption, there is no guarantee this will bear fruit. It may even garner a negative result. The choice to be made is in how to engage those who remain, especially utilizing the benefits that technology offers.

At times, people of faith come off the mountaintop of a pilgrimage, retreat, or mission trip and don't know what to do next. They may forget that the community, founded in the Eucharist, is the source of the pilgrim's journey and, ultimately, their final destination. What is done to cultivate this communal understanding will help determine if the

resources invested in an endeavor like WYD serve only individuals (and in particular, individuals with the means to travel) or serve the whole Church community, both the pilgrims who travel to the international celebration and those who remain stateside.

Conclusion

World Youth Day is a celebration meant for the whole Church. The challenge is to invite the entirety of the Church to truly celebrate it, rather than only those able to travel.

As technology and media have progressed from television to Skype to Instagram (and beyond), the ability to connect more people to the celebration has increased readily.

This in turn has awakened leaders of dioceses, religious communities, and parishes to understand more fully that this international festival is not just for the few, but is intended for the whole faith community.

The young people who celebrate stateside are not an afterthought, but can be pilgrim travelers too. Technology and information sharing has allowed the understanding of “pilgrim” to expand in a certain sense, and at the same time, to connect us back to our ancient heritage of feast and pilgrimage.

Stateside and international pilgrims will have distinct experiences for World Youth Day, both special in their own way, but they can be united as one community – and integrate the entirety of their parishes, dioceses, campuses, workplaces, movements, and groups.

It should be noted, though, that not everyone participating stateside and internationally are pilgrims by definition.

Not everyone who travels abroad can call themselves a pilgrim (i.e. a European backpacker is just that); neither is the one who simply watches the World Youth Day activities unfold on television or through social media. Pilgrims must be intentional in their journey as they seek transformation and closeness to God.

The international traveler does have a unique role to play as they physically make their way to World Youth Day and that should not be taken from them; nonetheless, the stateside pilgrim must also engage in movement in whatever way they can, as they have a distinct role to play in the communal and ever-growing World Youth Day phenomenon of the Catholic Church.

The consideration for planners is how to extend beyond the internationally-bound pilgrims to the whole community, with *corporate identity*, as they participate in the pilgrimage with the pilgrims – and to tend the spiritual journey of youth and young adults who celebrate the World Youth Day activities in their local areas in a way that is connected to the larger community, but also developmentally appropriate.

Recovering the historical relationship between pilgrim and community helps focus the planning and put it in its proper context. The recovery of the pilgrim/community relationship is not only a benefit to the Church in the short term but is essential in an age where consumption of media holds significant hazards if left unguided and disconnected. Social media envy, and its resulting isolation, are just part of the division that can widen the rift between those who can and those who cannot attend the festival overseas. Intentional work to cultivate the pilgrim/community relationship can strengthen the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, and draw her members into deeper solidarity across the world.

The responsibility, then, rests with the pastoral leaders of Catholic communities across the country (and even around the world) to intentionally draw more people into the experience of World Youth Day – and open wide the doors to Christ.

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

Coordinating a successful stateside gathering for World Youth Day can be daunting for anyone. With all the logistics to worry about and the responsibility of spiritually accompanying a cohort of disciples, any type of World Youth Day gathering can fill ministry leaders with great anxiety. Yet despite this, pastoral leaders continue to step forward and take on the mantle of a pilgrim leader, stateside or internationally, in communion with the Holy Father.

'Do not be afraid!' When we go to proclaim Christ, it is he himself who goes before us and guides us. When he sent his disciples on mission, he promised: 'I am with you always' (Mt 28:20). And this is also true for us! Jesus does not leave us alone, he never leaves you alone! He always accompanies you.⁸

Pope Francis preached these words to over three million people gathered on Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro and millions more around the world who participated in World Youth Day 2013. He gave everyone a mandate to live their encounter with Jesus Christ, trusting that he accompanies and sends

on mission. The encounter, the accompanying, and the sending do not just happen on their own. As Pope Francis said, Jesus Christ “goes before us and guides us.” The choice to engage in the encounter, to be accompanied, and to be sent is ours, though. It is never forced; it is a free choice in response to an invitation from Jesus Christ.

The invitation from Jesus Christ comes in many ways. The ministry of the stateside pilgrimage leader is invaluable for assisting that invitation.

These leaders serve World Youth Day pilgrims in a unique and privileged way, by helping open the door to Jesus Christ who encounters, accompanies and sends those who participate in the experience. God has called many ministry leaders to the important service to be co-workers in his vineyard. The pilgrimage leader, then, is engaged in the evangelizing work of the Holy Spirit in and through the Church that sends the baptized on mission to encounter, accompany, and send others. Pictures, mementos, and memories are not the only things that should be left from the experience of stateside and

⁸ Pope Francis, Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 2.

international WYDs. Rather, a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ and his Church who accompanies the pilgrims and sends them forth to “go and make disciples”⁹ (Mt 28:19) should be the first and foremost goal of any World Youth Day pilgrimage leader.

ENCOUNTER

There are a variety of encounters that take place in a World Youth Day pilgrimage, stateside or otherwise: with Jesus Christ, with the Church, with other pilgrims, and with anyone who shares the Catholic faith or not. Each encounter is an opportunity and experience of growth in life in Christ. The pilgrim leader helps to make all those encounters possible, memorable, and lasting.

An Encounter with Jesus Christ

Pope Francis invites “all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them.”¹⁰ What does it mean to have a “personal encounter with Jesus Christ”? It means experiencing him in the Sacraments, in the Scriptures, in prayer, in others, and in service. This encounter is at the core of who we are as Christians. As Pope

Benedict XVI stated, and Pope Francis repeated in his apostolic exhortation: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”¹¹

World Youth Day is an opportunity offered by the Church to all young people to encounter Christ. Many people have talked about their experience of World Youth Day as “life changing” for them. They experience Christ and his Church in a unique and special way. Leaders need to recognize this opportunity for themselves and for the pilgrims. Sometimes, though, it may seem challenging to some to even consider an encounter with Jesus Christ. As Pope Francis notes, utilizing the often-used language of Pope Benedict XVI, the encounter is really the developing of a “friendship” with Jesus.¹² Friendship is something that people can easily understand, even if it is with God. The pilgrimage leader can assist pilgrims in developing that relationship for the first time or deepen the young person’s friendship with Jesus Christ. In order to do that, though, the pilgrim leader needs to have and continually renew their own friendship and moments of encounter with Jesus Christ. If this is not

⁹ Mt 28:19.

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 3.

¹¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 1; cited by Pope Francis in EG, no. 7.

¹² See *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 266.

happening, then it is very difficult for the leader to be able to assist someone else. Pope Francis in his 2015 World Youth Day Message gave a few ways to renew this encounter daily: through participation in the Sacraments, particularly Eucharist and Reconciliation, reading Sacred Scripture, personal prayer, and serving those in need, particularly the poor.¹³ Ministry leaders are encouraged to tend their relationship with Christ on a constant basis. Once they commit to doing this regularly, they can then invite their pilgrims to do the same before, during, and after the time of pilgrimage.

An Encounter with the Church

The encounter with Jesus Christ is always done in and through his Church. We are a community of faith that is diverse, international, and multicultural. The leader will need to be prepared for this encounter with the Church Universal and her chief shepherd, the Holy Father.

The Pope, who is Vicar of Christ, “is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.”¹⁴ World Youth Day—both internationally and stateside—is a very public opportunity for

young people to witness the unity of the Church in the midst of its diversity.

Who has not been moved by the scene of hundreds of thousands of young people from all over the world together with the Holy Father in silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament? All ministry leaders need to be prepared and help prepare pilgrims for this encounter with the Church. The preparation can begin with the stateside pilgrimage leader learning more about the variety of cultures in his/her local community. Reading, asking questions, and participating in Masses of different cultural groups can assist in this preparation. Learning more about the diverse spiritual lives of the people of one’s diocese is critical in being able to authentically in celebrate and share that experience as part of a stateside celebration.

An Encounter with Fellow Pilgrims

The stateside pilgrimage leader may not physically encounter many of their pilgrims until the day of the celebration. However, this does not mean that a leader cannot help prepare stateside pilgrims prior to the event. Opportunities for learning and reflection can be a regular part of pre-event communications as well as integrating catechesis in social media

¹³ Pope Francis, Message for the 30th World Youth Day, 3.

¹⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, 32, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 882.

and on websites in the parish, diocese, or other settings connected to the local celebrations. The pilgrim leader can also engage with youth or young adults who are assisting them in the development of the stateside activities; while it may not be all the pilgrims, the ministry coordinator can deepen the encounter with young leaders, enabling them to accompany their peers during the event. Forming these relationships in advance of the stateside celebration can not only benefit the young people, but also the overall experience of the leader.

An Encounter with Others

The time of pilgrimage, whether stateside or international, is also a time of encounter with others along the way. The others encountered will be from a variety of backgrounds and life situations. Some of them (including friends, families, and active members of the Church community) will be open to encounter with the leader and with pilgrims, while others (including distant friends and acquaintances, vendors and secular partners, news media, and the general public) will be indifferent at best and hostile at worst. The important thing in all of these encounters for the young people is to be constantly welcoming, loving, and hospitable – truly witnessing “the joy of the Gospel.” Pilgrim leaders can assist them by

being aware of their own encounters with others, as well as by supporting the young people through challenging interactions. The encounters – with Christ, the Church, other pilgrims, and the many others along way – will often lead to continued encounters far beyond the time experienced at World Youth Day. On a practical level, social media, email, letters, and reunions provide means to continue the connections made there. On a deeper level, those encounters and a more mature understanding of encountering Christ and the Church help to support the growth of faith and encourage one another to be of service to the Lord, to the Church, and to the whole world.

ACCOMPANIMENT

Pope Francis says: “The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other. The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.”¹⁵

A pilgrimage leader is not simply an organizer, but one who spiritually accompanies a community (and not just the young people,

¹⁵ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 169.

but their families and friends and anyone in the community praying for and connected with the stateside and international pilgrims). Furthermore, the leader is not accompanying pilgrims by him or herself. Jesus Christ, fellow pilgrims, the pope, and others encountered along the way are also accompanying them. Added to this, the leader is one who is also on the journey with others in the group and witnesses a relationship with God. Leaders themselves are pilgrims.

As Pope Francis said, “Although it sounds obvious, spiritual accompaniment must lead others ever closer to God, in whom we attain true freedom.”¹⁶ Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, teaches that good spiritual accompaniment includes what might be called growth-inducing acceptance and evangelizing service.¹⁷

Acceptance and Challenge

None of us is completely or fully-grown in our relationship with Jesus Christ and our neighbor. We are all in need of on-going growth, but often we need others we trust to show us some of the things we need to work on. The pilgrim leader can offer acceptance of another person, but in a way that challenges that person to a deeper relationship and

alignment of life with Christ. Pope Francis warns that we cannot truly know the “person’s situation” before God from “without.”¹⁸ This means that a compassionate listener can challenge another person to greater spiritual growth. Pope Francis says that the “The Gospel tells us to correct others and to help them grow on the basis of a recognition of the objective evil of their actions (cf. Mt 18:15), but without making judgments about their responsibility and culpability (cf. Mt 7:1; Lk 6:37).”¹⁹

The leader can keep this very careful balance through personal recognition of one’s own sinfulness and need for growth in life in Christ. Everyone is in need of the mercy and love of God; a profound awareness of this fact should be an important and meaningful experience during a pilgrimage.

All who experience the stateside World Youth Days will come with their own struggles, sinfulness, and personal frustrations. Sometimes it is openly shared, and sometimes not. Good leaders recognize this and can accompany these young people through their presence, invitation, and encouragement that can lead pilgrims to a greater alignment with the Gospel.

¹⁶ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 170.

¹⁷ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 171-173.

¹⁸ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 172.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Evangelizing Service

When a pilgrim experiences the witness of compassion and acceptance, this often leads to a desire to do the same for another person. The mercy and healing experienced in Christ strengthens both the pilgrim and the leader to evangelize and serve. As the Holy Father said, “Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow.”²⁰

From its start, the international World Youth Day has offered participants an opportunity to be evangelized and to evangelize. This is no different for the stateside World Youth Day pilgrimages. Leaders and pilgrims embark on the journey with the hope that they will have a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ and others. Often they experience personal transformation, reconciliation, and renewed life in Christ. This cannot be kept to oneself.

The leader and pilgrims accompanying one another are “missionary disciples”; they are both followers of Christ (disciples) and sent by him (missionary). In baptism, we become disciples, followers of Christ, and Christians accompanying one another in and through the

Church to deepen this discipleship, and to follow the Gospel. Those who are baptized as infants have this choice made for them.

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

Effective ministry leaders witness this discipleship in all that is said and done on the pilgrimage journey – from simple email communication and announcements prior to and during the event to answering the same question from the pilgrims for the fiftieth time. It is a service to the pilgrims, one that is freely given for the sake of Christ and the call to serve those he has placed before us.

The experience of pilgrimage and the encounter with the pilgrims and others will also help the leader grow as a disciple. A service that all can give to each other on pilgrimage is living discipleship in a full and intense way, witnessing through word and especially deeds the joy found in life in Christ.

²⁰ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 172.

SENDING

Pope Francis asks us: “Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us to everyone. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent. The Lord seeks all, he wants everyone to feel the warmth of his mercy and his love.”²¹

The role of the leader continues on even after the events of World Youth Day come to an end. For those going to Kraków, this experience includes the long journey back to the United States. For those celebrating World Youth Day in the United States, it includes recognizing that even the short journey home comes after an experience of encounter with Christ and others at a stateside event. The journey does not end, though, when the pilgrim arrives back to their parish, home, workplace, or campus. Instead, it continues onward because all pilgrims are sent forth and called to live as missionary disciples.

²¹ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, no. 1.

²² Pope Francis, Meeting with Young People from Argentina, XXVIII World Youth Day, July 25, 2013.

The leader assists, equips, and accompanies all pilgrims in this act of “coming down the mountain” so that they might come to a deeper understanding of their experiences and how they can live the encounter with Jesus in and through his Church among their peers, and in their daily lives.

Continuing the Pilgrim Journey

At World Youth Day, the Church puts its trust in the young. WYD pilgrims need to be trusted that they will make the type of “noise” that Pope Francis called them to do at the last gathering in Rio de Janeiro.²² He challenged young people to assist the Church in “going out into the streets.”²³ The theme of World Youth Day 2016 is “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”²⁴ Leaders can prepare pilgrims to live mercy more fully in their lives after the pilgrimage experience, especially through works of mercy, charity, and justice and through depending on the Lord’s mercy, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance.²⁵

The pilgrim journey is a lifelong one that might include additional World Youth Day experiences, possibly even being a pilgrimage leader in the future. A leader for this World

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Mt 5:7.

²⁵ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2237-2449.

Youth Day can identify others who may serve well as future leaders. World Youth Day leaders have been called by God for this service, often through the invitation of another. Now the leaders are called also to do the same for a younger person, inviting them to take on the mantle of leadership.

The lifelong pilgrim lives the encounter with Jesus Christ in daily life. Gathering stateside and international pilgrims after World Youth Day can help all young people share and integrate their experiences and, ultimately, build upon them. For example, many World Youth Day pilgrims are also discerning their vocation in life. The leader assists in this discernment process by not only witnessing to one's own vocation in life, but by also encouraging pilgrims to consider the vocation of marriage, consecrated life, or priesthood. On a practical note, it might involve good conversations during the journey and hosting a gathered session in the weeks or months following World Youth Day that helps youth and young adults explore the notions of vocation and discernment.

Living the encounter with Jesus Christ also means being of service, which evangelizes others. Pope Francis teaches that

“evangelizing means bearing personal witness to the love of God, it is overcoming our selfishness, it is serving by bending down to wash the feet of our brethren, as Jesus did.”²⁶

Most young people want to be of service to others, but often do not know how. The pilgrim leader can assist youth and young adults in reflecting on what ways they can be of service to the Church and to those in need in the world, particularly the poor and by providing opportunities or pointing to opportunities to serve. This is our way of showing the love of Christ to the world. The leader can witness to the fact that “to love means to serve and service increases love.”²⁷

Sending Forth

The actual World Youth Day gathering, whether it occurs overseas or in various places throughout the United States, will ultimately come to an end. Therefore, the leader needs to *send forth* those who gather, but not simply by dispersing participants at the end of the gathering. People have changed during the time of pilgrimage due to the various encounters and the accompaniment, even if they do not fully perceive or understand it.

Similar to the dismissal at every Mass, stateside pilgrims need to “go, glorifying the

²⁶ Homily for the Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 3.

²⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, “Meeting with Volunteers of the XXVI World Youth Day, August 21, 2011.

Lord” by their lives.²⁸ As Pope Francis confidently told millions of pilgrims as they prepared to leave Rio de Janeiro in 2013, Jesus “not only sends us, he accompanies us, he is always beside us in our mission of love.”²⁹

The pilgrims have followed the leader on pilgrimage and, hopefully, encountered Jesus Christ who accompanied them on the journey. This is the life of the disciple, the one who is sent. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two, he had them take little on the journey, beyond trust in him (cf. Lk 10:1-12). They returned to him joyfully telling stories of all that was done in his name (cf Lk 10:17-20).

Jesus Christ continues to do the same today. Both the leader and the pilgrims are not only disciples, but they are sent on mission – they are “missionary disciples.”

Living as Missionary Disciples

When he spoke to the volunteers at the end of World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Pope Francis said “the most beautiful service we can give as missionary disciples” is “to prepare the way so that all people may know, meet and love the Lord.”³⁰

Just as the leader and the pilgrims have encountered Jesus Christ, so they have a mission to assist others in having such an encounter or deepening their relationship with him. St. John Paul II, the father and patron saint of World Youth Day, explained this dynamic very well when he said, “our personal encounter with Christ bathes life in new light, sets us on the right path, and sends us out to be his witnesses.”³¹

The response to the personal encounter as a witness sent by Jesus Christ into the world is called living as a “missionary disciple.”

This term captures a reality which is central to the work of the New Evangelization as the Church moves more fully from maintenance to mission.³² Pope Francis uses the term very often in his preaching and catechesis and explains it clearly in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. *Mt* 28:19). **All the baptized**, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the

²⁸ *Roman Missal*, Dismissal.

²⁹ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 1.

³⁰ Pope Francis, Meeting with Volunteers of the XXVIII World Youth Day, July 28, 2013.

³¹ St. John Paul II, Message of the Holy Father on the Occasion of the XVII World Youth Day, July 25, 2001.

³² See XII Ordinary Synod of Bishops (2012), Proposition 22.

faith, **are agents of evangelization**, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. **The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized.** Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. **Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples."**³³

Bringing Christ to others (as a missionary disciple) compels one to know and live the faith. Being catechized does not simply mean *knowing* the faith; it means also *witnessing* to it in our lives. Ongoing adult formation in the faith is a dynamic process that continues to take place throughout our life.

Additionally, growth in faith is not done alone; rather, it is the work of Christ within us

and the relationship that we have with him nurtured through prayer. Leaders are called to be regularly engaged in these efforts (ongoing formation, witnessing to our faith) if they are to model them for pilgrims.

The parish is a regular place where leaders and pilgrims are both nurtured by Christ through the community of faith, where they can grow in Christ through the sacraments, and where they can encounter Christ in those around them, especially in the poor and the suffering.

Yet leaders and pilgrims cannot remain within the comfort of the parish understood narrowly within its buildings. They (and any Christian for that matter) need to move outward to others and assist them in encountering Christ.³⁴ Leaders and pilgrims are encouraged to look beyond their parish boundaries and buildings to find more settings where their call to missionary discipleship can take root and flourish.

Missionary disciples are sent to not only preach, but to *heal* (see Lk 9:2,10:9). The world is in need of so much healing—in need of life-giving love. All the baptized can and must be bearers of love. The baptized share in the mission of Jesus Christ as priest, prophet, and king.³⁵ Faith is not meant to be kept to

³³ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 120. Emphasis added.

³⁴ See *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 121.

³⁵ Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 10; 31; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 783-786.

oneself or locked in church; instead, it is meant to be compassionately shared with all. Good leaders embrace their role to heal the woundedness of the pilgrims in their care. The pilgrims themselves can experience this healing ministry from their leaders – and ideally, be sent to heal those around them in the future – from their friends and families who struggle or are wounded to the larger society and community where they study, work, and live their young adult lives.

Conclusion: Be Not Afraid

Understandably, it can seem overwhelming to be a stateside pilgrimage leader once we recognize all the ways God calls us to effective leadership and missionary discipleship – and to create a memorable and holy space for pilgrims to have an encounter with God, with the Church, and with others.

Trying to live and lead this mission can be frightening. Yet Christ continually reminds us, as he reminded the first missionary disciples: “Do not be afraid...” (Mt 28:10) The World Youth Day experience, with its massive size and participation of lay leaders, priests and religious, the bishops, and the Holy Father himself, reminds us that we are not alone on this journey as leaders.

Pilgrimage leaders should know that they are united as missionary disciples across the globe – from those leading pilgrims to the global celebration in Kraków to those organizing stateside and digital experiences in the United States to international Catholic leaders planning local events taking place in parishes and dioceses on every continent.

In solidarity with those leaders, and in service to Christ, who sends us, we gain our strength for the work ahead of us.

As Pope Francis told the vast crowd of pilgrims and leaders in Rio de Janeiro as they were about to embark on a mission of service in the world (and which can be applied to the work of the stateside leader today):

Jesus did not say: “One of you go”, but “All of you go”: we are sent together.

Dear young friends, be aware of the companionship of the whole Church and also the communion of the saints on this mission. When we face challenges together, then we are strong, we discover resources we did not know we had.³⁶

³⁶ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 2.

Hosting a Stateside World Youth Day Pilgrimage Process and Sample Formats

The following is a process for planning a successful stateside World Youth Day event.

It is divided into four sections:

- (1) Setting a Vision,
- (2) Foundational Elements,
- (3) Preparation Checklist, and
- (4) Sample Schedules.

The USCCB Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth is grateful to the Archdioceses of Chicago in Illinois and Washington, D.C. and the Dioceses of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, for their assistance in the development of several of these suggested plans. A short abbreviated guide is also available that outlines the planning process in a simple “who, what, when, where, and how” format for planners to consider.

SETTING A VISION

Before event details and logistics are set, it is essential to ask the question: “Why are we hosting a stateside pilgrimage?” Below are a few questions and tools for answering this.

Target Audience

In order to identify the goals and objectives for your stateside celebration, you need to first identify the **primary and secondary audiences to which your event is focused.**

The target age range for World Youth Day internationally is from 16 to 35; however, for stateside celebrations, these parameters can fluctuate depending on the location, leadership, and intended goals. For many events, it makes sense to narrow the focus to include a primary audience and a secondary audience (as well as audiences that will not be included). One example of this could be:

Primary Audience: Catholic emerging adults ages 18-25 in a particular parish, diocese, city, or geographic region

Secondary Audience: Catholic young adults ages 25-35 in that area, plus those from neighboring parishes, dioceses, or locations

Audiences Not Included: Catholic youth ages 13 to 17 in high school from any area

Note that the demographics listed here serve only as an example and are not indicative of who should be included in any type of stateside celebration. For certain communities, high school-age youth could be the primary audience; while in others it might be limited to young adults in their late 20s or 30s. Cultural and language factors may also play into the identification of target audiences for certain parish, diocesan, or apostolic communities.

Clarifying a primary and secondary audience assists your planning team in remaining faithful to the objectives for the event and is especially important for an event like World Youth Day for a number of factors:

- There are distinct cultural and ethnic expectations for who qualifies as “youth” at an international level (in the United States English-speaking culture, this can be junior high and high school students; in Latino culture, “jovenes” means mid-teens through marriage; in Europe, the term generally covers 16 to 35).
- Many young adults and middle-age adults who have had positive experiences at a past World Youth Day event (either stateside or international) may have a desire to participate in some way.
- Nationally, dioceses have different age groups that they include for international and stateside celebrations.
- Diocesan and parish leaders may want all young people in their communities (from small children through those in their late thirties) to be able to participate in an event like this, whether or not they are within the intended audience of World Youth Day or the local organizers.

- Considerations will need to be made if families and older (age 35+) members of movements, parishes, or dioceses should be able to participate in the event, and in what roles they are allowed to play. Because of such intergenerational factors, additional attention will need to be paid to child and youth protection measures.

Our Audiences:

PRIMARY

SECONDARY

Vision of Success

Now that you have identified the target audiences for your event, you have the opportunity to cast a vision for the celebration. Who do you really want to be there? What is the primary goal for an activity like this? How does this goal (or goals) connect to the overall international vision of World Youth Day and the larger vision of evangelizing and inspiring the young Church?

What do you hope will be accomplished by the end of the event? What do you hope that others, including the participants, will say when speaking about this event in the future? It is important to try as much as possible not to hold yourself to past expectations or event experiences, but to look forward to the possibilities that lie ahead (some realistic, some with greater risk, and some that are really exciting, even if not immediately attainable). This is your moment to dream.

Finish the sentence

A successful stateside World Youth Day event and pilgrimage looks like...

Objectives & Performance Indicators

The *vision of success* for your defined audience and outcomes leads you to identify a number of factors or objectives that will most allow you to accomplish the vision.

Determine three to four objectives for the pilgrimage both tangible (e.g. increase the visibility and awareness of World Youth Day across every parish in our diocese) and intangible (e.g. foster a culture of encounter with Christ, the larger and local Church, and each other among participants.) Afterward, identify a few *Key Performance Indicators* (KPI) that are both specific benchmarks of success and tools for measuring progress. These KPIs are also action steps that ensure that work is being done toward the objective.

Remember—it is preferable to dream big!

EXAMPLE OBJECTIVE:

Increase the visibility and awareness of World Youth Day across every parish in our diocese.

SAMPLE KPI #1:

Create a parish resource packet for the World Youth Day week (late July) with prayers of the faithful, bulletin articles, website copy, and pulpit announcements to publicize the stateside celebration and to be distributed and used at parishes that week.

SAMPLE KPI #2:

Have increased participation in our local stateside World Youth Day celebration from prior years (if applicable), or a greater number of participants than from previous large-scale youth or young adult ministry events in the parish, diocese, or region.

SAMPLE KPI #3:

Execute a social media campaign that engages over 200 young adults from nearby parishes and that invites those men and women to send in stories, comments, or short videos about Pope Francis, Poland, and the WYD theme on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Objectives for the Stateside World Youth Day Pilgrimage 2016

Objective 1:

KPI 1:

KPI 2:

KPI 3:

KPI 4:

Objective 2:

KPI 1:

KPI 2:

KPI 3:

KPI 4:

Objective 3:

KPI 1:

KPI 2:

KPI 3:

KPI 4:

Event Summary

Now that you have defined a target audience, your vision of success, and some objectives to implement that vision, write an event description (three to five sentences) of what you want this event to look like. This statement will help you tell the ‘what’ of the event and effectively share the event vision with others. This summary can be tweaked to be used as content on your website, social media, bulletin announcements, and so forth.

Event Description

Stateside Pilgrimage Theme

What themes are you working with that will help shape how you execute your event vision? Along with the official international World Youth Day theme, there may be themes, principles, or values that are important to your parish, campus, movement, or diocese that you may want to incorporate into this local celebration. Themes and principles like this are important, as they give shape to the activities and a focus for any speakers, artists, liturgical ministers, or event leaders. There may be significant events in the life and history of your local community that are important to include. Weaving together local themes with the international World Youth Day theme can give the stateside celebration a more distinct feel from the overseas events in Kraków.

Stateside Themes

World Youth Day 2016

International Theme:

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy (Mt 5:7)

Your Particular Theme(s):

Collaborators

Who else should be around the table?

Whether you are planning a parish, regional, or diocesan stateside pilgrimage, consider what significant people, groups, ministries, organizations, schools, etc. are important to collaborate with from the beginning of your planning (these can include leaders in and volunteers from youth, campus, and young adult ministries, vocation ministries, evangelization and outreach, family life ministries, cultural diversity ministries, etc.). Good collaboration is not bringing on other groups once the vision has been set and the plans have been made; instead, good collaboration means, from the beginning, others in leadership share in the development of an activity. The same would go for a stateside event. Successfully planning and executing an event like this would not be possible without the shared investment and support of local collaborators.

However, it is important to stay focused on the primary audience for your event while identifying collaborators. Collaboration can help to shape a more informed vision for the event, but do not let it widen the scope so much that the focus of it becomes diluted.

It is important to clarify what role you would like others to play. For example, are you looking for people to collaborate and to vision with you or partner groups/sponsors to assist with specific logistics of the day, though not be involved in visioning? Be sure to clarify from the beginning of your planning what the expectations are for each person or group with which you are collaborating. Such collaboration is a great way to provide a richer and more diverse celebration as well as to share the load of the financial, volunteer and promotional resources needed. It also helps to add different strengths to your team.

Collaborators

Planning Team

Component Assistance

Logistics (food, sound, lighting, etc.)

Additional Collaborators

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

Once the goals, theme, and collaborators are established, it will be important to look at the basic components of the stateside program.

Understanding Your Audience

While you have identified the primary and secondary audiences for your stateside event,

it is important to clarify the specific qualities about your audience including the age-range, language preference, financial resources, and so forth. If you have already targeted a very specific demographic, this step simply allows you to make note of that here. The following are critical questions you may need to answer before structuring your event.

Participant Ages:

- 1) Although internationally WYD includes young people ages 16-35, does that age range make the most sense for your community?
- 2) Will the event be geared to youth (under 18), young adults (18-39), or both? If the latter two, how will you honor the *adult* aspect of young adulthood?
- 3) How will you communicate this age range in your publicity materials? Will you use a hard and fast age range (e.g. 18-35, 16-21) or more general and inviting language (e.g. high school students, college students and young adults, 20s and 30s)?

Language Preference:

- 1) What language(s) does the primary and secondary audiences speak?
- 2) What is their preferred language of prayer?

Additional Characteristics:

- 1) What resources of finances and free time does the audience have?
- 2) What prayer preferences and experiences do the audiences share?
- 3) What is the level of knowledge of faith among the audiences?
- 4) What aspects of the international World Youth Day event would the audiences identified be most interested in or willing to engage in?

Date and Time

Next, based upon the objectives you wish to accomplish for your stateside celebration, determine the best day and time for your event. When determining this ask:

- What is the time difference between your local celebration and the international celebration of World Youth Day? How does this time difference affect the date and time for your event?
- Since World Youth Day technically lasts *multiple days*; will you have multiple smaller events that span the week of World Youth Day, or a one-day or half-day event during the closing weekend?
- Will you have an overnight option as part of your event to mirror the overnight vigil experience of World Youth Day?
- Since World Youth Day takes place during the summer months, what summertime community factors do you need to be aware of when choosing a particular date and time for your event? For example: what travel, holidays, local festivals and events, the weather, sunrise and sunset times, already-existing parish or diocesan events, and staff vacations should you consider before finalizing the date/time?

- If you plan to develop a pilgrimage or service project as part of your program, how will that affect the timing of your stateside celebration?
- Will you develop non-gathered digital opportunities for young people to engage the World Youth Day events locally in their homes or on their mobile devices?

See the sample schedules listed in this guide for additional ideas on how to structure the event(s) and to respond to the questions listed here. These sample schedules are not set in stone, but can be adjusted to the particular needs and preferences of your planning team and the specific site and timeframe you have chosen to host the stateside celebration.

Our Stateside World Youth Day Celebration(s) will occur on:

Date and Time:

Local Factors to Remember:

Budget

Before final decisions about the event details are finalized, it is essential to know the budget within which you are working. Some questions to consider during this stage:

- Is there a dedicated budget set aside within your parish, diocese, network, or organization for this event? If so, what is the amount that has been set aside?
- If no budget has been allocated, is it possible to develop a budget proposal within your parish, diocese, network, or organization – or with an outside granting organization or foundation?
- Are there partner organizations, groups, collaborators, or private donors who may be able to assist with the event budget or provide in-kind donations?
- Will you charge for the event itself or only charge enough to cover the costs of portions of the event (i.e., food and drink)?
- Will an event fee partially offset the costs or will the event fees cover all the costs?
- Will you bring in sponsors, exhibitors, or vendors to help offset costs (and in turn, provide them with a place to exhibit)?
- Will you provide partial or whole scholarships? Will you include in your promotional materials that “no one will be turned away due to finances”? If so, how will you be able to fund such assistance?
- Is there an opportunity to fundraise for the stateside gathering within your local community? (NOTE: such a fundraiser can also generate awareness of the event)

Based on your primary and secondary audiences, also consider what organizations, ministries, schools and universities, religious communities, and other groups would have a vested interest in collaborating or partnering with a local stateside celebration like this. Consider having significant aspects of the event (such as the site, the food and drink, music, entertainment, sound and lighting, equipment, and so forth) donated or funded by a partnering organization.

Create a realistic budget worksheet for this event and use that sheet as the guiding document for all your team members in implementing the event plans. It is important to be responsible stewards of the financial gifts available to host a stateside World Youth Day celebration in your local community and to be grateful to those who are supporting it.

Schedule

Based upon the vision of success, your audience, event summary, the date and time, and the budget allocated, the next step is to identify the components you want in the schedule. You may want to consider mirroring the components of the international World Youth Day pilgrimage (see the most updated schedule at www.krakow2016.com).

Take some time to reflect upon what might motivate the pilgrims in your community to celebrate World Youth Day: Is it meeting new people, being a part of a large-scale event, experiencing the universality of the Catholic Church through the lens of a new culture, encountering the Pope, experiencing the same things as international pilgrims, the heritage and culture of the United States (or Poland), or are there other factors or reasons?

When developing the schedule, also consider the components of the international WYD gathering to integrate into the stateside event.

Catechesis

During the international World Youth Day pilgrimage, catechist bishops from around the world offer catechetical sessions related to the World Youth Day theme, as well as evangelization and mission. Consider offering at least one catechetical session as a part of

your stateside pilgrimage or offer an opportunity for breakouts on different topics or language groups. What catechetical topics would be most valuable for your young people to hear? What inspiring local or regional speakers could you invite to offer catechesis? Consider inviting your local bishop(s), if they are not attending the international event, to offer catechesis to mirror the international pilgrimage.

PLANNING TIP

Consider how opportunities for evangelization and catechesis can happen informally through conversation. Invite local priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, and lay ecclesial ministers to be present at the event in prayer and talk with local pilgrims.

Prayer and Liturgy

During World Youth Day, pilgrims are invited to set aside worldly distractions and set out on pilgrimage to encounter Christ, the Church, and other pilgrims. Even though your group may not be traveling far, consider how you can help your pilgrims enter into a distinct time and space for their local pilgrimage through prayer. Some of the most powerful prayer experiences at World Youth Day come at the end of the week with an evening Stations of the Cross service (on Friday), a walking journey to the final liturgy site and an

evening prayer vigil (on Saturday), culminating with the Concluding Mass (on Sunday). Are there ways that you can utilize technology to pray with the Holy Father and the international community live (or record and watch portions of the international prayer later in the schedule)? Help provide a powerful pilgrimage experience by incorporating new prayer experiences or moving images of faith as a part of prayer. Consider having a candlelight Mass or Eucharistic procession, prayer with icons, veneration of the cross, multilingual prayer, the Via Crucis, and so forth.

PLANNING TIP

Did you know there is an official World Youth Day cross and icon that travels the world in preparation for World Youth Day? Consider making a replica for your local celebration or using another significant local symbol of faith and sharing it around parishes in your Diocese in preparation for your local pilgrimage.

Another major component of the international gathering is the accessibility of the Sacrament of Reconciliation at various locations and on almost all the days of the World Youth Day experience. Consider inviting several confessors to be part of your stateside event; you can either have a special

time on the schedule for reconciliation or make them available throughout the program. Regardless, access to this Sacrament is a key component that should be integrated into the prayer experiences of your celebration.

Music and Food

Music in prayer and celebration is a powerful tool to highlight the local culture of the World Youth Day host country. In what ways can you highlight the music or cultural traditions of the host country, as well as the musical elements of the various World Youth Day experiences internationally? Is there also a way to highlight the musical talent of your local community at the stateside event?

Consider featuring one of the songs from the World Youth Day Concluding Mass or a devotional or traditional hymn from the host country in the native language. Every World Youth Day includes an official theme song released in the language of the native country, which may also be available in several other languages (for WYD 2016, the theme song is “Blessed Are The Merciful,” with sheet music and lyrics in English and Spanish available online at www.wydusa.org). Consider using this song as a part of your local pilgrimage in solidarity with millions throughout the world who are also singing versions of this hymn.

Food is another powerful way to enter into the international experience of World Youth Day with young people. Food is included in pilgrim packets, and World Youth Day alumni can tell interesting stories of locating good food while in the host country during their past trips. If you are offering food for your event, consider offering a meal, dessert, or drink from the local host country. You may also want to feature foods specific to your area (or inversely, other cultures and regions within the United States). This is a great opportunity to collaborate with families, parish, or secular cultural groups in your area; it can also be a wonderful way to introduce the participants to the diversity and uniqueness of foods that exist around the world or within their own country.

PLANNING TIP

Find individuals in your area who are from the World Youth Day host country and work with them and others to provide a culturally-rich local pilgrimage experience.

While very special, food can be one of the most expensive parts of an event. Are you able to provide food? Will you charge for food or will it be included in a broader event fee? Are there partners, collaborators, or donors who would be willing to share in providing food and drink for the event?

Walking Pilgrimage and Camping

One of the longest-lasting traditions of the international World Youth Day celebration is the experience of pilgrims prayerfully walking to the vigil site to “camp out” under the stars (or clouds and rain, depending on the weather conditions) on the night before the WYD Concluding Mass.

PLANNING TIP

Consider hosting an outdoor walking Stations of the Cross in nature or at different sites or parishes in your city or community.

These particular elements make the World Youth Day event stand out from other national or international events, secular or church-related; it is also one of the most memorable aspects of the program.

Consider the following questions when planning: Will your event take place overnight or have a “camping” option? In what way can you incorporate the movement or walking aspect of pilgrimage, whether you are in a rural, suburban, small town, or urban environment? Are there alternative ways to walk, process, or camp outdoors if the weather should prove to be a factor? Will you make the journey despite possible rain or storm conditions, and if so, what measures will you incorporate to ensure the safety of pilgrims in inclement weather?

Technology

Effective utilization of technology during a stateside pilgrimage can greatly deepen the connection between the international and local pilgrimages, and acknowledge the digital landscape in which many youth and young adults live today. World Youth Day has recently embraced technology as a significant component of the preparation and execution of the overall event. Consider some of the ways to use technology:

- Incorporate a live-feed (or video recording) of an event with the Holy Father into your own event.
- Utilize Skype, Face Time, Periscope, or other video conferencing to talk with pilgrims from your area who are at the international WYD celebration.
- Be active on social media using and searching for related tweets with the World Youth Day hashtags (#WYDUSA, #WYD, #WYD2016, and #Krakow2016) on Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking sites – and encourage your stateside pilgrims to participate by sharing their own local celebration and experience online through hashtags. Also consider developing your own event hashtag and use it in your promotional materials.

Site Location

Based upon the audience, schedule, and budget, it is important to determine the best location to host the stateside event. Consider all the options: your parish or diocesan center; a local retreat facility; a university campus; a large open outdoor space; a place accessible to the potential audience for this event; a location well-known to the community; someplace with a connection to the theme, patron saints, or culture of the international event; a place special to the life and ministry of the hosting parish, diocese, or movement. Availability of any of these possible locations may impact significant components of your event. With that in mind, it is important to secure your location as early as possible (and have a few backup sites in the event that the initial plans fall through or if weather could be an issue with any outdoor location).

PLANNING TIP

Consider a host location that has a vested interest in reaching out to your youth or young adult audience or a community from which you can build a strong base of volunteers or audience to invite (i.e. university, retreat center, large parish, local shrine, etc.)

To assist you with narrowing down the options for an ideal site for the stateside World Youth Day celebration, carefully look

through the following questions before making a final decision:

- What nearby locations include a space or spaces that best accommodate the various components of your event schedule? These may include large and small meeting rooms; beautiful and practical grounds for campus; a church or shrine; locations for prayer and quiet spaces; sleeping areas; food options, etc.
- What do your various location options cost? If a venue is free will you still provide a stipend for set-up, cleaning, and other costs incurred by the venue?
- How will participants travel to your event? If by car, is there sufficient parking? If by public transportation, is the location near public transit drop-off points?
- Is there access to bathroom facilities for the number of people expected?
- Who are the people that would be the most adversely affected by that location choice? How can you reach out to them to still encourage their participation?
- How handicap-accessible are the facilities that you are considering?

Event Publicity

While World Youth Day is well known among Catholic ministry leaders, it may not be for your target audience. The vast majority of youth and/or young adults you are inviting may have never been to an international World Youth Day and may not even know what it is. Some may assume World Youth Day is only for teenagers. This means that a part of your marketing and publicity for the event needs to include defining the event for your audience and highlighting the aspects of the event that are most compelling.

You can also ask those in the local area who have been to a stateside or an international World Youth Day event in the past to share their experience as a way to inspire others to participate in a local pilgrimage.

PLANNING TIP

Always remember that the most effective marketing is personal encounter and invitation. How can you empower others (and your leaders) to personally invite young people to the event?

The primary question when designing your marketing materials is “What is the key draw for your target audience?” Is it following the World Youth Day activities of the Pope, a speaker or musician at the stateside event,

experiencing Catholicism from a different culture, feeling a part of a large-Church experience, meeting new people, or going to Mass with peers? Utilize the answer to this question in the choices you make regarding the language and images you use when communicating about the event.

When marketing the stateside gathering, explore communication structures that exist already in your parish, region, or diocese such as newspapers, websites, bulletins, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Ask yourself, “How can we ensure there is a presence on every local Catholic platform (bulletin, website, social media, newspaper, particular group email lists, pulpit announcements)?” “What resources can you create to distribute to local parishes (event postcards, flyers, etc.)?”

Marketing Questions

What is the key draw for our audience?

What images and words reflect the key draw?

What venues can we use to market the event?

Who has the talents and resources to help us market the event?

After the Event

Like many retreat experiences, once the “high” wears away, it can be difficult to see or feel the effect afterward. So much of the international experience of World Youth Day is sharing the story and experience so as to live differently. It is also important to connect the stateside pilgrims with those who traveled overseas for the international event.

You are highly encouraged to use the resources in this guide focusing on equipping pilgrims in the weeks and months afterwards. This will help to encourage the young people to truly take this event into their daily lives and become missionary disciples.

Even though World Youth Day is not offered frequently, it is critically important to offer an opportunity for an event evaluation. You can either provide hard-copy evaluation sheets or offer a link to an online survey sent to the pilgrims in the days following the stateside gathering. Either way, be sure to get that input. An evaluation or survey can help you and other event planners for future local events and pilgrimages. It will also be helpful in looking further into the future to the next World Youth Day gathering. Perhaps this event will inspire your local community to host an annual celebration of young people, and the evaluations can assist with that.

Spiritual Preparation

If the goal of a local World Youth Day pilgrimage is to help young people encounter Jesus, then spending time in spiritual preparation is essential both for the event planners and participants.

In the publicity for the stateside celebration, or during the event itself, spend significant time talking and providing moments for pilgrims to reflect on the idea of going on pilgrimage (and self-identifying as “pilgrims”). This will enable the participants to more fully enter into the experience, just as those who travel overseas to the international World Youth Day are fully immersed there.

Ask yourself questions about how prayer can be a powerful component of the preparation efforts for you as a pilgrim leader. In addition, how is your planning team praying together for one another and for the young people who will be participating? How can you encourage individuals, colleagues, or particular groups in parishes or collaborating organizations commit to praying for the success of the stateside celebration and for the youth and young adults who may embark on the stateside pilgrimage?

In local communications (website, bulletins, social media, parish or youth/young adult

ministry announcements) in advance of the stateside gathering, consider offering short moments of spiritual formation (prayers, Scripture verses, catechesis, explanations, etc.) for those who might be attending your events.

In addition, prior to the stateside celebration, you can begin to physically gather together local youth and/or young adults for prayer, catechesis and formation, service and mission work, and/or for Eucharistic liturgies. Doing this will expand the scope and exhibit to the community (and young people) that World Youth Day and pilgrimages go beyond one-day or weekend events. You may even offer or host a preparation event in collaboration with those leading an international pilgrimage to World Youth Day in your local area.

PLANNING TIP

Think big. Utilize an event like the stateside World Youth Day pilgrimage to help lay the foundation for ministry growth in your parish, region, or diocese.

Determine your big-picture spiritual and ministerial goals and allow WYD to grow that possibility. For example, if you want to grow a small group ministry, use the small groups during your World Youth Day celebration and plan a post-WYD small group series.

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Six Months Away

- Form a planning team, collaborators, and begin regular meetings
- Identify the vision, target audience, objectives, and budget
- Collaborate with internationally-bound WYD pilgrimage leaders/teams/groups
- Set the date and a tentative schedule of events for the stateside gathering
- Request the local pastor, bishop, or other Church leader(s) to participate
- Visit and secure an event site (after reviewing several options)
- Book talent for event (musicians for Mass and or concert, speakers, emcee, etc.)
- Identify and begin to secure logistics: food, sound, lighting, technology, security
- Create save-the-date publicity materials

Four Months Away

- Create a detailed publicity and marketing plan for the stateside celebration
- Order and distribute publicity materials to parishes and ministry partners
- Identify a spiritual preparation plan to share with parish communities and with your collaborators

- Recruit the lead volunteers and managers
- Recruit priests and religious to be present at event and for specific event responsibilities (confessions, vocation promotion, prayer services, Mass, etc.)

Three Months Away

- Begin publicity measures in earnest
- Reach out to local parish and diocesan communications office and local media
- Open event registration

Two Months Away

- Recruit more volunteers to assist the team leaders and managers
- Plan and host first volunteer training
- Purchase or make plans to purchase the major supplies for the event

Final Preparations

- Review all logistics and perform any test-runs of the logistical elements: food, security, sound, lighting, and technology
- Host final volunteer training
- Create printed materials, handouts, worship aid, etc. for the event
- Do a final site walk-through with the lead volunteers and managers
- Create an evaluation form or survey

The Week After the Event

- Collect the evaluations or send out online survey for event participants; set deadline for receiving feedback
- Hold a debriefing meeting with core team and lead volunteers
- Send thank you notes to significant volunteers, collaborators, leadership of the community (bishop, pastor, lay ministers, or others), assisting priests and religious, site/venue contacts, vendors, service providers, and others who contributed to the stateside celebration
- Email stateside participants with further opportunities for them to get connected into ongoing ministries and the Church
- Begin preparations for a reunion event with stateside pilgrims and international pilgrims (possibly with a vocational focus: what is God now calling you to say, to do, to be in life after World Youth Day?)

Realizing that any pilgrimage of this kind is not over with the conclusion of the physical event, plans should be drawn up (during the spiritual preparation process) for continuing formation and evangelization opportunities, as well as missionary activities, for the pilgrims in the months beyond the original event.

Consider developing additional checklists for these next steps. In at least one year's time, assess the success of this event once more by measuring the involvement, investment, and actions of the pilgrims as a result of the program (and any follow-up done by the organizers or pilgrims in the months after).

Look ahead to possibly hosting an annual gathering for youth and/or young adults similar to this in future summer months, as well as a stateside celebration on the occasion of the next international World Youth Day.

Stateside Model #1 (evening program)

Based on a model developed by the Archdiocese of Washington for young adults (19-39), this stateside celebration is a five-hour evening program coinciding with the World Youth Day candlelight vigil (on Saturday of the World Youth Day schedule), recreating elements of that event for local participants. While ideally suited for Saturday, this model can be used on any evening of the WYD week with live or recorded video feed from other international activities.

6:00 pm Registration

- Refreshments
- Socialize with members of religious communities and organizations

6:15 pm Catechesis in Large-Group

- Event Welcome (by event organizers)
- Catechesis by speaker/bishop/pastor

6:45 pm Live Feed: WYD Prayer Vigil

- Live feed begins (or pre-recorded video) on large screen in an indoor hall/facility

7:00 pm Open Prayer Time and Dinner

- Option #1: Confessions at stations in the church, in portico, outside on benches
- Option #2: Rosary walk in grotto, led by religious sisters (offered every 30 min.)
- Option #3: Adoration in the chapel
- Option #4: Dinner with local priests, religious brothers, and sisters
- Option #5: Watch live feed in indoor hall
- Option #6: Church and grounds tours (offered every 30 min.)

8:15 pm Candlelight Procession

- Gather outside church
- Provide candles for each participant
- Process around grounds towards church

8:45 pm Evening Mass

- Celebrated by bishop or pastor
- To include a youth or young adult choir and liturgical ministers (pre-arranged)
- Use liturgical rites from (or similar to) the international World Youth Day Closing Mass; use the WYD theme song

10:00 pm Coffee House and Music

- Dancing, dance lessons, and entertainment connected to the culture and traditions of international host country; i.e. Brazil, Poland, etc.

11:00 pm Event Closing

- Offer any final announcements
- Invite participants to continue journey beyond this stateside gathering
- Conclude with a short closing prayer

Stateside Model #2 (afternoon and evening Program, with optional overnight)

Based on a model developed by the Archdiocese of Washington for young adults (19-39), this stateside celebration is a twelve-hour program coinciding with the World Youth Day candlelight vigil (on Saturday of the World Youth Day schedule), recreating elements of that event for local participants. There is an optional overnight option, for those unable to travel back to their homes on the night of the event (or who wish to experience the outdoor experience of World Youth Day). This program, especially with the day-long activities and overnight option, is ideally suited for the Saturday of the World Youth Day week.

SATURDAY

1:00 pm Registration

2:00 pm Welcome and Opening Prayer

3:00 pm Break

3:30 pm Catechesis, Round 1

- Concurrent 60-minute sessions
- Offer between 3 and 6 workshops, depending on number of participants

4:30 pm Break

5:00 pm Catechesis, Round 2

- Concurrent 60-minute sessions
- Offer between 3 and 6 workshops, depending on number of participants

6:00 pm Dinner Break

- Meals, Exhibits, and Music
- Two-hour period around campus

- By 7:30 pm, encourage participants to travel to the Stations of the Cross site

8:00 pm Stations of the Cross

- The first twelve or thirteen stations to be projected or displayed in an area apart from the other events – where participants would watch and follow along
- For the thirteenth and fourteenth station, at which time it should be dark enough, a candlelight procession would begin behind the prayer leaders as all travel to the Evening Mass site; pilgrims would stop for these two stations en route to the church during the candlelight procession

9:30 pm Evening Mass

- Celebrated by bishop or pastor
- To include a youth or young adult choir and liturgical ministers (pre-arranged)
- Use liturgical rites from (or similar to) the international World Youth Day Closing Mass; use the WYD theme song

11:00 pm Cultural Entertainment

- Concert, dancing, dance lessons, and entertainment connected to the culture and traditions of international host country; i.e. Brazil, Poland, etc.

11:30 pm Overnight Campout

- To be held at a nearby outdoor site, weather permitting (until 7:00 a.m.)

SUNDAY

7:30 am Morning Prayer

- Special prayer service for overnight guests
- Include elements from international WYD

8:00 am Light Breakfast Available

- Limited to those who remained overnight
- Groups can begin to leave at this point

Stateside Model #3 (morning to evening program)

Based on a model developed by several dioceses in the Midwest (USCCB Region VII) for both youth (13-18) and young adults (19-39), this stateside celebration is a twelve-hour program (11:00 am to 11:00 pm), which would ideally be situated on the Saturday of the World Youth Day week. The program can begin in one location, as pilgrims physically journey to another location for the duration of the event throughout the day.

11:00 am Registration

11:30 am Walking Pilgrimage

- Depart from one location towards the site of the central activities
- The departure and arrival sites can be 60 to 90 minutes apart by foot

1:00 pm Welcome and Opening Prayer

1:30 pm Large Group Plenary

- Keynote presentation by a main speaker
- Focus: mercy, solidarity, or pilgrimage

2:00 pm Dismissal of large group to catechetical and prayer breakout sessions

2:30 pm Breakout Sessions

- Catechetical and/or prayer focus
- Participants choose three (3) sessions of 45 minutes each, with 15 minute breaks in between each session:

Session 1: 2:30 to 3:15 p.m.

Session 2: 3:30 to 4:15 p.m.

Session 3: 4:30 to 5:15 p.m.

5:30 pm Vocations Fair/Festival

- A large festival/fair featuring representatives from colleges and universities with ministry and theology undergraduate degree programs; various career options, especially in church ministry; parish or diocesan ministry programs; apostolic movements and organizations; family life and vocation offices; local religious communities; and collaborating organizations
- Representatives will be available to talk with participants throughout the evening

5:30 pm Pilgrim's Meager Meal

- Light dinner available to participants
- Pilgrims are invited to mingle with each other and visit the festival area

7:15 pm Move to large group session

7:30 pm Large Group Plenary

- Evening presentation by a main speaker
- Focus: mission, missionary discipleship, evangelization, or leadership

8:00 pm Team Time

- Individual parish, campus, or regional groups gather to meet and discuss: the next steps; how to implement the lessons learned into their local communities; and ways they individually will become missionary disciples and agents of mercy
- During this time, opportunities for reconciliation, prayer and adoration, Stations of the Cross, and private reflection are also available to pilgrims

9:30 pm Move to large group session

9:45 pm Final Mass/Closing Ceremony

- This Mass is ideally celebrated by a bishop or several priests from around the area
- Liturgy should also include elements (music, prayers, etc.) from international World Youth Day Closing Mass
- Include youth or young adults in music and in liturgical ministries for the Mass
- Mass to conclude at approx. 11:00 pm

Stateside Model #4 (two-day overnight program)

Based on a model developed by the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, for high school-age youth (13-18), this stateside celebration is two-day program with an overnight option, which would ideally be situated on Saturday and Sunday of the World Youth Day week.

SATURDAY

9:00 am Registration

10:00 am Welcome & Opening Prayer

11:00 am Mass with the Bishop

12:15 pm Lunch

1:15 pm Large Group Plenary Session

- Keynote presentation by main speaker
- Framed by animation and music/concert

2:15 pm Break

2:30 pm Catechetical Session, Round A

- Workshops offered by local presenters; should last sixty minutes each
- Round A Theme: “GO” – with workshops on sub-themes including:
 - Understanding how the mission of Jesus relates to Christian vocation
 - Understanding how Jesus transforms us through sacraments and prayer
 - How evangelization and proclamation requires courage and resourcefulness

3:30 pm Free Time

- Options can include: sports and games; swimming; outdoor activities and adventures, based on site availability; time for prayer and reflection

5:45 pm Dinner

6:45 pm Praise and Worship

7:15 pm Large Group Plenary Session

- Keynote presentation by main speaker
- Framed by animation and music/concert

9:00 pm Adoration and Reconciliation

- Eucharistic adoration in the plenary space
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation may be offered during this time with confessors

10:30 pm Social (through midnight)

- The chapel will also be open all evening (10:30 am – 7:00 am) for quiet prayer
- Social options should not be too active, since this period immediately precedes the overnight option and sleeping

SUNDAY

7:00 am Morning Prayer

8:00 am Breakfast

8:30 am Catechetical Session, Round B

- Workshops offered by local presenters; should last sixty minutes each
- Round A Theme: “MAKE” – with workshops on sub-themes including:
 - Being missionaries of service
 - Being missionaries of catechesis
 - Being missionaries of love/mercy

9:30 am Break

10:00 am Catechetical Session, Round C

- Workshops offered by local presenters; should last sixty minutes each
- Round A Theme: “DISCIPLES” – with workshops on sub-themes including:
 - What is Christian discipleship?
 - Growing as a disciple through healthy relationships, marriage, and family
 - Growing as a disciple through priesthood and religious vocations (to become “fishers of men”)

11:00 am Large Group Plenary Session

- Viewing of Pope Francis’ homily (with translation) from the World Youth Day Final Mass in Kraków, Poland
- Framed by animation and music/concert

11:30 am Small Group Discussion

- Small groups gather in same space as plenary session (groups of 6 to 8 people)
- Each small group reflects on the homily:
 - What do you remember most about the homily?
 - How did the homily connect to the theme of mercy and discipleship?
 - What in the homily challenged you?
 - What in the homily comforted you?
 - What in the homily excited you?
 - What action steps can we take to respond to the Holy Father’s words in his homily?

12:00 pm Closing Mass with Bishop

- Young people to serve in the choir and as liturgical ministers at the Mass

1:00 pm Lunch and Closing

Stateside Model #5 (two-day overnight program)

Based on a model developed by the Diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for youth (13-18) and young adults (19-39), this stateside celebration is two-day program with an overnight option, which would ideally be situated on Saturday and Sunday of the World Youth Day week.

SATURDAY

11:30 am Registration

- Registration open until 1:30 p.m.
- Confessions, exhibitors, lunch, and music are available on-site during this period

2:00 pm Opening Mass

3:30 pm Tents/Vendors Re-Open

- Dinner available 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
- Participants have options to attend workshops, visit the exhibitors, or stop to get food during this time period

3:45 pm Breakout Session 1

4:30 pm Breakout Session 2

5:15 pm Breakout Session 3

6:00 pm Breakout Session 4

7:00 pm Concert

8:30 pm Holy Hour and Adoration

10:00 pm Evening Prayer and Candlelight Vigil

11:00 pm Rosary- Luminous Mysteries

NOTE: Eucharistic adoration is open all night

SUNDAY

6:30am Breakfast available (until 7:30)

8:00 am Morning Prayer with Bishop

9:30am Stations of the Cross

10:30 am Pilgrimage Walk

11:30 am Lunch Available (until 1:00 pm)

- Participants have the option to stop to get food during the following program

12:45 pm Concert and Papal Message

- Papal homily recorded from WYD Mass

2:00 pm Closing Mass with Bishop

Stateside Model #6 (short program on WYDUSA pilgrimage)

This stateside celebration is an evening program focused on the National Pilgrim Gathering for United States' pilgrims in Kraków, recreating elements of that event for local participants. This evening program could be held during any morning or evening during the World Youth Day week.

0:00 Registration

- Refreshments and Socializing
- Consider playing video or music from the World Youth Day events in Kraków, as people enter the gathering space

0:30 Small Group Activity

- Break into small groups and introduce
- Image Search Activity: Have participants use the internet on their mobile devices to find an image that they feel best represents Catholicism in the USA
- Share the images with one another in the small group and discuss them

1:15 Large Group Catechesis

- One of the pastoral leaders can lead or facilitate a catechetical session focusing on Catholicism in the United States, the state of Catholics in the U.S. today, charisms of American Catholicism, saints and religious figures associated with the Church in the U.S., and/or ways to be an agent of mercy and compassion, inspired by the Scriptures and Tradition of the Catholic

faith, locally and nationally.

2:00 Recorded Video from Kraków (IF AVAILABLE)

- Pre-recorded* video for the WYDUSA National Pilgrim Gathering on large screen in indoor hall or gathering space (* if the gathering takes place prior to the WYDUSA event, consider showing video of the English-language catechesis)
- Stateside participants can watch the video of the WYDUSA gathering in whatever manner is most comfortable for them

3:30 Large Group Discussion

- Leaders can facilitate a large group discussion focused on these or similar questions: What did you see and hear that was challenging or affirming? How did the gathering connect with our previous conversation about Catholicism in the United States? How can we hold the U.S. pilgrims in Kraków in our prayers?

4:00 Closing Prayer

Stateside Model #7 (evening program)

This stateside celebration is an evening program that allows stateside pilgrims to watch video footage from that day's events at World Youth Day in Kraków, but also brings them together for fellowship, prayer, and catechesis. This can be held any night of the WYD week.

6:00 pm Welcome & Registration

- Refreshments and socialization

6:30 pm Pilgrim Catechesis

- This catechesis can be led by a pastoral leader (bishop, priest, deacon, religious, lay leader); it can also be a witness from WYD alumni or young people.
- If the number of participants is high, consider having multiple catechetical sessions (and have the participants choose the session that speaks to them)
- Possible catechetical sessions can include:
 - Mercy (“Blessed are the merciful” WYD 2016 theme)
 - Pilgrimage, Encounter, and Celebration
 - Young people and their role in the Church and the world
 - The Life and Legacy of Saint John Paul II (and Kraków)
 - The Cross (connecting to the WYD Cross and the Via Crucis)
 - Vocation (what does it mean to respond to God’s call?)
 - Solidarity (with the poor, refugees, immigrants, marginalized, etc.)

7:30 pm WYD Kraków Video

- Show a moment from WYD Kraków, or a compilation of several WYD events
- Pre-recorded video on large screen in indoor hall or gathering space
- Participants can watch video whatever manner is most comfortable for them
- If the video includes footage of a liturgical event such as a Mass, emphasize a spirit of reverence and respect

8:30 pm Candlelight Vigil Prayer

- Have a prayer service by candlelight, recreating the vigil with the Pope on the Saturday evening of the World Youth Day events in Kraków
- If time and space allow, consider beginning with a pilgrimage walk

9:30 pm Closing and Dismissal

- If time allows, late evening options can also include: rosary, coffeehouse, music, praise and worship, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, or watching more video feed from Kraków, or socialization (on or off-site)
- Close by 11:00 p.m. with night prayer

Stateside Model #8 (interactive pilgrim communications)

This stateside celebration is focused on connecting stateside and international pilgrims through communications and technology. Depending on the arrangements and date, the timing of this event can vary – as the pilgrims in Kraków will be several hours ahead of those in the United States (consider the time zones and when/how to best interact through web communications). This may need to take place in the morning hours in the USA to connect with Kraków pilgrims in the afternoon or evening hours. This model can also be incorporated into stateside day-long or overnight gatherings.

00:00 Registration and Welcome

00:30 Large Group Conversation

- Discuss the concept of pilgrimage: What does it mean to be a pilgrim? What is the difference between the international and the stateside pilgrim experiences?
- Come up with talking points and questions for Kraków pilgrims (this may need to take place in small groups within the large group)

01:15 Interactive Conversation

- Connect with Kraków pilgrims (ideally from your local community)
- Have them share details of their journey
- Ask the Kraków pilgrims to pray for their stateside counterparts; let the Kraków travelers know that they are being prayed for by stateside pilgrims

02:00 Small Group Conversations

- Discuss: What did you hear and see from the Kraków pilgrims that inspired, challenged, or affirmed anything about your faith and about the concept of pilgrimage? What are your hopes for them? What are your hopes for others celebrating World Youth Day stateside?

02:30 Large Group Conversation

- Discuss the points made in small groups with the large group

03:00 Closing Prayer

OPTIONAL:

Consider also interacting with other stateside pilgrims across the United States during this gathering, asking them about their experiences locally; during an interactive session like this, pray with one another across the miles.

Stateside Model #9 (local pilgrimage journey)

This stateside celebration would ideally be situated on the Saturday of the World Youth Day week. The program can begin in one location, as pilgrims physically journey to another location for the duration of the event throughout the day. For this stateside gathering, use the options provided in the WYDUSA Local Pilgrimage Prayer Guide, available at www.wydusa.org. There are options in that guide for prayers before entering, while visiting, and departing the pilgrimage location.

9:00 am Registration and check-in

9:30 am Daily Mass

10:30 am Depart for Pilgrimage

- **WALKING OPTION:** depart from one location on foot towards a local pilgrimage site; the site can be 60 to 90 minutes apart traveling by foot
- **DRIVING OPTION:** depart from one location by vehicle if the local pilgrimage site is farther away; the site should be within 60 to 90 minutes' drive.

12:00 pm UPON ARRIVAL: Lunch

12:30 pm Prayer Before Entering Site

12:45 pm Pray at Pilgrimage Site

- Set up a tour if possible
- Visit those places at the site that connect to World Youth Day in Kraków, to young people, or to the theme of mercy

4:00 pm Small Group Reflection Time

- On site, at whatever time is most fitting
- See reflection questions in Prayer Guide
- Allow participants, if they are willing, to share how God might be speaking to them at this particular pilgrimage site

4:45 pm Closing Prayer Outside Site

**5:00 pm Return to Starting Point
(by WALKING or DRIVING)**

6:30 pm OPTIONS UPON ARRIVAL

- Group leader can dismiss participants at this point, if they so desire; here are some additional options if they remain together:
 - Dinner and socializing
 - Praise and worship, music performances, or coffeehouse setting
 - Evening prayer (vespers) and/or
 - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
 - Watching live or video footage of World Youth Day activities in Kraków

Stateside Model #10 (local mission work)

This stateside celebration would ideally be situated on the Saturday of the World Youth Day week. The program can begin in one location, as pilgrims physically journey to another location for the duration of the event throughout the day.

9:00 am Registration and check-in

9:30 am Daily Mass

10:30 am Depart for Mission Activity

- **WALKING OPTION:** depart from one location on foot towards a local mission site; the site can be 60 to 90 minutes apart traveling by foot
- **DRIVING OPTION:** depart from one location by vehicle if the local mission site is farther away; the site should be within 60 to 90 minutes' drive.

12:00 pm UPON ARRIVAL: Lunch

12:30 pm Mission Project

- Choice of service or mission work is dependent on local needs
- Pray before beginning work

4:00 pm Small Group Reflection Time

- On site, at whatever time is most fitting
- Allow participants, if they are willing, to share how God might be speaking to them at this particular pilgrimage site

- What was most challenging about this experience? What was most affirming?
- Where did you see/feel the presence of God in those we served, the people we encountered, and/or the work we did?
- Read Mt 25:31-46 and discuss “Lord, when did we see you hungry...?” as it relates to the missionary activity of the day
- How can we be agents of mercy beyond this one-time activity?

4:45 pm Closing Prayer at Worksite

5:00 pm Return to Starting Point (by WALKING or DRIVING)

6:30 pm OPTIONS UPON ARRIVAL

- Group leader can dismiss participants at this point, if they so desire; here are some additional options if they remain together:
 - Dinner and socializing
 - Praise and worship, music performances, or coffeehouse setting
 - Evening prayer (vespers) and/or
 - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
 - Watching live or video footage of World Youth Day activities in Kraków

World Youth Day Follow-Up: Connecting Stateside and International Pilgrims

It is important to remember that the impact of any pilgrimage, stateside or international, should not end at the experience itself. As leaders, we should help participants engage in a type of “mystagogical” reflection on the journey – whether it is near or far – that they just experienced. (To be “mystagogical” is to un-pack the spiritual meaning of the sacred moment, similar to the formation following the sacraments of initiation and R.C.I.A.). It is equally important that we seek ways to build the solidarity and communal experience by encouraging dialogue and relationships between stateside and international pilgrims. The pilgrim comes from a community and returns to a community; therefore, cultivating that pilgrim-and community-relationship can indeed strengthen the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, and draw her members across the world into deeper solidarity.

Consider what took place following the experience of the Transfiguration in the Gospels: the greatest events in the life of Christ, and in the lives of Peter, James, and John, happened after coming down the mountain. Those disciples returned to the Twelve and to the Galilean communities where Jesus taught, healed, and proclaimed

the Good News, but the saving mystery of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord was yet to come, followed by the Lord’s Glorious Ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The same goes for World Youth Day pilgrims: the best is yet to come, if the mountaintop experience is seen as a moment of refueling, re-energizing, and re-focusing--as a means, not the end. And just as Jesus accompanied the disciples from the top of Mount Tabor into the valleys below, so too must pilgrim leaders accompany the participants beyond the last moment of a pilgrimage event and help them to be integrated in the Church’s life and mission.

Plan beyond the ending. Even before the preparations begin, consider what take-aways you desire for the stateside pilgrims after their local World Youth Day pilgrimage experience. What should the stateside pilgrim (or any World Youth Day pilgrim) take away from this event? While each stateside gathering will be unique in its goals, there are some common benchmarks that can yield a successful event connected to the World Youth Day experience. Here are a few pilgrim takeaways that can serve as indicators of a successful and fruitful event.

The call to be Catholic

Part of being Catholic is recognizing that we are a part of something bigger. To be able to trace our origins back to our Lord Jesus Christ himself, back to the Twelve Apostles and original disciples, and to see the vast history and people that our faith links us to can be a humbling and exciting experience. World Youth Day is a great moment to experience that reality of being Catholic.

Being part of a stateside experience can help remind a pilgrim that he or she is a part of a universal (*catholic*) Church and that our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, calls all people to a deeper connection and communion with him and others precisely through his Church.

A successful stateside gathering will open local pilgrims to the recognition of the vastness of the Church, but also to the joy and excitement of knowing that the family and community of the global Church is over one billion strong. Even though stateside events won't have an international component, a larger Catholic gathering like this can still help pilgrims to recognize that, despite differences in language, location, and culture, there is great unity in the various inculturations and traditions of the Catholic faith, expressed in the Universal Church, which is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

The call to mercy and being merciful

The primary theme of the international World Youth Day in Kraków should permeate everything in a stateside experience. This theme, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Mt 5:7) calls all people to understand better the concepts of mercy, compassion, love, and forgiveness: how God has been merciful in participants' lives and the degrees to which mercy and compassion have been integrated into the pilgrims' actions in their everyday lives.

The notion (and ultimately, the experience) of Divine Mercy (beyond all understanding) should challenge stateside pilgrims to reflect on how they may or may not be expressing the Father's mercy in their relationships and encounters – and to see where they can make changes to better pass on that mercy to others. Whether on a personal, community, or civic level, there should be a takeaway that there is always room in one's life and relationships for greater mercy and love.

The call to live in Christ

World Youth Day invites us to embrace more deeply the call to live in Christ daily. In particular, two aspects of our relationship with the Lord might be fruitfully examined after World Youth Day. The first is the depth and closeness of our relationship with God.

Do we trust him as our Father, living as sons and daughters in the Son, and relying upon the Holy Spirit? The intimacy and personal connection with God that a pilgrim feels during World Youth Day is often caused by a powerful moment(s) of prayer, praise, or connection to the larger community; a moment(s) where we experience the depth and fullness of the Father's love for us in his Son, our Lord Jesus, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This feeling of intimacy with the Lord can last long beyond the initial World Youth Day experience and may be carried into one's daily life. Making more time for prayer and reflection, finding a preferred prayer style or spirituality, and living the sacramental life with more joy can be some of the gifts that come from a powerful World Youth Day experience.

The second aspect is living out our relationship with God in our day-to-day lives. While feelings can ebb and flow, the encounter with the Lord and the joy that comes from it are deeper than any momentary feeling and help provide direction for our day-to-day journeys. All of us are called to seek the Lord continually, to be open to and led by the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, this is about our graced response to the Great Commission

(Mt 28:16-20). The command to "go forth and baptize all the nations" was the theme for World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro in 2013, and with this in mind, Pope Francis challenged all pilgrims to go out and be "missionary disciples," saying:

With these words, Jesus is speaking to each one of us, saying: "It was wonderful to take part in World Youth Day, to live the faith together with young people from the four corners of the earth, but now you must go, now you must pass on this experience to others." Jesus is calling you to be a disciple with a mission!³⁷

A missionary disciple is what we are all called to be. It is the going forth and sharing the Good News in every place we go and wherever people are gathered, whether that is abroad to another land or down the block to our local hangout. We go forth with the intention of sharing with others the love that we have experienced and inviting others to embrace the love that God our Father has for them. In inviting others to that intimacy with the Lord, pilgrims are able to bring the World Youth Day experience full-circle, passing on what has been received, so that others may

³⁷ Pope Francis, "World Youth Day Concluding Mass,"

July 28, 2013, introduction.

benefit from the way God has shown his love for pilgrims of faith. These three takeaways from the stateside World Youth Day experience (the call to be Catholic, the call to be merciful, and the call to live in Christ) can help participants share the fruits of this event with others (families, friends, colleagues, pastors, as well as stateside and international World Youth Day pilgrims). Just because the stateside World Youth Day event has come to an end, the journey for the pilgrims in the world will surely continue.

Reflecting on the Experience

As part of the closing of the stateside experience, consider directing questions to pilgrims to help them reflect on what they gathered from their experiences and how they will live that out as they return home.

These questions can be given as a final group reflection at the stateside pilgrimage experience, be given to group leaders to share with their groups on the journey home, or can be offered as part of personal reflections or journal time for pilgrims at or soon after the event. These reflection questions would best be shared while the experience is still fresh in the stateside pilgrims' minds so that they can wrap up some thoughts from the day and consider resolutions to bring into their days ahead at home, work, school, or wherever they may go next.

- What particular moment(s) from my stateside journey were most impactful and what were the most memorable?
- When did I feel God most closely or hear his voice during my stateside pilgrimage experience?
- What did I learn about God, my faith, my Church, or myself through this pilgrimage experience?
- Did anything I learn or experience during this event surprise me?
- As I look towards going home, have I changed in any way because of this experience? Will I act differently when I return home?
- Is there anything from my stateside World Youth Day experience that has made me feel closer to others? God? Church? Myself? Do I know myself better because of this pilgrimage?
- Have I walked away feeling like I need to do something because of the experience of World Youth Day?
- Is there something I need to do or change when I get home?
- Is there any action I must take in response to what I saw, learned, and felt during my stateside World Youth Day pilgrimage?

GATHERING TOGETHER

One of the most important things to do after World Youth Day is to gather together those who traveled internationally with those who celebrated stateside. The one who travels overseas does not have a superior experience, just a different one, albeit an exceptional one as a pilgrim to the event itself.

Consider the analogy of the Super Bowl. Many people across the United States to watch the game – most through television and social media; a much smaller percentage attend the game in person. Yet very few, if any, people who go to a Super Bowl party feel inferior to those with tickets to the big game. Their experiences are simply different.

The same can go for World Youth Day. The analogy is not perfect, given that the international World Youth Day is a very particular form of spiritual pilgrimage that covers several days, and the experiences there are indeed special and unique; likewise, stateside celebrations are not only about watching events unfold on a television or mobile device screen, but making an intentional journey on a local level in solidarity with the Universal Church. Nonetheless, it can be a basic analogy that conveys the distinctiveness of the experiences rather than comparing them to each other.

Similarities and Differences

We begin by looking at the similarities and differences of the stateside experience compared to the international one. If you are going to have stateside pilgrims in dialogue with those who went abroad, it is important to know what aspects of their respective experiences they can actually talk about in a meaningful way.

More spiritual than physical

While the stateside pilgrim travels less (to get to the gathering or journeying locally) than those who go overseas, the experience of pilgrimage is about the spirit of the journey, not simply the physical process of going from one place to another. Though the physical aspect is vitally important – and this speaks to the uniqueness of the international WYD experience and other physical pilgrimages – the way that one understands the need for moving spiritually and mentally during this process is critical. When prepared well, a World Youth Day pilgrim should know that the physical goals are just markers for interior goals. The movement of one's mindset from one state-of-being to another; the movement of one's self to becoming a part of the larger community; the movement of one's heart from one way of seeing God to another way. This movement is an essential part of any pilgrimage experience, whether one travels 2,

20, 200, or 2,000 miles. This internal movement can be a great place to start discussion between the stateside and the international pilgrims.

Common language for all pilgrims

Stateside pilgrims can be encouraged to enter into the same mysteries and conversations leading up to their World Youth Day experience as international pilgrims. For World Youth Day 2016, this should start with the theme “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” (Mt 5:7) This theme, chosen by Pope Francis, invites us to consider the way in which God calls us to be merciful and to show mercy in our lives. This theme also challenges us to look at our everyday lives and to see where mercy is not being lived out. Whether in our society and culture, or in our own personal lives, this theme challenges all pilgrims to recognize the abundance of the Lord’s mercy in our lives and to try and wrestle with the call to be merciful to others.

A World Youth Day experience, whether stateside or internationally, should bear some fruit from this theme and give pilgrims a great starting point to share based on the language of mercy, forgiveness, and love. The common vocabulary will be helpful in easing the connection, as will common references to saints such as St. John Paul II and St. Faustina

Kowalska. Additionally, both types of pilgrimages will feature the Holy Father in some way (whether heard in person or via television, radio, or online). Depending on the local circumstances, both groups may have experienced catechesis, the Way of the Cross, a walking journey, singing the official World Youth Day hymn, and a significant liturgical celebration. Finally, both groups may have received resources and tools (including the WYDUSA prayer) from the United States’ World Youth Day Office, and these can also be a unifying factor in the conversations.

Different cultural experiences

A stateside pilgrim will probably not have the same experiences of a different culture(s) as an international pilgrim might have. One of the great aspects of World Youth Day is the ability to enter into the culture and community of other Catholics from different parts of the globe. The culture is not only experienced through the host country (in this case, Poland), but also through the various communities of people that a pilgrim may come across from countries and continents all over the globe. International-bound U.S. pilgrims will have the distinct experience of meeting and sharing stories with Germans, Australians, and Ugandans on their way to World Youth Day events. Stateside pilgrims may not be able to enter into a culture very

different from their own, but they may still be able to enter into dialogue and experience with people of other cultures. Many stateside events can include some sort of cultural piece that celebrates the music, dance, and food of the international host country (Poland).

In addition, there could be opportunities for stateside pilgrims to meet people from different cultural experiences in North America. Whether that diversity comes from geography (rural, urban, suburban), cultural origin (European, African, Hispanic, Asian, Native American), class (rich, middle class, poor), or region (East Coast, West Coast, Midwest, South), there are plenty of opportunities to engage with various populations. If your stateside event does not include these options, it may be something to consider in the planning process.

Understanding how World Youth Day is a celebration of catholicity (universality) helps leaders to better create an experience that allows people to reflect on their own culture and put that in dialogue with other cultures, all in the light of Christ.

Understanding the degree to which stateside pilgrims are exposed to such diversity will be helpful to know how this conversation will unfold with international participants.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Immediate Follow-Up for Pilgrims

Any World Youth Day pilgrim (stateside or international) will need to process the experience on a variety of levels. Some of that has hopefully been done throughout the experience itself. Opportunities for small group conversations and reflections, journaling, and quiet prayer are highly encouraged as part of any pilgrimage experience (stateside or international).

At the conclusion of the event, pilgrims should be reminded that, when they return, there is an expectation that all participants will share their experience with their community of origin (whether that be their family, friend network, parish, diocese, campus, workplace, or movement). This can be done by writing reflections to share in communications; via social media; preparing a formal presentation for parishioners, ministry groups, or Catholic events; or sharing of few words about the pilgrims' experiences and thanking the local community for their prayers and support. Spending time planning some kind of reflection, whether done formally or otherwise, is incredibly helpful for both stateside and international pilgrims as they return from the experience and back to everyday life.

There may be some mixed feelings between the stateside and international pilgrims during this sharing process. Some stateside pilgrims may believe that, because they did not participate in the international pilgrimage, they did not see or experience as much as those who went overseas. Some of the reasons that people did not travel to Kraków can become obstacles in reflecting on their own stateside experience.

There are many reasons that people do not travel for World Youth Day, including lack of money, a complicated immigration status, busy schedules, work, personal, or academic commitments, or a physical impediment. Any of these reasons could present a challenge for stateside pilgrims to appreciate the experience of the international pilgrim and get the most from it if they get caught up in the fact that they did not travel abroad.

It is important for the leader to be attentive to these concerns and help stateside pilgrims through this process.

One way to navigate this potential difficulty is to highlight the joys and blessings that came out of the stateside experience (which can be done at the conclusion of the local event or during a subsequent gathering with stateside-only pilgrims). It is essential not to compare

the experiences before each pilgrim has had a chance to formulate what the experience meant for them. Once they have reflected on this and developed a better understanding of the meaning of the experience for themselves, they can better appreciate their own encounters and share them with others, knowing that the Lord has sought them out and touched them where they were.

PLANNING TIP

Consider for your first combined gathering of stateside and international pilgrims to not let anyone one bring pictures, souvenirs, or show the pictures that they put on social media.

Instead, invite everyone to have to use their memory and tell the stories of what they saw and experienced. This way, it will create a more equal place for sharing and discussion and will allow for deeper reflection rather than surface overviews of what they did and saw.

Possible Preparing for Sharing

Depending on when your international pilgrims get back (if your community has any), it may be easier to gather stateside pilgrims sooner rather than trying to get both groups together at once. If you can gather the stateside pilgrims alone, consider using this time as a way to talk about what they have

carried with them since their World Youth Day experience and how they plan to share that with the rest of your community. Having them work together on a presentation project, or putting all the pictures together for a slide show can be a fun way to get them to recap the experience but also begin to develop some tools for talking about it with others. This also amplifies the stateside experience and reminds participants that their pilgrimage continues onward.

The Sharing Experience

There are a variety of ways for sharing among stateside and international pilgrims of World Youth Day. This will take some planning and work on the leader's part, but this sharing is necessary and can be very fruitful if done well. Some things to keep in mind:

- Timing is key. For most stateside pilgrims, they will wrap up and head home immediately following the experience. International pilgrims may have a schedule that has them visiting additional sites in Europe or elsewhere. Trying to plan a gathering as soon as international pilgrims return can be challenging and dependent on schedules. However, planning an event of sharing within one to three weeks is highly recommended.
- Provide an opportunity for each group to share their experiences to the other group (and possibly with those who did not experience World Youth Day at all).
- Also consider how the event is, above all, an opportunity to celebrate and rejoice in the Lord's goodness and mercy, to pray together, and to recommit the community to a more intense life of missionary discipleship and attention to the young Church that gathered for the Jubilee.
- Because of social media and technology, the sharing can begin right away. People will be putting pictures or quotes on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram during the World Youth Day experience itself. Use these social media tools to engage in meaningful dialogue by giving pilgrims question to respond to on a regular basis, or develop a social media community (Facebook group, etc.) for both groups – so that they both see each other as fellow pilgrims in the social media landscape.

Again, some stateside pilgrims may consider their experience “less than” if they hear about all the wonderful and exciting places that the international pilgrims got to visit, or when they hear about the numbers of participants abroad vs. the numbers they connected with

locally. In order to alleviate this, you may want to consider having the stateside pilgrims share first about their experience when you gather both stateside and international pilgrims together for the first time.

As part of the sharing, consider what the next steps can be as a united community of youth and/or young adults. While both groups may have entered the conversation with different experiences of pilgrimage, the entire group can leave the conversation with a collective understanding of missionary discipleship.

When speaking to those gathered, especially in reference to the future, use language and direction that supports the notion of solidarity and unity, hopefully alleviating any tension or friction that may exist. Incorporating the broader understanding of pilgrimage and

community (see above) can be helpful, as well as framing the event in a unified spirit of celebration, prayer, service and mission, and shared recommitment to the Gospel.

In a special way for the 2016 World Youth Day gathering, since the Holy Father has called for a universal Jubilee of Mercy for young people in the summer months, both groups have been celebrating the Jubilee in their own way (whether at home, in their parish or diocese, or with the international community in Poland with Pope Francis). This, then, can be the common bond for the reconnection and mission. Using the framework of the Jubilee of Mercy can be helpful for bring both groups together and for using the same language in developing a shared mission as a combined community of young missionary disciples.

SAMPLE SHARED GATHERING

This outline can be one possibility for bringing the international and stateside pilgrims together for a shared gathering. The times shown here reflect the number of minutes from the beginning of the event.

0:00 Gather and Hospitality

0:10 Welcome

Given by a bishop, pastor, or lay leader common to both groups.

0:15 Community Building

Consider a familiar activity or icebreaker from World Youth Day or one that is familiar to the community

0:30 Song and Prayer

Use the official World Youth Day hymn (in English, Spanish, or Polish, or your language of choice) and the “World Youth Day Prayer for the United States” (both can be found online at www.wydusa.org).

0:45 Recap of Experiences

Have each group present a recap of their experiences (possibly with pictures and videos, if appropriate) including songs and personal reflections by the pilgrims.

1:15 Small Groups and Reflection

Break into smaller groups of four or five persons for this discussion and reflection; try to have an equal mix of World Youth Day stateside pilgrims with international pilgrims, or a similar ratio. Spend at least 30 to 45 minutes in the small group setting. You can also take time for personal reflection on these questions prior to small groups, to allow pilgrims to collect their thoughts before engaging others.

Use the questions provided below (or similar ones of your design) and have the stateside and international pilgrims discuss what World Youth Day meant for them on a deeper level, what the experiences have meant for their faith lives and relationship with God, and what they plan to do next because of this experience.

- What moment(s) from your journey was most impactful or the most memorable?
- When did you feel God or hear his voice most closely during my pilgrimage experience?
- What did you learn about God, your faith, the Church, or yourself through this pilgrimage?

- Did anything you learn or experience during the pilgrimage surprise me in any way?
- Have you changed in any way because of this experience?
- In particular, what did you learn at WYD about the theme, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Mt 5:7) and the concept of Divine Mercy?
- Is there anything from your World Youth Day experience that has made you feel closer to others? To God? To the Church?
- Do you know yourself better because of World Youth Day?
- How can you be more merciful, loving, and compassionate to others in your life?
- How can you be more open to God’s mercy and forgiveness in your life?
- Is there something you need to do or change in your everyday life?
- Is there any action you must take in response to what you saw, learned, and felt at WYD?

After the group has spent time in conversation and reflection, reconvene the large group.

2:00 Large Group Sharing

Have groups share insights with the larger community; consider concluding this session with an encouragement to all participants to go forward in solidarity as one community of pilgrims ready for missionary discipleship in their respective circumstances.

2:30 Closing Prayer

Consider praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet, reading the Great Commissioning (Mt 28:16-20) or the Emmaus Story (Lk 24:13-35), and praying again the World Youth Day Prayer; alternatively, a Mass of Thanksgiving might be offered at the conclusion of the gathering and/or some time for prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament can be made available for a renewed and united commitment to missionary discipleship and God’s mercy.

3:00 Optional meal

Consider having a meal together. Some options for the meal can include Polish food items, a potluck among the pilgrims (brining their favorite dishes), or something particular to the local community or group.

Vocation Discernment Gathering for World Youth Day Pilgrims

World Youth Day has a growing impact on the vocational discernment process of youth and young adults, especially evidenced by those studying for the priesthood and entering religious communities of consecrated life in recent years.³⁸ It makes sense.

The World Youth Day experience is one that helps young people prayerfully consider what God is calling them to do with their lives, especially in light of the formation and inspiration gained from such a powerful encounter with the Universal Church. Realizing this connection can be a great occasion to gather together recent participants of stateside and international World Youth Day celebrations with a particular focus on discernment and vocation.

It should also be noted that “vocation” here is understood in the broad sense of God’s call in a person’s life. This would encompass the particular vocations to the priesthood, religious/consecrated life, and marriage, as well as the broader call to holiness which might be lived out in a single life committed

to service to others; in addition, it would also connect pilgrims to the vocation and mission of all the baptized in service to the Church, which might include the call to lay ministry.

Gathering Activities

Like other World Youth Day events, begin the gathering with team building and icebreakers, giving participants the opportunity to learn about the experiences of other World Youth Day pilgrims. This event would be open to both stateside and international pilgrims, so be aware of the needs of both (note: the considerations of bringing these groups together is covered earlier in this guide).

Discernment Exercise

Plan an activity to help the pilgrims engage in the discernment process – to help them better understand what discernment is, how the process works, and ways they can practice discernment in their everyday lives. These elements, and the notion of making choices through prayer and reflection with God and others, are important skills for any young

³⁸ USCCB Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations: *Profession Class 2014 Report*, p. 17; Ordination Class 2015 Report, p. 25; <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/consecrated-life/profession-class/upload/Profession-Class-2014-report-FINAL.PDF>;

and <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/ordination-class/upload/Class-of-2015-report-FINAL-V2.pdf>

person to develop as part of a healthy faith life. It is especially important at this point in their lives as they are considering many options regarding their future and where God may be leading or inviting them.

If a local vocation director or religious community has a particular discernment activity, it would be ideal to invite them to lead this session and to partner/collaborate with them here. Ideally, this gathering would include those leading youth and young adult ministries, vocation ministries, and marriage ministries in the community (parish, diocese, campus, etc.). Below is a suggested outline of a discernment exercise that may also be used:

You will need:

- A room that is large enough that group can spread out comfortably
- Scripture passage: Matthew 5:7 (World Youth Day 2016 theme)
- Paper and pens to write with for everyone in the group
- A prayer space with an altar or offering bowl

Start with an opening prayer that invokes the Holy Spirit (see the example provided here).

You can also use the Pentecost reading (Acts 2:1-11) as well to help pilgrims reflect on the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful.
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit
and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.
Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit
help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.³⁹

Using the questions in the previous section, give the pilgrims a chance to write about their World Youth Day experience and to reflect specifically on where and how the Lord might be calling them to show mercy to others, especially through their dreams for the future (career, relationships, studies, etc.). This could be set up by a discussion about forgiveness and Pope Francis’s message about the theme from Matthew 5:7 (or other Scripture passages on mercy, compassion, and forgiveness).

³⁹International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc.
“Prayer to the Holy Spirit” from *A Book of Prayers*.

You may want to have the questions typed out on the page or placed somewhere that they can visually see them to help them focus.

After some quiet journal time, consider doing a guided meditation or *Lectio Divina* with the focus on mercy and on how God is calling them to be merciful in the mission and vision for their lives. The focus of the reflection could be acknowledging our own need of the Lord's abundant mercy, those in our lives that need the Lord's mercy (and thereby our mercy), and how we might prayerfully consider putting that mercy into action.

After the meditation or *Lectio Divina*, ask:

- What images did you see?
- How did you feel?
- What do the concepts of mercy and forgiveness mean to you?
- How has the Lord's mercy been manifest in your life?
- Are there people whom you need to forgive or from whom you need to ask for forgiveness?
- Is there someone towards whom you need to show more mercy?
- Where can you be a witness of God's mercy in the world now?
- How can you be a witness of God's mercy in your future plans?

- What might the Holy Spirit be calling you to with your life?
- Have your plans changed since World Youth Day? If so, how?

Ask them to write down some ideas on what their future might look like, especially in how their future plans might yield a life of constant mercy, compassion, and forgiveness. Ask them to write a petition to God for clarity in discerning those ideas. Invite the pilgrims to pray for one another, to support the others in their search for meaning and purpose in light of God's call, and that their lives going forward will be ones where they can put mercy and love into action, witnessing to Christ's mercy on the Cross.

Conversation: Vocation

After this exercise, include time to discuss the notion of vocation. Discernment leads to clarity around one's vocation in life – that is, whatever God calls each of us to do with the life he gave to us. Share with them how World Youth Day is helpful in guiding young persons to discover what God might be calling them to do with their lives, especially by the spiritual mentors who journeyed with them (whether that was stateside or internationally) such as bishops, priests, religious sisters and brothers, deacons, lay ecclesial ministers, fellow pilgrims, or others.

Ask them how they see the vocations of priesthood, consecrated life, and marriage and family, as well as the Lord's call to those in single life and the call to lay ministry or another form of service to the Church, in light of their World Youth Day experience. Ask them if the events confirmed or changed any previously-held thoughts on these vocations or callings. Ask if World Youth Day may have made them open to the possibility of pursuing these vocations more intentionally and, if so, what they are considering doing in response to those thoughts or feelings, which are often promptings of the Holy Spirit to pray and discern. Have time for the group to share with each other in small groups or a large group, depending on the number of people present. The goal here is not to push anyone into any discernment/vocation process, but to have conversations that open their minds and hearts to the possibilities. Also, it is meant to encourage a greater awareness of the Lord's call each day of our lives.

Activity: Vocations Panel

This discussion and Q&A activity will encourage World Youth Day Pilgrims to reflect on the call to a particular vocation. The goal is to help pilgrims realize that all of us have a vocation, but some of us have a calling to a particular way of living out our lives that is in relationship to the larger Church

community. Pilgrims may have experienced being with many vowed religious in their stateside experience in a way to which they may not be accustomed. This will help them reflect on their own vocation and where and how God might be calling them to serve.

Assemble a panel including one or more of the following: a married couple; a religious brother and/or sister; a priest; a deacon; a lay ecclesial minister (single or married); and a single lay person discerning and living out God's call in a particular form of work or service; it would be good if all or some of the panelists have been to (or were inspired to their vocation through) a stateside or international World Youth Day (or who have been regularly involved in ministry with youth or young adults locally or nationally), though this is not a requirement.

Begin by having the panelists ask the pilgrims the following questions:

- What brought you the most joy during your World Youth Day experience?
- Who seemed to be the happiest people that you met while you were there?
- What thing that you do makes you the happiest?

After discussing these questions, have a panelist or the leader invite them to think

about what their lives would look like if they were doing what makes them happiest all the time. Ask them if they could envision a life like their World Youth Day experience for years to come. As pilgrims respond, take note of the different responses to the question, “What makes you the happiest?” These might be answers that you or the panel can come back to later on in the discussion.

Then have the panel share their own experiences (of World Youth Day, on how they found joy and happiness in events like these, and in their respective vocations) and how they discovered what God was calling them to do with their lives. This would be a great way to expose pilgrims to a variety of vocational callings. Leave some time for questions and answers to allow the pilgrims to ask whatever they want to know about a particular vocation or ministry.

If time allows, invite the pilgrims to take time for reflection (e.g., take 15 to 20 minutes for silent reflection), and if you feel it is appropriate, have them use this time to complete an online discernment test. There are a variety of online resources for discernment, as well as videos that highlight the journeys of religious men and women, priests, and married couples.

At the conclusion of the session, bring the conversation back to the large group and ask whether the pilgrims have gained any additional insights for themselves.

Ask the group how these religious men and women, priests, and married couples have become agents of mercy and compassion through their calling. Ask the young men and women present if they are now considering new possibilities (and if they are open to sharing those thoughts with the group). It is important to keep all these conversations in confidence and to encourage all pilgrims to hold those in discernment in prayer.

PLANNING TIP:

If you cannot find people from these groups to come out to your meeting, consider using online resources like video testimonials and websites; be sure to share these links with the pilgrims.

USCCB (Religious Women):

www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/discerning-women/

USCCB (Videos on Vocations):

www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/videos.cfm

USCCB (For Your Marriage):

www.foryourmarriage.org

VISION Vocation Network:

www.vocationnetwork.org

Vocation Placement:

www.vocationsplacement.org

Closing Prayer

End this session with a prayer for God's will to be done (and conclude with the Lord's Prayer). If time allows, consider a longer prayer experience using the patron saints of WYDUSA (for this exercise, consider printing short biographies and photos of these holy men and women):

Leader: Each of the guiding patrons of World Youth Day were called by our Almighty and Merciful God to something great. If during this session, you have been drawn to a particular vocation or call to service or ministry, we ask that you spend ten minutes with a saint of your choosing. Consider the following:

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

was a single young adult, with an eye towards possible marriage.

St. John Paul II

began his ministry as a young priest in the Archdiocese of Kraków.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

entered consecrated life (the Carmelite sisters) in her youth.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha

was an intentional single adult within her Native American community.

St. James the Apostle

was called to preach the Gospel, heal the sick, and lead others to Christ.

Our Blessed Mother Mary

was married to St. Joseph and with him in Nazareth, raised Jesus.

Which of these holy men and women do you want to accompany you in prayer as you ponder and discern the various paths God has laid out before you at World Youth Day and in your life?

Take about ten minutes to learn about them, speak with them, and ask for their guidance and prayers. When you have finished, come back to the large group.

At this point, the leader can conclude the gathering with the World Youth Day Prayer for the United States, and invocation of the patrons before a final benediction and blessing.

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.**

NOTES

